



# Flimsy

Has Christopher Guest met his match?

**FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:** Directed by Christopher Guest. Script and original music by Christopher Guest and Eugene Levy. Starring Ed Begley, Jr., Eugene Levy, Christopher Guest, Michael McKean, Catherine O'Hara, Parker Posey and Harry Shearer. Warner Independent Pictures, 2006. PG-13. 86 minutes. ★★☆☆☆

I'd like to suggest *Movieness* as an alternate title to *For Your Consideration*. The new satire of Hollywood by Christopher Guest and friends, *For Your Consideration* radiates movieness, meaning it's keenly aware of the film industry it so earnestly tries to lampoon. What it doesn't contain is funniness. *For Your Consideration* is a flimsy, filmsy mockumentary that too often misses the mark.

The Christopher Guest formula is by now widely familiar. Take a self-contained world of highly teasable enthusiasts — small town actors, say, or dog breeders — insert several dimwits and has-beens, introduce overwhelming disappointment, and present it as a documentary. Even Guest's weakest effort — 2003's *A Mighty Wind*, about a reunion of highly sensitive folk musicians — ultimately works because the concept is a precious escape from Hollywood filmmaking. Watching a Christopher Guest film is like watching early Woody Allen: There's a sense of discovery, of wanting to keep these stories to yourself. You marvel at how these movies ever got made. Now, turning to Hollywood as a subject, Guest seems overmatched.

*For Your Consideration* is the story of the making of *Home for Purim*, a 1940s Hebrew "period picture" destined to go unnoticed during awards season. As you might expect, the film-within-a-film is awful. Not to be confused with *Home for Punim* ("Home for a Face"), the movie consists largely of a dad (Harry Shearer) and his son (Christopher Moynihan) waiting for the prodigal daughter to return. When the daughter (Parker Posey) finally comes home, she arrives with her female lover (Rachael Harris), much to the disappointment of her dying mother (Catherine O'Hara).

The early scenes, in which the cast and

crew of *Purim* attempt to defend or assert their pathetic selves, are isolated and only inconsistently funny. As with all of Guest's characters, they are much, much further from glory than they realize. Delusions of grandeur are always at play in Guest's films, but in *For Your Consideration* they take center stage. When a rumor appears on the internet that *Home for Purim* might be Oscar-worthy, the entire production gets swept up in the hype.

For a little while, the laughs come steadily. The mock interview with producer Whitney (Jennifer Coolidge) reveals an archetype of dumb blonde vanity. The joint interview with the screenwriters Lane (Michael McKean) and Philip (Bob Balaban) shows their grasp of Purim to be tentative at best. Let's not forget Fred Willard as the co-host of *Entertainment Tonight* clone *Hollywood Now* (with the remarkable Jane Lynch doing a perfect Mary Hart spoof). Willard's breezy portrayal of an idiotic entertainment reporter, complete with faux Mohawk and outrageous costumes, will rank among his best.

The film peaks in a hilarious sit-down meeting between the studio executives and the writing/production team. The message from Sunfish Studios is, "Tone down some of the themes a little." In other words, make the film less Jewish. A long argument with overlapping dialogue ensues. The centerpiece of the film, the scene reveals much of what's wrong with Hollywood today: It's cowardly, prejudiced and afraid of actual culture.

After a jump-cut several months into the future, we learn that *Purim* is now called *Home for Thanksgiving*. The suits won. The film loses. The disorienting lurch breaks the fragile rhythm of *For Your Consideration*. More importantly, given how Guest usually exults in the tiny details of human failure, the harsh break feels like an ironic comeuppance, as if an actual studio stepped in and said, "Time to wrap this up." Hollywood gets the better of Guest here, in easily the most Hollywood of his movies. Let's hope the next time we see Guest and company, the material is more worthy of the concept. **EW**

