

Eagles All

Jesus in high school

SAVED!: Directed by Brian Dannelly. Written by Dannelly and Michael Urban. Produced by Sandy Stern, Michael Stipe, William Vince, Michael Ohoven. Cinematography, Bobby Bukowski. Editor, Pamela Martin. Production design, Tony Devenyi. Music, Christophe Beck. Costume, Wendy Chuck. Starring Jena Malone, Mandy Moore, Macaulay Culkin and Eva Amurri, with Patrick Fugit, Heather Matarazzo, Chad Faust, Martin Donovan and Mary-Louise Parker. MGM, United Artists, 2004. PG-13. 92 minutes.

I'd really hoped for something with a stronger satiric bite, but Brian Dannelly's teen comedy set at a suburban, private, Christian high-school is surprisingly toothless. The choice to pull his punches is disingenuous, because Cassandra (Eva Amurri), a potty-mouthed, rebellious, non-Christian, has a lot more to say than Dannelly's careful scripting allows. We must assume that the filmmaker lets Cassandra — such an appropriate name if you know your Greek characters — say just exactly as much as he wants said and no more. Too bad. As a Jewish outsider, this character surely has an interesting take on the whole Christian conformist movement.

Actually, there's very little here that you haven't seen in the other teen comedies of the season, such as *Mean Girls*. The unique feature is the Baptist, praise Jesus angle, and if you don't play in that court, the constant Christian message becomes annoying very quickly. I stayed for the whole movie,

but long before the end I quit hoping for a real breakthrough in the narrative.

Mary (Jena Malone) lives with her lonely, attractive mother, Lillian (Mary-Louise Parker), who may be sleeping with Pastor Skip (Martin Donovan), the principal of Eagle Christian Academy. (Their relationship is strictly off-screen, except for one kiss. Wow!) Mary has always loved the Lord, so when her boyfriend, Dean (Chad Faust), comes back from summer vacation and tells her he's gay, she believes it is her duty to save him by seducing him. Moreover, she persuades herself that Jesus has told her to do it. Oops.

Mary's best friend Hillary Faye (Mandy Moore) abandons her shortly after Dean is yanked out of school and sent off in disgrace. But Hillary's own brother, Roland (Macaulay Culkin), and his newfound friend Cassandra (Amurri) help Mary pick up the pieces of her life and go on. They discover her secret — she's pregnant — when they accidentally see her catching a bus outside Planned Parenthood.

Meanwhile, all the other plot twists proceed as expected, with one more element added for spice: Patrick (Patrick Fugit), Pastor Skip's son, who likes Mary but is wanted by Hillary Faye. It's an opportunity for Fugit to step out of the shadows cast by his brilliant turn as the naive, William, in Cameron Crowe's 2000 hit, *Almost Famous*.

The good thing about this large-cast film is that the primary characters don't sink into predictable, generic teens. Each keeps some

distinguishing small (or large) idiosyncratic trait. Hillary is the most stereotypical, but Moore enthusiastically embraces her character's Jesus-besotted behavior and throws herself into the saving game with gusto.

The most surprising character turn is Roland's, who changes deeply over the course of the film. An understated, solid performance by Culkin makes Roland's metamorphosis from Hillary Faye's alter-abled little brother to Cassandra's boyfriend believable. This role lets Culkin show us what he can do as a grownup.

Breaking no new ground, *Saved!* suffers

from muddled direction but is itself saved by several excellent performances. Eagle Christian Academy may or may not actually exist, but it's easy enough to imagine that such schools are encouraged by the current political agenda favoring faith-based institutions. Ultimately, the film shows how easy it is to program young people to believe in sentiments they don't have the experience to challenge. And that's scary.

Saved! is now playing at Cinemark. Recommended for its attempt to explore born-again high school culture, the film gets a B- in my book. **EW**



Roland (Macaulay Culkin), Cassandra (Eva Amurri) and Mary (Jena Malone) bond as the school outsiders.

movie clips

OPENING OR RETURNING:

Around the World in 80 Days: Jackie Chan stars in this remake that follows an eccentric London inventor, Phineas Fogg (Steve Coogan) who makes a very public bet then has to come through. Also stars Jim Broadbent, Cecile De France, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Kathy Bates, Rob Schneider. PG. Cinemark. Cinema World.

Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story: Can social rejects save their small local gym from gentrification? Only director Rawson Thurber and his stars Ben Stiller, Vince Vaughn, Christine Taylor and Rip Torn know for sure. PG-13. Cinema World. Cinemark.

Farmingville: Documentary into shocking hate-based attempted murders of two Mexican day laborers in suburban Long Island. Special Jury Award at Sundance. Directed by Catherine Tambini and Carlos Sandoval. "POV" at 10 pm on 6/22 on OPB.

Hellboy: Based on Mike Mignola's Dark Horse Comics series, this supernatural action adventure stars Ron Perlman, John Hut, Selma Blain and Doug Jones and is directed by Guillermo del Toro. Highly entertaining, sweet film. See it. Movies 12. PG-13. **Online archives.**

Kill Bill Vol. 1: Quentin Tarantino's first of two films was called the most violent film ever made in Hollywood. Stars Uma Thurman as the Bride, a woman with a mission: Kill Bill (David Carradine), her former boss and lover who betrayed her and murdered her family. With Lucy Liu, Daryl Hannah, LaTanya Richardson, Vivica A. Fox, Michael Madsen and Samuel L. Jackson. R. Latenite Bijou.

Mad Monkey Kung Fu: Kung Fu master Chen takes on the gangsters who crippled him after they slaughter his beloved pet money and sell his sister into prostitution. Director, choreographer, and leading man Lau Kar-leung, also the leading master of the genre, is at the peak of his creative prowess here. NR. Blurb courtesy of Latenite Bijou.

Moments: Short Israeli film series. At 7 pm on 6/19 in Washington Community Center.

New York Minute: Action comedy stars Mary-Kate Olsen and Ashley

Olsen as sisters on the loose in Manhattan. With Eugene Levy as a loony truant officer. PG. Movies 12.

Terminal: Steven Spielberg directs Tom Hanks as a tourist who has to live at Kennedy airport because his homeland disappeared in a civil war, so his passport is no good. Then he falls in love with Catherine Zeta-Jones. PG-13. Cinemark. Cinema World.

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

CONTINUING:

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. Cinemark.

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.

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

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.**

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

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.

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.

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.**

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.

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.**

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. **See review this issue.**

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 newlyweds 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. **Online archives.**

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.

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. **See review this issue.**

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. **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. Movies 12.

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

Bad Santa: Directed by Terry Zwigoff. The story of two con men who go on a road trip to malls dressed as Santa and his elf who rob the malls after hours. An 8-year-old teaches them the true meaning of Christmas. Right! Stars Billy Bob Thornton, Bernie Mac, Lauren Graham, John Ritter. R.

The Line King: The Al Hirschfeld Story: Award-winning documentary about caricaturist and artist Al Hirschfeld. Includes essay by NYTimes Michael Kimmelman. NR.

Lower Depths, The: Unique 2-disc set includes two film versions of Maxim Gorky's play. Jean Renoir made his version in 1936, with Jean Gabin, and Akira Kurosawa directed his in 1957, with Toshiro Mifune. Both versions include commentary.

Mama Roma (1962, Italy): One of director Pier Paolo Pasolini's great films. Stars Anna Magnani. DVD includes interviews with Bernardo Bertolucci, cinematographer Tonino Delli Colli and Pasolini biographer Enzo Siciliano, as well as an hour-long documentary about Pasolini and a 35-minute film by Pasolini about a director who sets out to make a film about the Passion of Jesus.

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.**

Woman is a Woman, A (1961, France): One of director Jean-Luc Godard's most famous films stars Anna Karina and Jean-Paul Belmondo. Extras include an early short film by Godard and excerpts from a French television interview with Karina and others.

Next Week: Barbershop 2, Blazing Saddles, Cold Mountain, Dracula: Dead and Loving It, The English Patient, The Perfect Score and Ragtime.