

# Girls Just Want

To Have Fun.

**CALENDAR GIRLS:** Directed by Nigel Cole. Written by Juliette Towhidi and Tim Firth. Produced by Suzanne Mackie, Nick Barton. Cinematography, Ashley Rowe. Production design, Martin Childs. Editor, Michael Parker. Executive producer, Nik Powell. Music, Patrick Doyle. Starring Helen Mirren (Chris) and Julie Walters, with John Alderton, Linda Bassett (Cora), Annette Crosbie (Jessie), Penelope Wilton (Ruth), Ciaran Hinds (Rod), Celia Imrie (Celia), John-Paul Macleod and Philip Glenister (Lawrence). Touchstone Pictures, 2003. PG-13. 108 minutes.

No surprises here. If you've seen the trailer or the television ads, you already know a proposal comes before a civic-minded group of British women who belong to the W.I. (short for Women's Institute). Two club members, Chris (Helen Mirren) and Annie (Julie Walters), propose to put out a calendar to raise funds for a local hospital. They want W.I. women to pose for the calendar doing things typical Yorkshire Dales women do — baking bread, playing piano, arranging flowers, knitting — butt nekkid. Well that's a twist, even if Annie does try to dress it up a bit with the more acceptable and arty sounding "nude."

The proposal generates heat from the conventional chairwoman and others. But Chris and Annie won't allow the group's concerns to rule out their idea. After all, they put up with deadening lectures on broccoli for the sake of tradition, why shouldn't the more strait-laced among them take off their corsets for art?

The movie gets laughs out of the idea that a bunch of women aged 50 or older posing nude is really wild. Right here in

Lane County, a game dozen men from the Long Tom Grange made their own nude calendar, while raising money for Junction City schools, hard-hit by budget cuts. (See *EW* cover photo, Dec. 31, 2003; story, p. 5.) There's something downright wholesome about men and women of a certain age being willing to show a little skin for charity.

In *Calendar Girls*, the women who agree to pose make quiet, poignant admissions to each other about their private lives, which gives the project heart. And the money will go to bring comfort to leukemia patients, family and staff at the local hospital, in memory of Annie's recently deceased husband, John (John Alderton), a fine character who expresses a wry humor and appreciation of beauty that lasts.

The trouble with reviewing such a slight film is that I might leave nothing for the reader or viewer to discover. On the surface, the film seems to be about the calendar for John, but actually it's about relationships. Had the filmmakers understood this as deeply as some of the actors did, we might have all been surprised.

One of the best small roles is that of Ruth (Penelope Wilton), who discovers the hard way what is missing in her marriage. Ruth's story should have included more

GIRLFRIENDS: CHRIS (HELEN MIRREN) AND ANNIE (JULIE WALTERS).



scenes with her husband, but thanks to the heavy-handed script and direction, we in the audience knew what was going on long before Ruth did.

Chris and Annie present the opposite problem. They are in so much of the film it's easy to miss the subtleties in their long-lived friendship. So when their relationship gets in trouble, it's hard to know what strengths each will call on to work out what's gone wrong between them. Show, don't tell.

In both cases, the actors and the audience could handle much more complexity with ease. Real life is tough. Every issue has many sides. Why simplify friendship or marriage? Women who come to see the film may be over 50, but that's no reason to gloss over the reasons life is worth liv-

ing. "Sex and the City" allows Miranda's wedding and Samantha's bad news to come in the same half-hour episode. We get it, OK? Women enjoy women characters who are as complicated and multifaceted as they.

This film is slight but not completely inconsequential. In an age of action, special-effects films geared to the young male demographic, any film about women's lives should be welcomed. But with such a talented cast, we expect the best. We get little flashes of the real thing here, especially from the amazing Mirren and Walters. But not nearly enough.

Entertaining but not enlightening, *Calendar Girls* is playing now at Cinema World and Cinemark. **EW**

## movie clips

**OPENING OR RETURNING:**

**Along Came Polly:** Ben Stiller plays Reuben, a hapless husband whose bride dumps him. Then he meets up with a childhood friend, Polly (Jennifer Aniston). Also stars Philip Seymour Hoffman, Hank Azaria, Bryan Brown and Alec Baldwin. John Hamburg directs. PG-13. Cinema World. Cinemark.

