

First, Do No Harm

Say ahh to Michael Moore's new film

SICKO: Written, Directed and Starring Michael Moore. Cinematography, Christoph Vitt. Music, Erin O'Hara. The Weinstein Company, 2007. PG-13. 113 minutes. ★★☆☆☆

To his detractors, Michael Moore is the Round Mound of Sound, a man who exploits the case histories of the browbeaten for maximum shock and exposure. It wasn't always this way. He was largely unknown following the release of *Roger and Me*, his devastating look at the death of Flint, Michigan, the town where Moore grew up. But Moore found his voice with *Bowling for Columbine* and a national following to boot, one he relied upon to support the lively but chaotic *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Much of the criticism that followed was politically motivated, making it irrelevant, to my mind, to his work as a filmmaker. The problem is, Moore the filmmaker often plays straight into his critics' hands, using his camera as a virtual tissue for the tear-stained eyes of the suffering. When other directors cut away, Moore zooms in.

Moore is up to his usual hijinks in *Sicko*, his documentary about the American health care system. *Sicko* is a shot of *Fahrenheit* with a tall chaser of *Columbine*: in other

words, it's a broadly-drawn attack that blue and red states can agree upon. When it works, which is more often than not, it makes you want to storm the nearest Kaiser Permanente and tear it down, brick by brick. (In one of *Sicko*'s most powerful moments, we hear President Nixon endorsing the concept of HMOs, which soon after became a reality. Thanks, Dick.) When *Sicko* doesn't work, you wonder if Moore is stretching the truth a little, given how carefree he's proven to be in the past. As with all of Moore's films, *Sicko* can take itself too seriously; Moore is at his best when he's using music and humor for emphasis, something he does in *Sicko* only after a brooding opening sequence.

We don't need Moore to tell us the U.S. health care system is broken. We all know, either directly or indirectly, about the rising costs, the labyrinthine paperwork and the increasing trend toward denial of payment. Moore's genius is for putting a light to the



Moore on a search for health care in England

enormous ironies that get secreted away by people in power. To give just one example from *Sicko*, Moore learns that prisoners at Guantanamo Bay get better health care than the 9/11 cleanup crew. Incensed, Moore travels to Cuba to investigate, taking members of the cleanup crew with him. In fact, Moore travels quite a bit in *Sicko*, visiting England, France and Canada — all countries with nationalized health care — where the citizens react first with laughter, then pity.

Moore isn't content merely to examine our failing health care. *Sicko* touches upon child care, college tuition, student protests

and the Iraq war, to varying effect. There's an element of exploitation to Moore's style, one that reminds me of a less gifted Sascha Baron Cohen (*Borat*). But what comes across in *Sicko* isn't the statistical measurement of our failure. (Although learning that Cubans spend \$1 on health care for every \$40 dollars spent in America — with better results — was just a little dispiriting.) What comes across is the pluck and wisdom of the afflicted, especially their ongoing devotion to a country that has betrayed them. When Moore is out of the way, their stories come shining through. **EW**

movie clips

OPENING OR RETURNING:

Birds, The: Alfred Hitchcock's classic thriller guaranteed to change the way you look at our feathered friends. For middle and high school youth at Downtown Eugene Public Library Thursday 7/5 at 1pm or at Sheldon Branch Eugene Public Library Friday at 6 pm.

Delta Farce: Larry the Cable Guy, Bill Engvall and DJ Qualls star in this bit of nonsense about a group of dudes who accidentally wind up in the military — then are accidentally ejected from an Iraq-bound plane, winding up in Mexico. PG13. Movies 12.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix: Um...Do you really not know what this one's about? Muggles and wizards, magic and rebellion, special effects & all starts at the witching hour of midnight next Tuesday 7/10 (technically Wednesday 7/11) — so grab your pointy hats and wands and venture out into the moonlight. PG13. VRC Stadium 15, Cinemark 17.

License to Wed: Robin Williams stars in this silly little summer fluff of a romantic comedy about love and marriage...it's light, it's kinda funny, it's probably air conditioned. Also starring Mandy Moore and John Krasinski. PG13. VRC Stadium 15, Cinemark 17.

Paprika: Satoshi Kon's dreamy anime. R. Bijou. See review this issue.

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

CONTINUING:

1408: This adaptation of a Steven King short story, which stars John Cusack as a man alone in a horribly haunted hotel room, is getting surprisingly good reviews; *Entertainment Weekly* said it's "reassuringly old-school gothic." With Samuel L. Jackson, directed by Mikael Håfström. PG13. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

28 Weeks Later: Six months after the "rage virus" tore through Britain, the U.S. Army claims the coast is clear and the country can be rebuilt. All begins well but shortly goes to hell — as does the movie. R. Movies 12. ★☆☆☆☆ (5/17)

300: Super-stylized, derivative and overbaked film, based on Frank Miller's graphic novel, about the Battle of Thermopylae, when King Leonidas (Gerard Butler) led 300 apparently half-naked Spartans against the massive army of Persia. R. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (3/15)

After the Wedding: Danish director Susanne Bier brings depths to her beautiful, emotional film, which tells the story of a man who discovers unexpected connections between his life and that of a Copenhagen philanthropist. R. Bijou. ★★☆☆☆ (6/21)

Are We Done Yet?: Nick (Ice Cube) and Suzanne (Nia Long) and two kids return in this sequel to *Are We There Yet?*, in which Nick's new house in the 'burbs is more work than it's worth. PG. Movies 12.

Blades of Glory: Ricky Bobby and Napoleon Dynamite... er, Will Ferrell and Jon Heder star in the story of two disgraced figure skaters who discover a way they can compete again: by skating together. Spandex and bad hair abound. PG13. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (4/12)

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. Movies 12.

