

Hearts at 60 Below

Sweet Land mixes lutefisk and love

SWEET LAND: Written and directed by Ali Selim. Inspired by a short story by Will Weaver. Music, Mark Orton. Starring Elizabeth Reaser, Tim Guinee, Alan Cumming, John Heard, Alex Kingston, Ned Beatty and Lois Smith. Forward Entertainment, 2006. PG. 110 minutes. ★★☆☆☆

Let's get right to it: *Sweet Land* is a sweet movie. It takes a certain kind of confidence to dub your film "A Love Story" in this fairly cynical day and age, but *Sweet Land* actually is such a thing: a quiet, gentle story about building love and trust, set in the sprawling farmlands of 1920s Minnesota.

Inge Altenberg (Elizabeth Reaser), a young German woman, arrives in Minnesota to marry a man she's never met. Speaking only a tiny bit of English, without proper documentation and assumed to be Norwegian on account of her originating address in Norway, Inge runs into problems from the start. She mistakes her intended's chatty friend Frandsen (Alan Cumming) for the man she's supposed to marry, and Minister Sorrensen (John Heard) won't marry her to Olaf Torvik (Tim Guinee) for fear she might be a spy, or at least a troublesome influence. Still, it could be worse; a young Norwegian woman Inge meets at the train station arrives bearing a letter she can't read — one that told her not to come.

Ali Selim's film is set with-in a double set of future bookends, one at Olaf's death, as Inge sits with her grandson and a forgetful Frandsen, and one at Inge's own death, when that grandson is grown up and facing the decision of whether to sell the old family farm. The elder Inge is played by Lois Smith, whose kind face and caring demeanor say much about Inge's years with Olaf.

Sweet Land moves easily between the past and two futures, often trailing from an old photo or a turn of the head from one era to the next. The graceful time-shifts are part of the film's impressive style. With lovely use of color and spare but cozy sets, Selim discovers a similar beauty in the wallpaper of a farmhouse kitchen and the seemingly endless gold of a cornfield. The attention paid to the everyday moment — baking a pie, har-

vesting a field, feeding pigs — is entrancing.

When the wedding doesn't happen, Inge is shuttled off to live with Frandsen's sprawling family, as it wouldn't be proper for her to stay at Olaf's house. But she makes her way there anyway (Olaf, knowing his neighbors better, goes to sleep in the barn). Gradually, Olaf comes to welcome her company. He could use the help with his farm; Olaf's catchphrase is "Banking and farming don't mix." The negative results of that mix are painfully,

perfectly illustrated, as are the societal pressures to conform and the ultimately tight-knit nature of the farm community. But the weightier issues, timely as they remain, play second fiddle to the beautifully illustrated connection that builds between Olaf and Inge as they work side by side, each slowly moving into the other's orbit. *Sweet Land* tells not only the story of a lifelong love, but a story of family, both the kind you're born into and the kind you choose.

Sweet Land opens Friday, March 2 at the Bijou

movie clips

OPENING OR RETURNING:

Animal House: National Lampoon's *Animal House* filmed in Lane County in the fall of 1977, at locations that include Main Street in Cottage Grove and UO campus. R. March 7, VRC Stadium 15.

Arthur and the Invisibles: In this animated feature, 10-year-old Arthur goes in search of a magical land after finding a note left by his grandfather. Directed by Luc Besson (*The Fifth Element*). PG. March 6, VRC Stadium 15.

Barnyard: 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. March 5-7, VRC Stadium 15.

Black Snake Moan: *Hustle and Flow* director Craig Brewer returns with this story of a nymphomaniac young woman (Christina Ricci) who, after a wild night, is taken in by Laz (Samuel L. Jackson), a reformed bluesman determined to set her straight. R. Cinemark.

Curious George: The Man in the Yellow Hat (Will Ferrell) tries his best to tame Curious George in this animated version of the beloved children's series. G. March 5-7, VRC Stadium 15.

Devil Wears Prada, The: Meryl Streep stars as demanding, high-powered fashion magazine editor Miranda Priestley, whose new assistant (Anne Hathaway) is fresh from college and totally clueless about fashion. PG-13. March 5, VRC Stadium 15. ONLINE ARCHIVES.

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. March 6, VRC Stadium 15.

Freedom Writers: Hilary Swank stars as a real-life teacher who made a difference in an inner-city high school through an ambitious writing project. PG13. Movies 12.

Garfield: A Tail of Two Kitties: Bill Murray returns as the voice of the once-somewhat-classic Garfield, who follows his owner Jon (Breckin Meyer) to London. PG. March 5-7, VRC Stadium 15.