**Creature from the Black Lagoon:** In 3-D! The 1954 classic monster film mixes scientific discovery with legend. New print, complete with 3-D glasses tuned to bring out its best. Shows with Hentai (Japanese erotic anime). Two weeks only; Jan. 9-11 and Jan. 16-18. Bijou.

**In the Cut:** This film came and went very quickly last year. Catch it early, because it may not be here only briefly. In Jane Campion's psychological thriller, Meg Ryan plays a lonely woman who becomes involved with a tough homicide detective investigating murders in her neighborhood. Also stars Mark Ruffalo, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Nick Damici. Highest recommendations. R. Movies 12.

**Matrix Revolutions:** Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburne and Carrie-Anne Moss are back for the third (and final?) Matrix episode. Written and directed by the Wachowski Brothers. Produced by Joel Silver. R. Movies 12.

**Teacher's Pet:** Talking dog Spot wants to become a "real boy," and mad scientist Ivan Krank, tries to make it possible. Nathan Lane is Spot's voice, Kesey Grammer is Krank's. PG. Cinemark. Cinema World.

**Torque:** Biker Cary Ford (Martin Henderson) returns to see his girlfriend, Shane (Monet Mazur), but they get caught up with some bad bikers. Also stars Adam Scott, Ice Cube, Jay Hernandez. PG-13. Cinema World. Cinemark.

**Win a Date with Tad Hamilton:** Kate Bosworth, Tophér Grace and Josh Duhamel star in this teen romance comedy directed by Robert Luketic. PG-13. Sneak at 7 pm on 01/16 and 4 pm on 01/18 only. Cinemark.

**Films open the Friday following EW publication date unless otherwise noted. See archived reviews at www.eugeneweekly.com**

**CONTINUING:**

**Big Fish:** Tim Burton's film about a son (Billy Crudup) who tries to figure out his father's (Albert Finney) life through the wild stories he's told. Also stars Ewan

McGregor, Helena Bonham Carter, Danny DeVito, Jessica Lange, Alison Lohman and Steve Buscemi. Truly wonderful film; highest recommendations. PG-13. Cinema World. Cinemark. **See review this issue.**

**Brother Bear:** Disney tale of young man who is transformed into a bear and his adventures in the great Northwest. He picks up a bear cub and runs into a pair of misguided moose, or is that meese? Six new songs from Phil Collins, including one with Tina Turner. G. Movies 12.

**Calendar Girls:** Spunky members of a woman's club in Yorkshire, England poses naked to raise money for medical research after one's husband gets leukemia. Stars Helen Mirren, Julie Walters and John Alderton. Based on a true story. Nigel Cole directs. PG-13. Cinemark. **See review this issue.**

**Cat in the Hat, The:** Mike Meyers stars as the outrageous feline who visits a couple of kids and wreaks havoc in the house while mom's away. With Alec Baldwin, Kelly Preston. Reviewers don't recommend. PG-13. Movies 12.

**Chasing Liberty:** In this young adult romantic comedy, Mandy Moore plays the only child of the US Prez, and Matthew Goode is the Brit she meets in Europe who helps her escape from her Secret Service agents. PG-13. Cinemark. Cinema World

**Cheaper by the Dozen:** Steve Martin and Bonnie Hunt play the parents of 12 children, including Piper Perabo, Hilary Duff and Tom Welling. Directed by Shawn Levy. PG. Cinema World. Cinemark.

**Cold Mountain:** Anthony Minghella's adaptation of Charles Frazier's Civil War best-seller stars Jude Law as a wounded Southern soldier walking home across the mountains, Nicole Kidman as his pre-war sweetheart, and Renee Zellweger as a young drifter who teaches her to farm and survive. Elegaic. Excellent performances, beautiful film. Very highest recommendations. R. Cinema World. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

**Elf:** Jon Favreau directs and Will Farrell stars as an elf who doesn't look like the other kids, er, elves. The big elf searches for his biological father (James Caan) in New York. PG. Movies 12.

