

# Lukewarm Sequel

## A Mother Goose Hollywood

**SHREK 2:** Directed by Andrew Adamson, Kelly Asbury, Conrad Vernon. Written by Adamson, Joe Stillman, J. David Stem and David N. Weiss, based on a story by Adamson and a book by William Steig. Produced by Aron Warner, David Lipman, John H. Williams. Executive producer Jeffrey Katzenberg. Composer, Harry Gregson-Williams. Music Supervision, Chris Douridas. Editors, Michael Andrews, Sim Evan-Jones. Production design, Guillaume Aretos. Visual effects, Ken Bielenberg, Philippe Gluckman. Voices: Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz. With Julie Andrews, Antonio Banderas, John Cleese, Rupert Everett, Jennifer Saunders. DreamWorks, 2004. PG. 93 minutes.

**M**ovie sequels suck. It's hard to work up the enthusiasm engendered by the original, and reviewers face summer sequels ad nauseum. That old Latin term is peculiarly apt for this film's subtext — a pissed-at-Hollywood and Disney-in-particular cuteness around product placement and the seedier side of Tinseltown's show-biz mentality.

Why do so many characters in American animated movies (except early Pixar) speak like show-biz wheeler-dealers long-parodied by Billy Crystal or like thugs? (Even *Finding Nemo* had its sharks.) The trend began with the excellent Toons' characters from Robert Zemeckis' *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), that endearing mesh of live-action and animation, with its strong anti-Hollywood bias. But now copies simply crop

up like feral squash from last year's garden. Boring, boring, boring. And what message do such characters give kids about our culture, anyway? That we secretly admire inflated egos and criminal deeds?

In *Shrek 2*, the film's baddie combines the worst of such caricatures: She's a Fairy Godmother — Jennifer Saunders in a thankless, patronizing role — as a wannabe celebrity and shameless manipulator. Mum hires thugs to carry out her plan to marry off her dithering, sexless son, Prince Charming (Rupert Everett), to Princess Fiona (Cameron Diaz), who's already married to Shrek (Mike Myers). Fairy Godmother is perfect as a crooked show-biz type, but that doesn't make her or the prince charming. On the contrary, they pull the life out of any scene they're in.

The novel new character is Antonio Banderas as a cocky Puss In Boots. I was reminded of some of Banderas' now carefully forgotten early roles in the outrageous first films by Spanish director Pedro Almadovar — *Labyrinth of Passion* (1982), *Matador* (1986) and *Law of Desire* (1986). These movies may have slipped off his current filmography, because Banderas' U.S. movie persona is that of a clean-cut, heterosexual, action-hero and leading man, his only failing that he's a bit of a dandy. But some of the playful quirkiness, unconventional behavior

and gender-crossing portrayals from these earlier films comes through in the antics of Puss. About time, I say.

Too bad there aren't more spicy things happening in *Shrek 2*. Donkey (Eddie Murphy) still says inappropriate things to the wrong people and gets in a snit when Shrek spends too much time with his new rival, Puss. Murphy gets the best lines in the show and uses his uncanny comic timing to toss them out, lightly, on the right beat.

Other new characters include Queen Lillian (Julie Andrews) and King Harold (John Cleese) as Princess Fiona's parents. Why cast Cleese if you aren't going to give him anything funny to do, I must ask? Anyway, their roles are pedestrian, with the

Queen quietly accepting her new son-in-law because her daughter loves him, while the king hatches lame plots and bonds with unscrupulous people.

Forced to choose between watching *Harry Potter 3* and *Shrek 2*, I pragmatically selected the shorter film. Even so, I grew rapidly tired of the movie and failed to respond well to it at any point. Buried by the film's retreat formula is a bit of good advice about marriage, how making one work is a process that doesn't come naturally but is learned. And maybe there's a strand or two about realizing that the people you love always look good to you. But there's little new ground here.

*Shrek 2* is now playing at Cinemark and Cinema World. So-so. **EW**



Shrek's new protector is the wily Puss in Boots (Antonio Banderas).

## movie clips

### OPENING OR RETURNING:

**Chronicles of Riddick, The:** Riddick (Vin Diesel) ends up on a multicultural planet invaded by a despot planning to subjugate everyone with his non-human warriors, the Necromongers. (Named for a bad rock band?) Also stars Thandie Newton, Alexa Davalos, Colm Feore, Linus Roache and Judi Dench. PG-13. Cinema World.

**Ella Enchanted:** Anne Hathaway is a perfectly obedient girl. She does what she's told, literally. Based on Newberry-winning novel. PG. Movies 12.

**Garfield, The Movie:** The poster promises "frisky business" as Garfield, the smarty pants kitty, makes his film debut. PG. Cinemark. Cinema World.