Gridiron Gang: In a variation on at least a dozen other inspirational

sports movies, The Rock plays a counselor at a juvenile detetion facility who teaches his young charges life lessons via football. PG-13. March 5-7, VRC Stadium 15.

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. March 5-7, VRC Stadium 15.

Happily N'Ever After: Sigourney Weaver, voicing an evil queen who ruins Fairy Tale Land, faces off against unlikely resistance leader Sarah Michelle Gellar in this painfully punctuated tale. PG. Movies 12.

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.) PG. ACADEMY AWARD: BEST ANIMATED FEATURE. March 5-7, VRC Stadium 15.

Lunafest: Fundraising film festival promotes awareness of women's issues and showcases women filmmakers. Proceeds benefit Womenspace. 7 pm March 7, 240A McKenzie Hall, UO. \$10, \$7 stu.

Open Season: Sony breaks into the animation game with the story of a clueless grizzly bear (Martin Lawrence) whose friend Elliot (Ashton Kutcher) lures him into the wild life. PG. March 5-7, VRC Stadium 15.

Prestige, The: Two magicians (Christian Bale, Hugh Jackman) see their slight friendship turn to rivalry in Christopher Nolan's (*Batman Begins*) enthralling film. With Scarlett Johansson, Michael Caine and David Bowie. PG13. March 5-7, VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆☆ (10/26/06)

Pursuit of Happyness, The: Will Smith stars as a down-on-his-luck father who strives to make it as a stockbroker while facing eviction and raising his son (Smith's real-life son Jaden). PG13. March 5-7, VRC Stadium 15.

Quiet Flows the Don: A Russian classic that follows the story of Grigory Melekhov through the Russian Revoulution, the beginning of WWI and the trials of young love. Part 2 of 3. In Russian with English subtitles. 7 pm March 6, 111 Pacific, UO. Free.

Rocky Balboa: When a computer simulation shows that the young Rocky would likely have taken down the current champion, the aging

Rocky (Sylvester Stallone) agrees to an exhibition bout. PG. Movies 12. March 5-7, VRC Stadium 15.

Song for Martin: A concertmaster and composer fall in love but find their relationship challenged when Martin, the composer, is diagnosed with Alzheimer's. In Swedish with English subtitles. 7 pm March 2, 221 McKenzie, UO. Free.

Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter ... and Spring: Exquisitely beautiful and very human drama, starring director Kim Ki-duk, is entirely set on and around a tree-lined lake where a tiny Buddhist monastery floats on a raft amidst a breathtaking landscape. 7 pm March 8, Int'l Resource Center, EMU, UO. Free. ONLINE ARCHIVES.

Stand by Me: River Phoenix's film debut as one of four 12-year old boys who discover a dead body on their trek into the Oregon woods. Highly recommended. R. March 7, VRC Stadium 15.

Stomp the Yard: A troubled street dancer from L.A. finds himself a hot commodity among the step dancing teams of two fraternities at a university in Atlanta. PG13. Movies 12.

Sweet Land: Ali Selim's lyrical film follows the story of a young German woman who arrives in Minnesota to marry a quiet Norwegian farmer. The insularity of the tight-knit community proves both trouble and blessing in this stylishly filmed, heartfelt love story. PG. Bijou. **See review this issue.**

Swing Time: Roger Ebert calls this "the best of the Astaire/Rogers films." Screening will be followed by a conversation with Diane Retallack of the Eugene Concert Choir. 7 pm March 4, DIVA. Free.

Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby: 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. March 5-7, VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆☆ (8/10/06)

Wild Hogs: What kind of dirt did the producers have on William H. Macy, John Travolta, Tim Allen and Martin Lawrence to get them to appear in this male-bonding, midlife crisis flick with a mortifying trailer? PG13. Cinema World, Cinemark.

Without Limits: Robert Towne (*Chinatown, Personal Best*) directed this tale of the UO's great 1970s track

star, Steve Prefontaine (Billy Crudup). Script does justice to both the man and his great coach, mentor and sometimes adversary, Bill Bowerman (Donald Sutherland). PG-13. March 7, VRC Stadium 15.

Zodiac: David Fincher (*Seven, Fight Club*) directs this take on the story of the notorious Zodiac killer, who haunted the Bay Area in the 1970s. Jake Gyllenhaal, Mark Ruffalo and Robert Downey Jr. are among the men fixated on solving the case. R. Cinema World, Cinemark.

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

CONTINUING:

Amazing Grace: Ioan Gruffudd stars as British abolitionist William Wilberforce in a solid but uninspired film directed by Michael Apted, whose resumé includes everything from the *49 Up* documentary series to Bond entry *The World Is Not Enough*. PG13. Cinemark.