**Haunted Mansion:** Eddie Murphy stars in Rob Minkoff's (*Stuart Little*) ghost comedy, with Jennifer Tilly, Don Knotts, Terence Stamp. PG. Cinemark.

**In America:** Jim Sheridan's memoir of living in New York in 1981 with his wife and two daughters is a heartfelt film that stars Samantha Morton, Paddy Considine, Sarah

Bolger and Emma Bolger. Highest recommendations. PG-13. Bijou. **Online archives.**

**Last Samurai:** Edward Zwick directs. In Japan, US Civil War hero Nathan Algren (Tom Cruise) trains the Emperor's troops in the way of the gun as they take on the last samurais. Algren is captured by Katsumoto (Ken Watanabe) and falls under samurai traditions and codes of honor. R. Cinemark.

**Looney Tunes:** Mixed animation/ live action directed by Joe Dante, stars Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Brendan Fraser, Jenna Elfman, Steve Martin, Timothy Dalton, Joan Cusack, Heather Locklear. PG. Movies 12.

**Lord of the Rings: Return of the King:** Peter Jackson completes Tolkien's trilogy on film, and the result is stunning. Stars Elijah Wood, Viggo Mortensen, Sean Astin, Ian McKellen, Billy Boyd, Orlando Bloom, Liv Tyler, Cate Blanchett. In parallel stories Frodo and Sam make it to Mount Doom as the warriors of Middle Earth under the leadership of Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen) fight the final battle against the forces of the evil Sauron. Very highest recommendations. Brilliant! Cinema World. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

**Love Actually:** Written and directed by Richard Curtis (*Bridget Jones's Diary*), this romantic comedy stars Hugh Grant, Liam Neeson, Colin Firth, Laura Linney, Alan

Rickman, Emma Thompson, Keira Knightley, Martine McCutcheon, Bill Nighy. Good fun. Highly recommended. R. Movies 12.

**Master and Commander The Far side of the World:** Peter Weir brings the late Patrick O'Brian's best-selling nautical adventures to the screen with Russell Crowe as Captain Jack Aubrey and Paul Bettany as Dr. Stephen Maturin, ship surgeon and naturalist. Set during the Napoleonic Wars. Highest recommendations. PG-13. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

**Mona Lisa Smile:** Julia Roberts is an idealistic teacher and nonconformist at Wellesley in the 1950s. Julia Stiles, Kirsten Dunst and Maggie Gyllenhaal are her students. Mike Newell directs. PG-13. Cinemark. Cinema World.

**My Baby's Daddy:** Three friends from the hood discover their girlfriends are all pregnant at the same time. Now they have to grow up to become daddies. PG-13. Cinemark.

**Paycheck:** Based on a Philip K. Dick sci-fi short story and directed by John Woo, film stars Ben Affleck, Uma Thurman Aaron Eckhart, Paul Giamatti, Colm Feore, Michael C. Hall. PG-13. Cinemark.

**Peter Pan:** Directed by P.J. Hogan, movie stars Jason Isaacs, Jeremy Sumpter, Richard Briers, Olivia Williams, Lyn Redgrave, Ludwina Sagnier and Rachel

Hurd-Wood. PG. Cinemark.

**Radio:** High school football coach (Ed Harris) shocks a Southern town by taking on a mentally challenged youth (Cuba Gooding Jr.) and developing a decades-long friendship with him. Also stars Alfre Woddard and Debra Winger; directed by Mike Tollin. PG. Movies 12.

**Scary Movie 3:** Horror spoof satirizes movies such as *The Ring*, *Signs*, *The Matrix Reloaded*, *Eight Mile*. Stars Anna Faris, Charlie Sheen, Denise Richards, Eddie Griffin and Queen Latifah. Directed by David Zucker. R. Movies 12.

**School of Rock:** Faking it as a substitute teacher, wild guitarist Jack Black turns elementary musical prodigies into a high-voltage rock band. Directed by Richard Linklater, it also stars Joan Cusack, Mike White and Sarah Silverman. PG-13. Movies 12.

