



WALT DISNEY PICTURES, PIXAR ANIMATION STUDIOS, 2004.

Hubris

Enough already!

THE INCREDIBLES: Written and directed by Brad Bird. Produced by John Walker. Executive producer, John Lasseter. Composer, Michael Giacchino. Production design, Lou Romano. Editor, Stephen Schaffer. Character design, Tony Fucile, Teddy Newton. Cinematography, Janet Lucroy, Patrick Lin, Andrew Jimenez. Starring voices of Craig T. Nelson, Holly Hunter, Samuel L. Jackson, Jason Lee, Sara Vowell, Spencer Fox and Brad Bird, with Elizabeth Pena, John Ratzenberger, Jean Sincere and Dominique Louis. Walt Disney Pictures. Pixar Animation Studios, 2004. PG. 121 minutes.

Sometimes solo, sometimes in a group, a family of superheroes fly off on a mission to save the world from evil in a swept-wing fighter jet that travels underwater as well as flying like a bat out of hell.

I'm grumpy about this plot, having seen several variations in the last couple of years. And 2004 has been a year of too many superheroes for me — Spider Man, Hellboy, Sky Captain and Team America — to say nothing of lesser deities who time-travel for fun and profit or those who practice magic. Superheroes are not (usually) mortal. They don't bleed, burn or drown when struck by a laser beam, out-of-control vehicle, train, bullet, knife, sword, bomb or what-have-you. All have superhuman abilities. They fly, hold their breath underwater impossibly long, run faster than a speeding bullet and often turn anatomical appendages into specialized weapons.

In this film, the Parr family takes it upon themselves to risk their lives to rid the world of evil. They include Bob, aka Mr. Incredible (Craig T. Nelson); his wife Helen, aka Elastigirl (Holly Hunter); their teen daughter, Violet (Sarah Vowell), who creates force fields; preadolescent son, Dash (Spencer Fox), who runs incredibly fast; and baby, Jack-Jack (Eli Fucile, Maeve Andrews), whose real powers are still

unfocused. Violet is shy but covers it up with teen angst; bored Dash puts a tack on his teacher's chair. Cute, huh?

Sure, the Parrs and their pals and enemies are animated. Not real. Not people. But thanks to Pixar Studio's clever animation, these characters have personalities. Like us, they communicate, fight with each other, eat breakfast, go to work or school, live in the suburbs. Clearly, these are Pixar's most fully realized human characters. But brilliant animation for what purpose? To show that being bigger, stronger, faster or more flexible than any one else makes you right and them wrong? Yikes!

As superheroes, the Parrs don't notice

whether they kill or injure civilians on their missions. They're like the young dudes and dudettes of *Team America*, who destroy the Louvre, the Sphinx, other people and other human landmarks in the way of their plan to annihilate faceless foes, headed by a strong evil person. No, not Kim Jong Il, but Buddy Pine, aka Syndrome (Jason Lee), a wannabe with the moral conscience of a hit man.

In *The Incredibles*, superheroes have been forced to go underground. They can no longer use their special powers because school teachers, lawyers, politicians and insurance executives "celebrate mediocrity," in Mr. Incredible's words. The big guy knows this because his alter ego, Bob Parr,

rages against the machine daily in his job as an insurance adjuster. Bob longs for the good old days when he was a full-time hero, not just a moonlighter listening to the police scanner for fun with his buddy, Lucius, aka Frozone (Samuel L. Jackson). The only character who understands the superhero's real need to return to the life — to be cool — is fashion maven Edna Mode (Brad Bird) aka E, who designs their costumes.

I'm troubled by the ideas expressed and suggested here. Is the movie about being reluctant to surrender youth to age or relegate past heroics to today's ordinariness? Does everyone secretly long to be a young man or woman going off to fight evil? Does the movie say to really young kids that might is always right, bigger and stronger is better, and being different is only OK if you're secretly an unstoppable power? The American way?

Like *Team America*, *The Incredibles* turns me off. I'm unable to put my finger on what filmmaker Brad Bird is saying. He's made a film that's visually interesting, and the action heroics to save the world are a white-knuckle race against the clock. But while Helen expresses warmth and thoughtfulness through her relationships with her husband and children, the little boy Dash is getting the message to "be like Daddy," and that sounds like a conservative invitation to be a warrior to me.

The Incredibles is now playing at Cinema World and Cinemark. You decide. I have: not recommended. **EW**



RON MANN, SPHINX PRODUCTIONS, 2003.

On the Road Again

Vegetarian bicyclists

GO FURTHER: Documentary produced and directed by Ron Mann. Writer, Solomon Vesta. Executive producers, Camera Planet, Robi Blumenstein and Daniel J. Victor. Editor, Robert Kennedy. Cinematography, Robert Fresco. Sound design, Mike Rosnick. Original score, Guido Luciani. Art director, Lynne Dalglish. Starring Woody Harrelson. Featuring Steve Clark, Joe Hickey, Tom Ballanco, Renee Loux Underkoffler, Jessica Chung, Joe Lewis, Sonia Farrell, Laura Louie and Ken Kesey. With musical performances by Bob Weir, Natalie Merchant, Anthony Kiedis, Michael Franti, Medeski, Martin & Wood, String Chees Incident and Dave Matthews. Sphinx Productions, 2003. NR. 80 minutes.

Life as a road trip with Woody Harrelson, barreling down coastal Highway 101 from Seattle to Los Angeles in the summer time: What a sweet trip! The bus burns hemp oil fuel, and the Merry Hempsters ride bicycles some or part of the time. The point of the trip is to get out the word about healthy living, eating right for the Earth, and supporting organic farming. This is not investigative journalism but a frankly not-balanced view of the environmental issues related to food and health.

Most days on the road, Woody rides his bicycle. Others ride with him, but you get the feeling that not everyone rides every day. You rarely see

lifestyle. I found Steve's style a little crude, particularly with a pretty college student he picks up along the way, seems interested in, then disses when she leaves the bus. What's that all about?

But basically, on this road trip, the men respect the women and vice versa, which is good. There are many early morning stretches and exercises, led by Jessica Chung, a yoga teacher and dance teacher from Seattle. The group's morning rituals remind me of the Oregon Country Fair in the old days, when only a small number of craftspeople camped out.

Music is good throughout. Look for your favorites here. I liked Dave Matthews over the final credits, in an acoustic version of *One Sweet World*.

The best shots of Woody are during his informal talks at college campuses — UO, San Francisco State, UC Berkeley and others. He's relaxed, informed, articulate and focused. And there's no doubt he's a strong believer in the way of life he and the others embrace on this journey. But his private life remains as closed at the end as at the beginning.

A lightweight movie, *Go Further* features the last interview with the late Ken Kesey, fun with the Pranksters, a downtown Eugene parade, a visit to Kesey's farm and a talk to students at the UO. Not a waste of time, it's a taste of a lifestyle that most of us won't sample. But for those who would, more power to you. **EW**