**Ladykillers, The:** Based on the 1955 British comedy starring Peter Sellers and Alec Guinness, Ethan and Joel Coen's adaptation stars Tom Hanks and Marlon Wayans. When these bank robbers move into "no hip-hop" house of a Southern church-going woman, anything goes. R. Movies 12.

**Notebook, The:** Nick Cassavetes directs Gena Rowlands and James Garner, Ryan Gosling and Rachel McAdams in the screen adaptation of Nicholas Sparks' best-selling romantic novel. With Sam Shepard and Joan Allen. PG-13. Sneak 6/12 at 7:30 pm. Cinemark.

**PISSFEST:** Portland Independent Short Film Festival winners include *Seven Minute Psychosis*, *Terminator Tomatoes*, *Teatro Roots* and *Queke Tu'e Deuche*. At 8 pm on 6/11 at DIVA. \$2-\$5 sliding scale.

**Saved:** Mandy Moore and Jena Malone play former high school friends at a Baptist high school who learn hard lessons about friendship when one of them becomes pregnant. PG-13. Cinemark.

**Stepford Wives, The:** Frank Oz directs Nicole Kidman, Matthew Broderick, Bette Midler, Christopher Walken, Faith Hill and Glenn Close in this updated comedy-thriller about a perfect, 1950s-era community in Stepford, Connecticut. PG-13. Cinema World. Cinemark.

**Super Size Me:** Morgan Spurlock's documentary features snappy

graphics, talking heads and the slow decline of Spurlock's health as he eats only at McDonalds for three meals a day, 30 days. Highly recommended. NR. Bijou. **See review this issue.**

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

### CONTINUING:

**Bloodstains across Eugene:** Punk documentary by local filmmaker Henry Weintraub. Latente Bijou.

**Cold Mountain:** Anthony Minghella's adaptation of Charles Frazier's Civil War best-seller stars Jude Law as a wounded Southern soldier who walks 1000 miles to get home. Nicole Kidman is his pre-war sweetheart, and Renee Zellweger teaches her to farm and survive. Very highest recommendations. Academy Award to Rene Zellweger. Nominations: Jude Law, actor; cinematography; original score; two original songs; film editing. R. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

**Day After Tomorrow, The:** Directed by Roland Emmerich, starring Dennis Quaid, Jake Gyllenhaal, Emmy Rossum, Sela Ward. A climatologist (Quaid) tries to figure out a way to save the world from abrupt global warming. He must get to his son (Gyllenhaal) in New York, which is being taken over by a new ice age. PG-13. Cinemark. Cinema World.

**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. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

**Harry Potter & the Prisoner of Azkaban:** Alfonso Cuarón directs the third film based on the series by J.K. Rowling. Harry (Daniel Radcliffe) and his friends Ron (Rupert Grint) and Hermione (Emma Watson), now teenagers, return to Hogwarts, where they face their darkest fears. Sirius Black (Gary Oldham) poses a great threat to Harry. The three friends must also contend with the Dementors, who are sent to protect

them from Black. PG. Cinemark. Cinema World.

**Hidalgo:** Based on autobiography of distance rider Frank T. Hopkins, played by Viggo Mortensen, this epic action-adventure takes place during a 3,000 mile survival race across the Arabian Desert in 1890. PG-13. Movies 12.

**Jersey Girl:** Written and directed by Kevin Smith, film's about a music publicist (Ben Affleck) trying to balance work and fatherhood as a single parent. Also stars Jennifer Lopez, George Carlin, Liv Tyler, Jason Biggs. Raquel Castro is his independent daughter. PG-13. Movies 12.

**Man on Fire:** Denzel Washington as a security guard for a child who is kidnapped on his watch. He will have revenge. R. Movies 12.

**Mean Girls:** Lindsay Lohan plays a high-school student raised by zoologist parents in the African bush, who falls for a popular girl's ex-boyfriend. PG-13. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

**Passion of Christ, The (2004):** Mel Gibson film opens amid charges (denied) of anti-Semitism. A.O. Scott of *The New York Times* writes, "The Passion of the Christ" is so relentlessly focused on the savagery of Jesus' final hours that this film seems to arise less from love than from wrath, and to succeed more in assaulting the spirit than in uplifting it." Others call the graphic torture unwatchable. R. Movies 12.

**Prince and Me, The:** Stars Julia Stiles, Luke Mably. She's a pre-med student. He's the Crown Prince of Denmark. Also stars James Fox and Miranda Richardson. PG. Movies 12.

**Pulp Fiction:** The often-imitated 1994 Quentin Tarantino followup to *Reservoir Dogs* stars John Travolta, Samuel L. Jackson and Uma Thurman, with Amanda Plummer, Bruce Willis, Tim Roth, Eric Stoltz, Christopher Walken, Ving Rhames and Harvey Keitel in three violent stories of crime, lust and greed. A fabulous look at the everyday life of the criminal community, with terrific performances by Travolta and Jackson as the duo who pull all the stories together. Oscar for Tarantino's screenplay. R. Latente Bijou.

