

Serial Killer

Crossing the line

MONSTER: Written and directed by Patty Jenkins. Produced by Mark Damon, Donald Kushner, Clark Peterson, Charlize Theron and Brad Wyman. Executive producers, Andras Grosch, Stewart Hall, Sammy Lee, Meagan Riley-Grant, Andreas Schmid. Cinematography, Steven Bernstein. Original music, BT. Editors, Arthur Coburn, Jane Kurson. Production design, Edward T. McAvoy. Costumes, Rhona Meyers. Starring Charlize Theron, with Christina Ricci and Bruce Dern. Newmarket Films, 2003. R. 111 minutes.

Patty Jenkins’ bloody feature film about real-life killer Aileen Wuornos is as hard to sit through as if it were about a man who was a serial killer. When the industry makes a feature film about the Green River killer, for example, I plan not to see it. Such films are popular — just look at the numbers who go to see Hannibal Lector movies — but I have seen enough. I don’t want any more of those images in my mind.

So it was very difficult for me to look at *Monster*. Wuornos, who prefers to be called Lee (Charlize Theron), a hardened, low-rent prostitute, finds herself with a sadistic John. Lee crosses the line in an explosive scene. I’m no expert on the criminal mentality, but it seems to me that once a certain boundary has been bridged, there’s no going back.

Wuornos does try to go straight. But she’s been hooking since she was 13, so it’s unlikely she’ll find another way to live.

And since she’s started killing her johns, she probably won’t quit doing that either, even with a sweet girlfriend, Selby (Christina Ricci), to come home to.

Selby’s unformed — no match for the dominant Lee. Actually, both women seem adolescent, even childish, as if something big interrupted their development into maturity. For Selby, it was the incompatibility of her urges and fantasies with her family’s religious fundamentalism. For Lee, it was being ostracized by her peers and family. For both women, it had to do with sex. So Selby, who thinks hooking sounds sophisticated, pushes Lee into going back to the only work she knows how to do.

The triumph of Theron’s ability to bore into the inner life of a woman as different from herself as imaginable is how she captures the fragility of Wuornos’s hold on human decency. The physically transformed actress perfectly expresses Lee’s tough exterior, which is all that she has as a buffer between her marginal life and an uncaring world. But with Selby’s love, Lee’s need to be loved, to be seen, fleeing



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as it is, humanizes her. And that makes all the difference for the viewer.

What nothing can change is circumstance. Lee understands who and what she is. She knows what the world wants from her. And she learns again that no one gives a damn about her. She’s a throw-away person, a disposable unit in a culture openly hostile to women such as she. Her one friend before she meets Selby is Thomas (Bruce Dern), a Vietnam vet, who also lives on the edge. But even Thomas cannot help her.

Wuornos was arrested in January 1991 in the aptly named Last Resort Bar, in Port Orange, Fla. In the media frenzy that fol-

lowed she was called the country’s first female serial killer, a social outcast, a lesbian who hated men. It was poorly recognized by the authorities that she was raped by the first man she killed (played in the film by Lee Tergesen). Others made Wuornos out to be a feminist hero. Nick Broomfield and Joan Churchill, documentary filmmakers, have made *Aileen: Life and Death of a Serial Killer*, which gives a different picture of this complex woman, who committed six murders after she killed the john who raped and brutalized her.

Monster opens at the Bijou and Cinemark on Friday, Feb. 13. **EW**

movie clips

OPENING OR RETURNING:

Black Monk (USSR, 1988): Directed by Ivan Dykhovichnyi. Parallel stories unfold: romance between educated man and landowner’s daughter; meeting between scholar and fabled monk. In Russian with English subtitles. At 8:15 pm on 2/6 in 115 Pacific Hall, UO campus. Free.

Book of Mormon, The Journey: Probably most appropriate for Mormons, this historical drama is co-written and directed by Gary Rogers. NR. Cinema World.

City of God: Rio de Janeiro is home to one of the most notorious slums in the world, called City of God. Based on the true story of a young man from the ‘hood whose photographs may be his only way out. Directed by Fernando Meirelles, this acclaimed, unflinchingly brutal film stars Matheus Nachtergaele. Not for the faint-hearted. Stars primarily unknown first-time actors. Highly recommended if you can handle violence. R. Cinema World. **Online archives.**

Clockwork Orange (1971): Stanley Kubrick’s compelling, violent film was banned in UK for many years. Led by a sadistic psychopath (Malcolm McDowell), a gang rapes and kills. One of the master’s most unforgettable films. R. LateNite Bijou.

Fifty First Dates: Drew Barrymore and Adam Sandler in a romance with a catch: she has no short-term memory recall, so she forgets him every night. Also stars Rob Schneider, Sean Astin and Dan Aykroyd. Directed by Peter Segal. PG-13. Cinemark. Cinema World.

Harold and Maude (1971): Hal Ashby’s cult classic about a depressed 20-year old man (Bud Cort) who meets a remarkable older woman (Ruth Gordon). Music by Cat Stevens. PG. At 6 pm on 2/14 in Lorane Grange Hall. \$7 donation requested.

Haunted Mansion: Eddie Murphy stars in Rob Minkoff’s (*Stuart Little*) ghost comedy, with Jennifer Tilly, Don Knotts, Terence Stamp PG. Movies 12.