**Something's Gotta Give:** Directed by Nancy Meyers. Harry Sanborn (Jack Nicholson) is a New York music mogul with a libido much younger than his years. Also stars Diane Keaton, Amanda Peet and Keanu Reeves. PG-13. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

**Stuck on You:** The Farrelly Brothers (*Something About Mary*) direct this story of joined twins Bob (Mat Damon) and Walt (Greg Kinear). Walt convinces Bob to move to L.A. so he can become an actor. But success threatens to drive them apart. Also

stars Cher, Eva Mendes and Seymour Cassel plus big name cameos. PG-13. Movies 12.

**Twenty-one Grams:** Mexican director Alejandro González Iñárritu's second feature has astounded critics. Telling three linked stories, Iñárritu again works magic with narrative structure. Sean Penn, Benicio Del Toro and Naomi Watts, star in a film *The New York Times* says reaches a "Faulknerian idea of old-fashioned grace." Also stars Charlotte Gainsbourg, Clea DuVall, Danny Huston and Melissa Leo. R. Bijou. **Online archives.**

**Under the Tuscan Sun:** Diane Lane plays writer Frances Mayes in this screen adaptation of her best selling book about buying a run-down villa in Italy and creating a new life. Escape from real life — beautiful people, gorgeous scenery, everybody's got money. PG-13. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

**Underworld:** Set in a world where vampires are a clan of aristocratic moderns, and lycans (werewolves) are a gang of street thugs, Len Wiseman's film stars Kate Beckinsale and Scott Speedman. When they fall in love, they trigger an ancient feud. R. Movies 12..

**Bijou Art Cinemas (686-2458)  
Cinema World 8 (342-6536)  
Cinemark 17 (746-5202)  
Movies 12 (741-1231)**

## Video Clips

**NEW RELEASES ON VIDEO**

Releases subject to change. Available the Tuesday following date of EW publication, sometimes sooner. See archived movie reviews at [www.eugeneweekly.com](http://www.eugeneweekly.com)

**Accidental Tourist, The (1988):** Directed by Larry Kasdan, excellent film stars William Hurt, Geena Davis, Kathleen Turner, Bill Pullman. DVD extras include deleted scenes, more.

**Bill Maher: Victory Begins at Home (2003):** Maher's one-man Broadway show on his usual subjects — sex, religion, politics. DVD includes Maher's Q&A with show patrons. NR.

**Cabin Fever:** Four college friends vacation at a remote cabin, but one of them gets very sick, and the others struggle with life and death decisions as their terror rises. Directed by Eli Roth; stars Jordan Ladd, Rider Strong, James DeBello, Cerina Vincent, Joey Kern, Arie Verveen. R.

**Everybody's All American (1988):** Taylor Hackford's great football film stars Dennis Quaid and Jessica Lange, with Timothy Hutton, John Goodman. DVD extras include commentary, extra scenes and featurettes on making-of.

**Once Upon a Time in Mexico:** Directed by Robert Rodriguez. Antonio Banderas as El Mariachi, now involved in international espionage. Costars Salma Hayek, Johnny Depp and Mickey Rourke. R.

**Open Range:** Kevin Costner directs and stars with Robert Duvall in traditional Western about a corrupt cattle baron (Michael Gambon) who forces the cowboys to fight. Annette Bening's performance is warm and real. With Abraham Benrubi, Diego Luna. Recommended. R. **Online archives.**

**Rules of the Game (France,1939):** Jean Renoir's classic anti-war film takes place at a country estate during a hunting party. A great film by any standards. Stars Nora Gregor, Paulette Goddard, Mila Parely, Odette Talazac, Claire Gerard. NR.

**Spellbound:** Academy Award-nominated documentary feature by Jeffrey Blitz follows eight school kids from around the country as they prepare for and compete at the National Spelling Bee. Suspenseful, funny and heartwarming, this film's a real winner. Very highest recommendations for the whole family. G. **Online archives.**

**Next week: Bang Bang You're Dead, Capturing the Friedmans, Comic Book, The Critic, Le Divorce, Secret Lives of Dentists, A Smile Like Yours, Thirteen.**