# movie clips

**OPENING OR RETURNING:** **Before the Music Dies:** Film "tells the story of American music hanging in the balance," through interviews with musicians, writers, industry types and fans. With Dave Matthews, Elvis Costello, Calexico, Les Paul, Bonnie Raitt and more. Not rated. 6 pm Nov. 28, 182 Lillis, UO. Free. **Bobby:** Emilio Estevez directs a broad ensemble cast, all at the Ambassador Hotel on a fateful night in 1968, whose concerns run from politics to love and back again. With Anthony Hopkins, Demi Moore, Elijah Wood, Lindsay Lohan, Martin Sheen, Sharon Stone and more. R. Opens Nov. 23. Cinemark. Cinema World. **Deck the Halls:** Matthew Broderick and Danny DeVito face off when DeVito's character decides to build the world's biggest holiday light display. With Kristin David, Kristin Chenoweth and Alia Shawkat. PG. Opens Nov. 22. Cinema World. Cinemark. **Déja Vu:** As far as we can tell, this Jerry Bruckheimer-produced, Tony Scott-directed thriller has something to do with traveling four days back in the future to stop a boat exploding. Or maybe it's just *looking* four days back. Clever preview, either way. Stars Denzel Washington and Val Kilmer. PG-13. Opens Nov. 22. Cinema World. Cinemark. **Fanny and Alexander:** Theatrical cut of Ingmar Bergman's autobiographical tale of two Swedish children growing up with their mother and her new bishop husband. R. 6:30 pm Nov. 24, Unity of the Valley. Free. **For Your Consideration:** Christopher Guest's (*Waiting for Guffman*) new mockumentary takes on the movie business, as the cast and crew of a hopeless little film get swept up in internet-generated Oscar buzz. With Catherine O'Hara, Parker Posey, Fred Willard and the rest of the Guest gang. PG-13. Opens Nov. 22. Bijou. **See review this issue.** **Fountain, The:** Fearless director Darron Aronofsky (*Pi*, *Requiem for a Dream*) spent years making this ambitious film, which follows three couples in different times periods, all played by Hugh Jackman and Rachel Weisz, all on difficult quests. PG-13. Opens Nov. 22. Cinema World. Cinemark. **Grudge 2, The:** Amber Tamblyn (*Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*) stars as the little sister of Sarah Michelle Gellar's character from the first film, who's gone off searching for big sis. Haunted houses and creepy children abound. PG-13. Opens Nov. 22. Movies 12. **Guardian, The:** A hotshot young Coast Guard rescue swimmer (Ashton Kutcher) learns how to be a real hero from a retired swimmer who lost his team in an accident (Kevin Costner). PG-13. Opens Nov. 22. Movies 12. **Harlan County, U.S.A.:** Barbara Kopple (*Shut Up and Sing*) directed this look at Harlan County, the site of some of the worst labor violence in American history, and the issues faced by its residents. PG. 7 pm Nov. 29, 180 PLC, UO. Free. **Illusionist, The:** In the first of the year's two magician movies, Edward Norton plays a Venetian stage magician caught up with an old love (Jessica Biel), a dogged inspector (Paul Giamatti) and a crown prince (Rufus Sewell). PG-13. Opens Nov. 22. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (9/7) **Not Too Distant Past, A:** A selection of films and videos addressing America's historical amnesia and its present-day relevance. With Marc Moscato's "The More Things Stay the Same," Vanessa Renwick's "Britton, South Dakota" and "Portrait #2: Trojan" and Travis Wilkerson's *An Injury to One*. 7 pm Nov. 30, Fir Room, EMU, UO. Free. **Pickaxe:** Director's cut of the film, about a group of activists protecting old growth forest in Warner Creek, includes deleted footage and uses a different narrator. With

special guest speakers. 6:30 pm Nov. 29, 110 Willamette, UO. Free. **Queen, The:** Stephen Frears' movie about the shifting desires and threats of Britain's public and the differences in Tony Blair's (Michael Sheen) and Queen Elizabeth II's (Helen Mirren) responses to the death of Princess Diana is a grand, usually subtle fiction that gets at a lot of truth. PG-13. Opens Nov. 24. Bijou. **School for Scoundrels:** NYC meter "maid" Roger (Jon Heder) takes a confidence-building class led by Dr. P (Billy Bob Thornton). The surer of himself Roger becomes, the more competitive his instructor gets. PG-13. Opens Nov. 22. Movies 12. **Syd Barrett:** 2002 BBC documentary helps sets the record straight on the elusive Pink Floyd member. Part of the "In-Concert" series. Bijou LateNite. **Tenacious D in the Pick of Destiny:** Tenacious D (Jack Black and Kyle Gass) head off on a musical adventure obtain the Pick of Destiny and thereby become the Greatest Band on Earth. It's a biopic! Sorta. R. Cinemark. **When the Sea Rises:** Winner of the 2005 César (the French equivalent of the Oscar) for Best First Film, the movie follows an actress as she takes her one-woman show across the country. In French with English subtitles. Not rated. Bijou.

**Films open the Friday following EW publication date unless otherwise noted. See archived reviews at [www.eugeneweekly.com](http://www.eugeneweekly.com)**

