

# Sketches For My Sweetheart

Making time for beauty

**CASHBACK:** Written and directed by Sean Ellis. Cinematography, Angus Hudson. Music, Guy Farley. Starring Sean Biggerstaff, Emilia Fox, Shaun Evans, Michelle Ryan and Stuart Goodwin. Magnolia Pictures, 2007. R. 102 minutes. ★★☆☆☆

If you could stop time for everyone but yourself, what would you do? Chances are it's something other than freezing the world during work and drawing your colleagues and/or customers, but that's one of the things that appeals to young, heart-broken Ben Willis (Sean Biggerstaff, also known as quidditch captain Oliver Wood in the first two *Harry Potter* films) in *Cashback*, a film which began life as an Oscar-nominated short. Ben, an art student, has recently ended his relationship with his sultry-eyed girlfriend Suzy (Michelle Ryan, currently of *Bionic Woman*). It sounds like he calls it off with her, but she's the one who throws a lamp at Ben's head, and he's the one mooning around on his skinny little bum. Ben can't sleep, and in his endless insomnia, he does two things: One, he takes a job at a supermarket. And two, he discovers he can stop time.

Or at least he pretends he can, using this fantasy to pass the time during work.



Hey, this isn't Hogwarts: Sean Biggerstaff as Ben Willis in *Cashback*

Ben's coworkers have their own means of dealing with the tedium: Sharon (Emilia Fox) hides from the heartless clock; manager Jenkins (Stuart Goodwin) takes himself too seriously; two immature jokers find endless amusement in things that

most definitely do not fall under the heading "work." Ben, whose story wanders in and out of his childhood via interesting visual transitions, thinks mostly about sex and beauty and, in an almost painfully naïve way, the intersection of the two.

and shirts tugged around their motionless bodies to reveal as much of their figures as possible, are rather creepy; plenty of reviewers have found this notion a little pervy and misogynistic. But if it's all in Ben's head, there's something sad about these scenes, in which Ben's artistic talent is stuck under the soulless imagery he picked up from a friend's parents' porn mags. Ben wants to see the beauty in the everyday, but his vision is limited.

In this view, *Cashback* is a story of artistic awakening, one pieced together with a few fairytale plot turns and a dose of the magic of love. Trapped in his head one way or the other, Ben slowly starts to see things and people differently — including his sweet coworker Sharon. There are few surprises in this tale beyond the beautiful frozen scenes through which Ben walks, and there are also a few rough spots in writer-director Sean Ellis' hastily-written film (long, slow-motion shots of Suzy yelling silently as Ben mutters in voiceover are particularly uncomfortable). But *Cashback's* washed-out supermarket sets and familiar characters somehow lend strength to the standard boy-loses-girl, boy-meets-cooler-girl themes. Ellis gives us a lovely, recognizable world in which a childish sweetness mixes strangely with a young man's desires; his star's guileless face and wide eyes lend the movie heart. **EW**

*Cashback plays as a LateNite feature at the Bijou.*

## movie clips

### OPENING OR RETURNING:

**Bob Marley:** Live in Germany, 1980, on the final tour before Bob Marley's death. Professionally shot video. Bijou LateNite.

**Brave One, The:** Jodie Foster plays a New York radio host who is attacked by a group of men who kill her fiancé (Naveen Andrews, from *Lost*). The experience leaves her shaken and transforms her into a vigilante in Neil Jordan's dated-seeming film, which fails to fully investigate the questions its story seems to raise. R. 122 min. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (9/20)

**Comebacks, The:** Because there now must be a send-up movie for everything, including inspirational sports movies (don't those do a pretty decent job of sending themselves up?). You know the drill: Coach, ragtag band of misfits, bad jokes, etc. PG13. 84 min. Movies 12.

**Execution:** Documentary about a man's last seven days on death row will be followed by a panel discussion featuring William Neal "Billy" Moore, who spent 16 years on Georgia's death row, film director Steven Scaffidi and UO law professor Joe Metcalfe. 6:30 pm 11/8, 175 Knight Law, UO. Free.

**Fred Claus:** So what if Santa had a brother? Who happened to be the opposite of the saintly gift-giver: a repo man? That's the basic premise of this film, but the reason people will see it, I suspect, is for Paul Giamatti in a Santa suit getting in a fight with Vince Vaughn. PG. 116 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

**Lions for Lambs:** Heavyweight actors take heavyweight roles in this story of three relatively powerful people — a professor (Robert Redford, who also directs), a senator (Tom Cruise) and a journalist (Meryl Streep) — whose actions and choices will affect the lives of two young men fighting in Afghanistan. R. 90 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

**Lost and Found:** Teton Gravity Research's film follows the story of the 2007 ski and snowboard season. "A testament to the terrain and conditions that only exist in the Western Hemisphere," says the film's website. 7 pm Nov. 8, McDonald Theatre. \$5.