**Raising Helen:** Directed by Garry Marshall, starring Kate Hudson, John Corbett, Joan Cusack. After her sister and brother-in-law die in a car accident, a young woman (Hudson) becomes the guardian of their three children. PG-13. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

**Secret Window:** Psychotic (John Turturro) stalks writer (Johnny Depp), accusing him of stealing the ending to his story. David Koepp directs, story by Stephen King. Also stars Maria Bello, Timothy Hutton, Charles S. Dutton. PG-13. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

**Shrek 2:** Mike Myers returns as Shrek, Cameron Diaz is his new wife, Princess Fiona, and Eddie Murphy's his sidekick, Donkey. Now the newly-weds face Queen Lillian (Julie Andrews) and King Harold (John Cleese). Fairy godmother (Jennifer Saunders), Prince Charming (Rupert Everett) and the ferocious Puss in Boots (Antonio Banderas). So-so

sequel. Cinemark. Cinema World. **See review this issue.**

**Starsky & Hutch:** Ben Stiller is uptight Starsky, while Owen Wilson is laid back Ken "Hutch" Hutchinson in this remake of TV's undercover crime-fighters. With Vince Vaughn, Snoop Dogg, Juliette Lewis. PG-13. Movies 12.

**Troy:** Wolfgang Petersen directs the ancient Greek tale of the great warrior Achilles (Brad Pitt) and the lovers Paris (Orlando), Prince of Troy, and Helen (Diane Kruger), Queen of Sparta, whose passion starts a war that destroys a civilization. When Paris steals Helen from her husband, King Menelaus (Brendan Gleeson) of Sparta, and takes her to the walled city of Troy, Menelaus and his brother Agamemnon (Brian Cox) move against King Priam of Troy (Peter O'Toole) and Prince Hector (Eric Bana). R. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

**Van Helsing:** Monster killer Van Helsing (Hugh Jackman) teams up

with Kate Beckinsale in Transylvania to bring down Count Dracula (Richard Roxburgh). PG-13. Cinemark.

**What the Bleep Do We Know?** Through interviews with cutting-edge scientists and spiritual teachers, a brand new way of thinking about consciousness, intentionality and the ability to make a difference in the world emerges. But it begins with Amanda (Marlee Matlin). Highly recommended. NR. Bijou. **Online archives.**

**Whole Ten Yards, The:** Bruce Willis, Matthew Perry, Amanda Peet and Natsha Henstridge star in this comedy sequel. Willis is a retired hitman living the life of a happy homemaker until Mafioso mayhem ensues. PG-13. 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)

**Black Hawk Down:** Now available in high resolution superb DVD Ridley Scott directs this true story based on the mission-gone-wrong of American special forces in Somalia, 1993. Stars Josh Hartnett, Ewan McGregor, Ron Eldard and Sam Shepard. AFI award for best picture; academy nods for Scott, cinematography, sound, editing. Highest recommendations. R. **Online archives.**

**Nip/Tuck:** Television's frank series on two plastic surgeons, one an unrepentant womanizer, the other a troubled family man. First season, five-disc set includes all 13 episodes plus extras, including behind-the-scenes documentary, makeup effects, outtakes, deleted scenes. Highly recommended.

**Station Agent, The:** Tom McCarthy's excellent film about three people with little in common who become friends, surprise hit at Sundance 2003. Stars Peter Dinklage, who takes up residence in a rural town's old train depot and gets to know neighbors Patricia Clarkson and Bobby Cannavale. Acclaimed performances by all three. One of 2003's ten best films. DVD includes commentary by McCarthy, Dinklage, Clarkson and Cannavale, plus five deleted scenes. **Online archives.**

**Touching the Void:** In 1985, two daring young British climbers scaled the unclimbed west face of 20,853 foot Siula Grande in the Peruvian Andes. Coming down, a succession of events made their survival unlikely. Director Kevin Macdonald's brilliant and touching mixed documentary and re-enactment adventure film is the result. Highest recommendations. DVD includes three featurettes: making-of, what happened next, and "Return to Siula Grande." NR. **Online archives.**

**Wedding Banquet, The:** 1993 comedy about a stuffy, gay yuppie (Winston Chao) who decides to marry his artist tenant (May Chin) who needs a green card, in order to placate his traditional Chinese parents. Directed by Ang Lee (*Pushing Hands*). DVD extras include Lee and producer/co-writer James Schamus commentary on "A Forbidden Passion." In English. NR.

**Next Week: Bad Santa, The Line King: The Al Hirschfeld Story, The Lower Depths, Mama Roma (1962), Secret Window**