**CONTINUING:** **America: Freedom to Fascism:** Director Aaron Russo's film explores the erosion of civil liberties in America. The film received a standing ovation at the Cannes Film Festival; CBS Radio said it "Makes *Fahrenheit 9/11* look like *Bambi*." 7 pm Nov. 30, Cozmic Pizza. Free. **Babel:** The last fim of a thematic trilogy for director Alejandro González Iñárritu follows four emotional, affecting storylines on three continents, exploring their connections and breakdowns. Starring Brad Pitt, Cate Blanchett, Gael García Bernal and astonishing newcomer Rinko Kikuchi. R. Cinemark. ★★☆☆☆ (11/9) **Barneyard:** When the farmer's away, the cows will ... order pizzas and throw a party? Don't think too much about this animated feature or you might begin to wonder why Otis (Kevin James) has udders. PG. Movies 12. **Borat:** Sacha Baron Cohen (of "Da Ali G Show") plays the title character, a Kazakhstani reporter creating a documentary while road-tripping across the U.S. The subtitle, "Cultural Learnings of American for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan," ought to tell you something. R. Cinema World. Cinemark. ★★☆☆☆ (11/9) **Casino Royale:** Bond gets blond as Daniel Craig (*Munich*, *Infamous*) steps into the role in a rebooting of the whole franchise, turning it into something darker and, well, better. With Judi Dench and Eva Green. PG-13. Cinema World. Cinemark (also showing in digital). **See review this issue.** **Departed, The:** Martin Scorsese's new film is a remake of the 2002 Hong Kong thriller *Infernal Affairs*. Leonardo DiCaprio plays a cop undercover in the mob; Matt Damon is the gangster mole in the police force. Jack Nicholson and Mark Wahlberg round out the stellar cast. R. Cinemark. ★★☆☆☆ (10/12) **Flags of Our Fathers:** Clint Eastwood's new film explores the story behind the iconic image of the flag-raising on Iwo Jima during WWII. "A film of awesome power and blistering provocation," says *Rolling Stone*. R. Nov. 22 only, Cinemark. **Flicka:** The remarkably ageless Alison Lohman (*Matchstick Men*) once again plays a teen, this time

one who would rather work on her father's ranch (and work with wild mustang Flicka) than go to college. PG. Movies 12. **Flushed Away:** Aardman Features (*Wallace and Gromit*) teams up with Dreamworks for the story of a pampered pet mouse (Hugh Jackman) who finds himself, after a trip down the drain, in London's bustling rodent underground. With Kate Winslet, Ian McKellen and Jean Reno. PG. Cinemark. **Happy Feet:** Warner Bros. chases some *March of the Penguins* dough with this animated film, starring Elijah Wood as a cute lil' guy in search of his soul mate. (OK, so they were working on this one first. Still.) With Robin Williams, Hugh Jackman, Nicole Kidman. PG. Cinema World. Cinemark. **Jackass: Number Two:** Johnny Knoxville, Steve-O, Bam Margera and crew regroup for more nasty, brutal, naked, crude, snortingly funny pranks and stunts. Don't try this at home. R. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (10/5) **Let's Go to Prison:** Will Arnett, better known as Gob on *Arrested Development*, winds up in jail with Chi McBride and Dax Sheperd — the latter having connived to get him there. Frankly, if it's got Arnett, that's all we really need to know. Hopefully. R. Cinemark. **Man of the Year:** Supposedly, Robin Williams' unlikely president in this film, a satirical comedian who ran as a joke, is partly based on Jon Stewart. Which is odd, because the previews aren't nearly as funny as "The Daily Show." With Christopher Walken and Lewis Black. PG-13. Movies 12. **Marine, The:** The WWE's John Triton plays a Marine who, upon his return (against his will!) from Iraq, sees his wife kidnapped by a gang leader and ... no. Just no. PG-13. Movies 12. **Monster House:** Three kids face off against a creepy neighborhood house that's something other than haunted. With the voices of Maggie Gyllenhaal, Steve Buscemi and Jon Heder. PG. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (7/20) **Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest:** Johnny Depp reprises his role as over-the-top swashbuckler Jack Sparrow in the second *Pirates* film. Orlando Bloom and Keira Knightley are the in-love eye candy, with Bill Nighy all betentacled as watery bad guy Davy Jones. PG-13. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (7/13) **Prestige, The:** Two magicians (Christian Bale, Hugh Jackman) see their slight friendship turn to rivalry in Christopher Nolan's (*Batman Begins*) new film. Competition grows as the men do, each trying to outdo the other's performance. With Scarlett Johansson, Michael Caine and David Bowie. PG-13. Cinemark. ★★☆☆☆ (10/26) **Santa Clause 3, The:** Santa (Tim Allen) faces off against Jack Frost (Martin Short), who's trying to take over Christmas. G. Cinemark. **Saw 3:** Scary clown-faced villain Jigsaw is on his deathbed. Yeah, right. There's something about a doctor who has to keep Jigsaw alive and a former victim working on a plot of his own, but this money-making B-movie franchise doesn't need us to tell you it's going to be nasty, scary and gory. R. Cinemark. **Stranger Than Fiction:** Harold Crick (Will Ferrell) begins to hear a voice (Emma Thompson) narrating his life — and he doesn't like where the story's going. Marc Forster's (*Finding Neverland*) new film has a stellar cast and an intriguing premise; we sincerely hope this one can deliver. PG-13. Cinema World. Cinemark. ★★☆☆☆ (11/16) **Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby:** Will Ferrell and NASCAR. What more do you need to know? OK, well, Ricky Bobby (Ferrell) and his racing partner face a new challenge when a French Formula One driver (Sacha Baron Cohen) arrives on the scene. PG-13. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (8/10)