Cannibal: The Musical: Trey Parker (*Orgazmo*, *South Park*) wrote and directed this deadpan musical parody that at its core is about Alfred Packer, the only man in the country ever convicted of cannibalism. *Variety* called it "a pitch-perfect sendup of hackneyed lyrics and irrationally joyous choreography." NR. Bijou LateNite.

Disturbia: Under a three-month house arrest, teenager Kale (Shia LaBeouf) spies on the homes around him — which leads to meeting the hot girl next door and, you know, figuring out that the creepy neighbor might be up to something nasty. PG13. Movies 12.

Evan Almighty: Steve Carrell takes the starring role in this sequel to *Bruce Almighty*. Now, God (Morgan Freeman) wants Evan (Carrell), a former newscaster turned Congressman, to build an ark. Boy, that's gonna involve a lot of critters. PG. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Evening: Pulitzer Prize winner Michael Cunningham (*The Hours*) adapted Susan Minot's novel for the screen; a striking cast, including Claire Danes, Toni Collette, Natasha Richardson, Meryl Streep and Glenn Close, star as women connected through secrets and love. PG13. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer: Reed Richards, Ben Grimm and Sue and Johnny Storm face off with the shiny guy who rides an equally shiny surfboard — and leaves destruction in his wake. PG13. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Fracture: Director Gregoy Hoblit, who brought Edward Norton to our attention in 1996's *Primal Fear*, brings Ryan Gosling (*Half Nelson*) back to the mainstream as an assistant D.A. working to get a suspected murderer (Anthony Hopkins) convicted. R. Movies 12.

Hot Fuzz: The team that brought us the wondrous, gory *Shaun of the Dead* returns with *Hot Fuzz*, in which the awesomest London cop ever (Simon Pegg) is sent to a sleepy village so he'll stop making his superiors look bad. 'Course, other stuff happens. With Jim Broadbent and pretty much every hysterical Brit working in film. R. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (4/26)

Invisible, The: A young man attacked and left for dead (Justin Chatwin) tries desperately to win his way out of limbo by discovering his killer's identity. PG13. Movies 12.

Knocked Up: Judd Apatow follows *The 40-Year-Old Virgin* with a sweet yet still raunchy comedy about the unwanted pregnancy that occurs when up-and-coming journalist Alison (Katherine Heigl of *Grey's Anatomy*) has a one-night stand with slacker Ben (Seth Rogen). R. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆☆ (6/7)

Live Free or Die Hard: Justin Long — yes, he of the Mac ads — joins Bruce Willis for this fourth chapter in the *Die Hard* franchise, in which a bad-die attacks the U.S.'s infrastructure over the 4th of July weekend. PG13. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Mr. Sean's Cartoon Club: Crazy, weird and old cartoons featuring Betty Boop, Felix, Superman and more. Noon-1:30 pm July 1. Bijou. \$4.

Ocean's 13: The formula doesn't change much for the third *Ocean's* outing: Suave stars have a grand old time concocting heists, executing plans and looking good in suits. But the charm is wearing thin. With George Clooney, Brad Pitt, Matt Damon and a bunch of other folks. PG13. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆☆ (6/14)

Paris, Je T'aime: 18 directors from around the world offer short films, each set in a different Paris neighborhood, each exploring love, loss and the city of light. It's a mixed bag of stories, but an interesting collection of filmmakers, from Alfonso Cuarón to Gus Van Sant to Walter Salles, makes it hard to entirely pass up. R. Bijou. ★★☆☆☆ (6/28)

Pink Floyd: The Wall: The "In-Concert" series presents *The Wall* — the entire album performed live on Pink Floyd's 1980 tour. Professionally filmed and never before seen. Final film of the series. Not rated. Bijou LateNite.

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End: Captain Jack and crew are back for the third — and what one might hope is the final — *Pirates* movie (which has something to do with saving Jack from the Land of the Dead and facing off with the Dutch East India Company). A warning to soda buyers: It's two hours and 48 minutes long. PG13. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Ratatouille: The latest animated film from Pixar is directed by Brad Bird (whose *The Iron Giant* is too often overlooked) and concerns a big-dreaming rat who wants to be a chef. When he makes a deal with a garbage boy, the culinary world of Paris gets far more than it ever imagined. G. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Shrek the Third: When Shrek's father-in-law kicks the bucket, the ogre finds himself the reluctant king of Far Far Away. His only hope of getting out of the job? His wife's slacker cousin. PG. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Sicko: Michael Moore follows *Fahrenheit 9/11* with this take on the U.S.'s healthcare and insurance systems. "An affecting and entertaining dissection of the American health care industry, showing how it benefits the few at the expense of the many," said *Variety*. PG13. VRC Stadium 15. See review this issue.

Surf's Up: The young, talented, possibly misguided Shia LaBeouf voices Cody Maverick, a teenage penguin surfer entering his first pro competition. A documentary crew's filming his every move, which might — sort of — explain that "based on a true story" joke in the preview. PG. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Transformers: It wouldn't be summer without a Michael Bay film, right? Hot on the heels of those other '80s toys the Ninja Turtles, the Transformers arrive, bigger and flashier than ever. Earth, it seems, will be the battleground for the war between the Autobots and the Decepticons. With Shia LaBeouf (*Holes*) and Megan Fox. PG13. Sneak screenings start Monday at Cinemark.

Waitress: Keri Russell (*Felicity*) is a wonderful surprise in writer-director Adrienne Shelly's bittersweet small-town story about love, hope, pies — and finding strength where you least expect it. Shelly's perfectly cast last film is a beautiful balancing act of emotions. PG13. Bijou. ★★☆☆☆ (5/24)

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. Movies 12.