

animated

FEATURE FILMS

The Triplets of Belleville
Finding Nemo

11. THE STATION AGENT

Actor Tom McCarthy makes his feature film debut with this quirky, intelligent ensemble piece about three individuals with independent lives, who have an unacknowledged, great thirst for real companionship. By the end of the movie, Fin (Peter Dinklage), Olivia (Patricia Clarkson) and

Joe (Bobby Cannavale) have reached a place where they can be themselves together, the best of all possible arrangements. And they get to this place by dealing with each setback that comes along.

As a dwarf, Fin has learned to protect himself from obnoxious comments. Now he has to let go of his projections about Joe and Olivia. An artist, Olivia has recently lost her son, and she doesn't actually trust anyone. Snack-truck vendor Joe is just plain lonely, and he sees the possibilities of shared, simple pleasures with both Fin and Olivia, although he fantasizes sex with her.

The film rambles along at its own pace, giving viewers the strong sense of place that grounds the story and the characters. As their familiarity with one another grows, they come to fill the role of family for each other. But not before pain, drunkenness and

sorrow put in an appearance. Throughout, Drinklage brings a serious dignity to his character, while the always luminous Clarkson reveals new depths, and Cannavale shows us yet another side of his attractive screen persona.

12. IN THE CUT

I can't ignore this interesting work by director Jane Campion (*The Piano*, *Holy Smoke!*), based on Susanna Moore's thriller, despite the film's lackluster reviews. Campion turns New York's East Village into a neighborhood where a woman feels threatened if she is sexy or dressed provocatively, unlike the Manhattan where fashionistas from "Sex and the City" stroll.

Frannie (Meg Ryan) is a college teacher whose life has fallen into a rut. She talks to her half-sister, Pauline (Jennifer Jason Leigh) about feeling stuck, and Pauline suggests meeting a man and having sex. Frannie and Pauline go to a bar, where later Frannie sees a prostitute servicing a man in the basement. Frannie knows the man saw her, but she doesn't see his face, only his hand. The woman turns up dead the next morning.

Detective Malloy (Mark Ruffalo) comes to Frannie's apartment to question her about what she saw. The sexual current between Malloy and Frannie is hot. Malloy is very upfront and unashamed about sex when he speaks to Frannie. She agrees to go out with him and borrows one of Pauline's slutty outfits. A second victim is found, and police know a serial killer may strike again in these steamy neighborhood streets.



In The Cut

SCREEN GEMS, 2003.

The camaraderie between Frannie and Pauline is wonderful. They are very sister-like without the judgemental baggage actual sisters carry. And Malloy's clear expression of desire is refreshing. He isn't an intellectual like Frannie, but he is very keen about human nature, and he nails her loneliness perfectly. Frannie is sick of her ex-boyfriend (Kevin Bacon), not interested in her horny student, Cornelius (Sharrieff Pugh), and not turned on by Malloy's arrogant partner, Detective Rodriguez (Nick Damici). She's ready for some action, and Malloy's the guy.

Trouble is, he could be the serial killer, or so Frannie (and the audience) start thinking. Tension builds as Frannie and Malloy get to know each other more intimately. Would a serial killer be so devoted to giving a woman pleasure? I don't think so.

The film is controversial. It contains explicit sex scenes as well as frank sex talk, and grisly images of bodies and body parts, although the killing takes place offstage. Fabulous performances by Ryan, Ruffalo and Leigh make it all work. **EW**



The Station Agent

MIRAMAX FILMS, 2003.

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