Astronaut Farmer, The: Billy Bob Thornton plays the title character in this based-on-a-true-story feelgood film about a feller building a rocket in his barn. With Virginia Madsen and Bruce Dern. PG. Cinemark.

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. ACADEMY AWARD: BEST ORIGINAL SCORE. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (11/9/06)

Breach: Dramatic thriller follows Eric O'Neill (Ryan Phillippe) in his new job: secretly keeping an eye on Robert Hanssen (Chris Cooper), a government employee being investigated as a suspected mole. With Laura Linney. PG13. Cinemark.

Bridge to Terabithia: Adaptation of the much-loved children's book by Katherine Paterson, in which two lonely kids create a fantasyland for themselves. Despite the fantasy-film feel of the trailer, the film is said to be very loyal to the book. PG. Cinama World, Cinemark.

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. PG13. Movies 12. March 5, VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆☆ (11/22/06)

Children of Men: Clive Owen and Julianne Moore star in this highly praised adaptation of P.D. James' novel, which envisions a troubled near future where no more children are being conceived. Directed by Alfonso Cuarón (*Y tu mamá también*). R. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (1/11)

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. With Jack Nicholson and Mark Wahlberg. R. ACADEMY AWARDS: BEST DIRECTOR; BEST PICTURE; FILM EDITING; ADAPTED SCREENPLAY. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (10/12/06)

Eragon: Adaptation of young novelist Christopher Paolini's first thick tome stars John Malkovich as an apparently campy evil king. Newcomer Edward Speelers plays the title character, who bonds with a dragon named Saphira and, um, saves the world? Or at least the kingdom. Just a guess. PG13. Movies 12. March 5, VRC Stadium 15.

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. Movies 12. March 6, VRC Stadium 15.

Ghost Rider: What did they do to Nicolas Cage's face? He looks like he lost at least 10 years to play the titular hero, whose long-ago deal with the devil forces him to hunt rogue demons at night. PG13. Cinema World, Cinemark.

Last King of Scotland, The: At long last, Eugeneans can see Forest Whitaker's highly-praised performance as Idi Amin in Kevin MacDonald's new(ish) film. With James McAvoy as the (fictional) young doctor who becomes Amin's personal physicial until his eyes are opened to the dictator's brutal actions. R. ACADEMY AWARD: FOREST

WHITAKER, BEST ACTOR. Cinema World. ★★☆☆☆ (2/1)

Music and Lyrics: Hugh Grant is back in scruffy, lovable mode as a washed-up pop star who has a new chance at fame — if he can just write the right song for a young diva. Drew Barrymore plays his "plant lady," who has a flair for words. PG13. Cinema World, Cinemark.

Night at the Museum: When down-on-his-luck Larry (Ben Stiller) gets a job as the night guard at a museum, he sure doesn't expect the exhibits to come alive at night. There's something very *Jumanji* about this. PG. Movies 12. **Norbit:** Oscar nominee Eddie Murphy plays both the nerdy title character and his overweight, possessive fiancée. The trailer hurts us, and so does the fact that Thandie Newton is in this movie. PG13. Cinemark.

Notes on a Scandal: Judi Dench and Cate Blanchett deliver outstanding performances in a tangled story of infidelity, jealousy and power that's one of the best films of 2006. R. Bijou. ★★☆☆☆ (2/8)

Number 23, The: After discovering a book that seems to be about his own life, Walter Sparrow (Jim Carrey) gets obsessed with the number 23 and goes a little crazy in inconsistent director Joel Schumacher's messy, jumbled new film. R. Cinema World, Cinemark. **See review this issue.**

Pan's Labyrinth: Writer-director Guillermo del Toro delivers a beautifully wrought, sometimes excruciating film that follows a young girl though her adventures in a fantastic otherworld — and through a difficult, frightening existence in this one. In Spanish with English subtitles. ACADEMY AWARDS: CINEMATOGRAPHY; ART DIRECTION. R. Bijou. Cinemark. ★★☆☆☆ (2/8)

Peter Tosh: Live at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1979. Also featuring Tosh in Brazil in 1980. Part of the In-Concert Series. Bijou LateNite.

Reno 911: Miami: The cast of the Comedy Central show (including Carrie Kinney and Thomas Lennon) heads to Miami to thwart terrorist attacks on spring break. R. Cinema World, Cinemark.

Spike & Mike's Sick & Twisted Animation: The 25-year-old series of weird and wild animation hits town with a new bunch of films. Not rated. Bijou LateNite.