In the Company of Men (1997): Neil LaBute’s acclaimed directorial

debut appeared on many critics’ top 10 list. Stars Aaron Eckhart and Matt Malloy as businessmen whose cold-blooded plan to devalue a vulnerable woman, played by Stacy Edwards, reveals them as predators and misogynists. Very cool movie. Highly recommended. R. At 7 pm on 2/18 in 214 McKenzie Hall, UO campus. Free. **Love Don’t Cost a Thing:** Directed by Troy Beyer. Stars Nick Cannon as teenager Alvin Johnson who tries to play cool by hiring a cheerleader to act as his girlfriend. Remake of 1987’s *Can’t Buy Me Love* starring Patrick Dempsey. PG-13. Movies 12.

Miles Davis: Live in Munich: LateNite Bijou.

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. Movies 12.

Monster: Patty Jenkins’ feature film about real-life killer Aileen Wuornos stars Charlize Theron in an unforgettable performance. Theron’s physical transformation not only captures Wuornos’s fragile hold on human decency but also show that her tough exterior is the only buffer she has between her marginal life and an uncaring world. Co-stars Christina Ricci. Hard-to-watch violence, but outstanding. R. Bijou. Cinemark. **See review this issue.**

Quiet American, The: Directed by Phillip Noyce (Rabbit-Proof Fence), this adaptation of Graham Greene’s novel is set in 1952 Saigon during the French Indochina War. Michael Caine plays an English journalist; also stars Brendan Fraser. 2002 Academy Award nomination for Caine. Underrated, excellent movie. DVD includes anatomy of a scene, director’s commentary and making-of featurette Highly recommended. R. At 7pm on 2/12 in 180 PLC. Free. **Online archives.**

Triplets of Belleville: Sylvain Chomet’s animated tale features the writer, director’s whimsical, skewed architecture looming over the bizarre figures, who populate his strange and wonderful story. A don’t-miss gem from 2003, the film is nominated for Best Animated Film award. Very highest recommendations PG-13. Bijou. **See review this**

issue.

Welcome to Mooseport: Ray Romano, running for small-town mayor, and Gene Hackman, former US Prez, square off for Maura Tierney’s love. Also stars Marcia Gay Harden, Christine Baranski, Rip Torn. Directed by Donald Petrie. PG-13. Sneak at 7 pm only on 2/15. Cinemark.

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

CONTINUING:

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. Cinemark. **Barbershop 2 Back in Business:** Ice Cube, Cedric the Entertainer and the barbers are back at Calvin’s Barbershop, with hair stylist Queen Latifah next door. PG-13. Cinemark.

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. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

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.

Butterfly Effect: The trailer is about a young man (Ashton Kutcher) who time travels back to the past to fix the broken lives of a childhood girlfriend (Amy Smart) and his friends, Lenny (Eldoen Henson) and Tommy (William Lee Scott). R. Cinemark.

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.

Catch That Kid: Bart Freundlich directs this caper film about three smart kids on a mission without permission. Stars Kristen Stewart, Corbin Bleu, Max Thieriot, Jennifer Beals, Sam Robards, John Carroll Lynch and James LeGros. PG. Cinema World. Cinemark.

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. 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. 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.

Girl With the Pearl Earring: Scarlett Johansson and Colin Firth give consummate performances in this underrated, lovely film about Vermeer and the model for his famous, mysterious painting. Based on Tracy Chevalier’s best-selling novel. Very highest recommendations. PG-13. Cinema World. **See review this issue.**

Gothika: Halle Berry plays a criminal psychologist who blacks out and comes to accused of murdering her husband (Charles Dutton). Now she’s a patient in his hospital. Directorial debut of Mathieu Kassovitz. Also Penélope Cruz, Robert Downey Jr., Bernard Hill. R. 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.**

Lost in Translation: Directed by Sofia Coppola (*The Virgin Suicides*), this highly acclaimed film was shot entirely on location in Japan. It stars Bill Murray and Scarlett Johansson as lonely Americans in a Tokyo hotel who become friends. With Giovanni Ribisi. Very highest recommendations. R. Cinema World. **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. **Online archives.**

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.**

Miracle: The: 1980 US Ice Hockey team beat the greatest team in the world (the Russians) at the Olympics. Stars Kurt Russell as the coach of this inspiring tale of a sports-world miracle. PG. Cinemark. Cinema World.

Mystic River: Directed by Clint Eastwood; written by Brian Koppelman, based on the novel by Dennis Lehane, this dramatic tragedy stars Sean Penn, Tim Robbins, Kevin Bacon, Laurence Fishburne, Marcia Gay Harden, Laura Linney and Emmy Rossum. Very highest recommendations. R. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

Perfect Score, The: Cast includes Erika Christensen and Scarlett Johansson in this tale of six high-school students who band together to heist the SAT. PG-13. Cinemark.

Peter Pan: Directed by P.J. Hogan, movie stars Jason Isaacs, Jeremy Sumpter, Richard Briers, Olivia Williams, Lyn Redgrave, Ludivine Sagnier and Rachel Hurd-Wood. PG. 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.

Timeline: Richard Donner directs screen adaptation of Michael Crichton’s novel about archaeologists on a dig who time travel back 600 years to rescue their teacher, trapped in 14th century France. Stars Paul Walker, Frances O’Connor, Billy Connolly, David Thewlis. PG-13. Movies 12..

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.**

You Got Served: In competitive street dancing, crews battle each other for money and respect. Cast includes Marques Houston, Omarion, Raz B, J Boog and Lil’ Fizz. PG-13. Cinemark.

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