**Optimistic:** The latest snowboarding film to hit town comes as part of the Sphere of Influence Tour, which works to make their tour as environmentally sound as possible. 8:30 pm 11/10, McDonald Theatre. \$5. www.sphereofinfluence.com

**P2:** Horror flicks are beginning to search out new, creative settings for their films, obviously; this one takes place in a parking garage (it's a level number! Now it all makes sense!). When an over-achiever stays late on Christmas Eve, she winds up at a very different dinner than the one she expected. R. 98 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

**Rendition:** Gavin Hood (*Tsotsi*) directs a pretty stellar cast in this timely tale of a woman (Reese Witherspoon) whose Egyptian-born husband disappears from a flight home — and the young CIA analyst (Jake Gyllenhaal) who finds himself in a morally troubling position as a

witness to the man's fate. With Meryl Streep and Peter Saarsgard. R. 122 min. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (11/1)

**Synchrony:** Director Jeff Rowes' locally produced, philosophical road-trip documentary involves everything you expect from a road trip — hitchhikers, pit stops, scenery — and then some. Screens as part of the Second Friday Film Forum, with pre-screening music from LaunchPad and a Q&A with Rowes to follow. 7 pm 11/9, DIVA. \$5, \$3 stu., members.

**Wristcutters: A Love Story:** Devastated over a breakup, Zia (Patrick Fugit) slits his wrists, only to wake up in a strange afterlife where he makes a few friends and sets out to find his ex, who's also done herself in. "An odd, touching adventure," said *The New York Times*. R. 91 min. VRC Stadium 15.

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

### CONTINUING:

**Across the Universe:** Julie Taymor (*Titus*, Broadway's *The Lion King*) puts her ambitious but unsatisfying spin on a love story built around Beatles songs, following a young man (Jim Sturgess) and the girl he falls for (Evan Rachel Wood) amid the tumult of the 1960s. PG13. 131 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆☆ (10/18)

**American Gangster:** Denzel Washington and Russell Crowe face off in the story of 1970s driver turned drug lord Frank Lucas (Washington) and the cop investigating Lucas and his unexpected rise to power. Directed by Ridley Scott. R. 157 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15. **See review this issue.**

**Bee Movie:** Not much looks all that sweet about this animated comedy, in which Jerry Seinfeld voices a recent bee college graduate who learns, to his shock, that humans have been stealing bees' honey for ages and ages. With the voices of Renee Zellweger and Matthew Broderick. PG. 90 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

**Bourne Ultimatum, The:** "I remember everything," says Matt Damon's Jason Bourne in this film's action-packed trailer. Director Paul Greengrass and the major players (Joan Allen, Julia Stiles) return to the series' satisfying third installment, which finds Bourne hunting down his past in stunning locations. PG13. 111 min. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (8/9)

**Cashback:** Sean Biggerstaff stars in this indie as a romantically devastated, insomniac young man who takes a late shift at a local supermarket and spends his time imagining that he can stop time. "A very romantic portrait of a young artist as he ponders love, beauty and living in the moment," said the *Los Angeles Times*. R. 102 min. Bijou LateNite. **See review this issue.**

**Dan in Real Life:** Poor Dan (Steve Carrell) is an advice columnist with a passel of daughters whose life is further complicated when he falls for his brother's girlfriend (Juliette Binoche). Also, the brother is played by

Dane Cook. PG13. 99 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

**Darjeeling Limited, The:** Wes Anderson returns with this story about three brothers (Owen Wilson, Jason Schwartzman and Adrien Brody) on a journey through India. They're sort of going to find their mom; they're sort of going to find something spiritual; they're sort of going to reconnect. But alas, the train sort of goes nowhere — not that that'll keep Anderson fans from jumping on for the ride. R. 91 min. Bijou. ★★☆☆☆ (10/25)

**Game Plan, The:** The Rock stretches his dramatic skills as a football player faced with a strange challenge: a little girl who claims to be his daughter. PG. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

**Hairspray:** Based on John Waters' 1988 cult classic, *Hairspray* is about teenagers on a local Baltimore dance show — especially one short, plump, cheery girl who loves to dance. With John Travolta in drag. PG. 117 min. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (7/26)

**Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix:** The Ministry of Magic is in denial about the return of Lord Voldemort, Hogwarts get a nasty new teacher and Harry ... Harry's in one kind of trouble or another throughout the mostly successful and only slightly disappointing fifth HP film. It's not quite *Prisoner of Azkaban*, but it's getting there. PG13. 138 min. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (7/19)

**Into the Wild:** Star Emile Hirsch bears a reasonable resemblance to Christopher McCandless, a bright, privileged young man who took off into Alaska in the early 1990s, but Sean Penn's adaptation of Jon Krakauer's novel doesn't create an entirely satisfying portrait of the man whose story has been captivating readers for a decade. R. 140 min. Bijou. ★★☆☆☆ (10/18)

**Lars and the Real Girl:** The remarkable Ryan Gosling (*Half Nelson*) stars as Lars, who meets and brings home Bianca, a life-sized doll he treats as if she were a person. The film's "daring and delicate blend of apparent irreconcilables will sweep you off your feet if you're not careful," said *Los Angeles Times*. PG13. 106 min. VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆☆ (11/1)

**Martian Child, The:** John Cusack continues to drag his formerly youthful cinematic persona into adulthood with this film about a man who adopts a boy who claims to be from Mars. With Amanda Peet and the always-wonderful Joan Cusack. PG. 108 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

**Mr. Woodcock:** This oft-delayed film involves a fellow (Seann William Scott) heading home to stop his mother (Susan Sarandon) from marrying his high school gym teacher (Billy Bob Thornton), who was, shall we say, no saint. PG13. Movies 12.

**Nanny Diaries, The:** Jersey girl Annie (Scarlett Johansson) is at odds with her mother as to what she should do with her life when an unexpected opportunity arises: She'll become a nanny for a wealthy family on NYC's Upper East Side. Working for the very rich turns

out not to be quite the escape from real life that she expected. With Laura Linney and Paul Giamatti. PG13. 106 min. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (8/30)

**Nightmare Before Christmas, The:** Tim Burton's endlessly entertaining, original Halloween/Christmas fable returns yet again in 3D. See if you don't leave the theater singing. PG. 76 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

**No Reservations:** Catherine Zeta-Jones plays a perfectionist chef at a fancy Manhattan restaurant whose world is shaken up by the arrival of her niece (Abigail Breslin) and a new sous chef (Aaron Eckhart) with a style in direct opposition to her own. PG. 105 min. Movies 12.

**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. 110 min. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (7/12)

**Saw IV:** Jigsaw (Tobin Bell) and his apprentice are dead, but the nastiness continues during the investigation of his last bunch of murders. But if you're going to see this one, you don't need me to tell you that. R. 108 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

**Seeker, The:** This movie was once called *The Dark is Rising*, for it was once (and ostensibly still is) based on Susan Cooper's wonderful, award-winning series of books. But her books were steeped in Welsh mythology and were decidedly not about an American preteen in a Santa Cruz jacket. Still, powers of light and dark, saving the world, etc. — all good themes for us fantasy fans. PG. Movies 12.

**Stardust:** Matthew Vaughn (*Layer Cake*) takes a firm and steady hand to the many plot threads of this adaptation of Neil Gaiman's novel about a fallen star with an attitude and the many characters seeking her. Wicked and charming, sweet and sly, with a stellar cast and a superb sense of humor. PG13. 128 min. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (8/9)

**Thirty Days of Night:** Thirty days of darkness in small-town Alaska make the place a haven for things that like the dark in this film, based on the graphic novel of the same name. Starring Josh Hartnett and — ooh! — Danny Huston, who raises the level of anything he's in. But can he do it here? R. 113 min. Cinemark.

**3:10 to Yuma:** Russell Crowe and Christian Bale costar in this solid Western from director James Mangold (*Walk the Line*). Based on a short story by Elmore Leonard that was made into a film in 1957, the film follows a vicious outlaw (Crowe) and the Civil War vet (Bale) who's volunteered to get the thief to the train that'll take him to trial. R. 117 min. Cinemark. ★★☆☆☆ (9/13)

**Underdog:** Jason Lee voices the titular canine, who finds himself superpowered after an incident in the lab of mad scientist Simon Barsinister (Peter Dinklage). Bad guys have plots, but Underdog has a spaniel to impress! Oh, and the day to save. PG. 84 min. Movies 12.