

No Fallen Angels Here

A stupid crime gone terribly wrong



BEFORE THE DEVIL KNOWS YOU'RE DEAD: Directed by Sidney Lumet. Written by Kelly Masterson. Cinematography, Ron Fortunato. Music, Carter Burwell. Starring Philip Seymour Hoffman, Albert Finney, Ethan Hawke and Marisa Tomei. THINKFilm, 2007. R. 117 min. ★★☆☆☆

If you are the sort of person who, when watching a movie, likes to have a character which you can like, if not outright identify with — not, as they say, that there’s anything wrong with that — you may want to skip *Before the Devil Knows You’re Dead*, the new film from 83-year-old director Sidney Lumet (*Network*, *12 Angry Men*, some several dozen other films). A bleak, brutal chronicle of a family tearing itself apart, *Before the Devil* (which takes its name from a phrase that begins “May you be in heaven for half an hour...”) offers only one potentially likeable character; otherwise, it’s full of fuckups, jerks, selfish bastards, hapless fathers. It is a story of bad choices and worse motivations: To plan to rob one’s parents’ jewelry store, as unhappy, drug-addicted would-be mastermind Andy (Philip Seymour Hoffman) and sad-sack Hank (Ethan Hawke), do, is bad enough, but

to do it for a relatively small amount of money because both are incapable of pulling their lives together in a more legal fashion makes the crime even worse.

Of course, it all goes terribly, terribly wrong, and wrong in a way we get to see from numerous points of view as Lumet and first-time screenwriter Kelly Masterson slice the story into slivers of perspective, the handful of

timelines connected by some distracting, ugly cuts. The nonlinear structure works beautifully, lining up Andy and Hank’s story with that of their vengeful father, Charles (Albert Finney), and patiently piecing together an ominous, often taut narrative that lets no one off the hook for their actions. This is not a film that will allow the audience to feel smugly above its increasingly disheveled protagonists, but it’s not easy to sympathize with them, either. Still, while *Before the Devil* works as a melodrama about the horrors that follow a handful of terrible decisions, the story seems to

take place in a strange void, its timelines lacking a true connection to the characters’ pasts. There’s nowhere to go but down after the crime is committed, but how Andy and Hank got to such a selfish, lost point in the first place remains a mystery, and one not solved by the lone scene in which Andy rails against his father. Maybe it’s not about the money after all. But maybe what it’s about is irrelevant: These are men who would have fallen one way or the other, given the chance. **EW**

Before the Devil Knows You’re Dead opens Friday, Nov. 30, at the Bijou.

Present at the Creation

MY KID COULD PAINT THAT: Directed by Amir Bar-Lev. Editors, John Walter and Michael Levine. Starring Marla Olmstead, Mark and Laura Olmstead, Zane Olmstead, Anthonh Brunelli, Michael Kimmelman. Sony Pictures Classics, 2007. PG-13. 83 minutes. ★★★★★



“All art in some way is a lie,” says *New York Times* art critic Michael Kimmelman. In *My Kid Could Paint That*, documentary filmmaker Amir Bar-Lev asks big questions about that lie. Marla Olmstead, 4 years old when the film begins in 2004, paints like a child genius, or so people believe. The first portion of the film simply documents her life with her parents and little brother as their world turns upside down: Her paintings start selling for thousands of dollars, and positive media attention comes to her in Binghamton, N.Y., from all over the world.

Bar-Lev and his cameramen stick with the Olmsteads through this time and through the painful moments as *60 Minutes* uses a psychologist and hidden video (hidden with the parents’ consent) to imply that father Mark, a dabbler in painting, might be the real artist. Bar-Lev also captures Marla painting on camera, a process the parents say disturbs the process of creation. And the audience can easily judge the comparative quality of the documented work to earlier “Marla” pieces.

My Kid Could Paint That opens Friday, Nov. 30, at the Bijou.

movie clips

OPENING OR RETURNING:
Awake: Pretty young things Hayden Christensen (*Star Wars* Episodes I-III) and Jessica Alba (*Sin City*) star in this thriller about a young man who experiences creepy, crazy things while under the knife (but completely aware) for a surgery. R. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.
Before the Devil Knows You’re Dead: Sidney Lumet’s new film is being hailed as a return to form by many, but there’s something unsatisfying in the bleak tale of two brothers whose attempt at robbery goes terribly, devastatingly wrong. Stars Philip Seymour Hoffman, Ethan Hawke and a raging, quiet Albert Finney. R. 117 min. Bijou. **See review this issue.**
Behind the Mask: Documentary about people who take direct action to save animals from laboratory experiments screens with an appearance by Peter Young, a former animal liberation prisoner. 6 pm Dec. 6, 180 PLC, UO, Free.
Fleetwood Mac: Unreleased 1976 *Rumors* tour documentary from Santa Barbara, Calif. Professionally shot. Part of the In-Concert LateNite series. Not rated. Bijou LateNite.
Found Footage Festival: Touring exhibition of random, strange, unexpected videos found in unusual places. Films are introduced and commented on by the festival’s founders. Not rated. 7 pm Dec. 2, Bijou. \$7.
I’m Not There: Portland filmmaker Todd Haynes’ (*Far From Heaven*) unconventional Bob Dylan movie is one of the year’s most anticipated — and, for the most part, highly praised. Different actors, including Cate Blanchett, Heath Ledger and Christian Bale, play incarnations of Dylan over the decades. “One of the most inventive and joyous movies of the year,” said *Salon*. R. 135 min. VRC Stadium 15.
Joy of Anxiety: The Early Films of the Late Ingmar Bergman: Four of the influential, exceptional director’s early films screen as part of DIVA’s “The Liveliest Art” program: *Smiles of a Summer Night* (1955), 1 pm; *The Seventh Seal* (1957), 4 pm; and *The Virgin Spring* (1959), 7 pm Dec. 2, DIVA. Each film is followed by a discussion led by Tom Blank. Free.
My Kid Could Paint That: Amir Bar-Lev’s documentary follows the story of young Marla Olmstead, who sold her first abstract painting at the age of four. After a TV special suggested that it was not Marla but her father creating the works, the young painter sank back into a more ordinary life. Bar-Lev leaves the truth of this issue up to the viewer in his fascinating film. PG13. 83 min. Bijou. **See review this issue.**
Old Joy: Subtle, introspective film stars Daniel London and singer-songwriter Will Oldham as two old friends on a camping trip in the mountains east of Portland. Shot entirely in Oregon, the film was reviewed as one of 2006’s best. Not rated. 83 min. Social hour at 6 pm, film at 7:30 pm Dec. 1, Lorane Grange. \$7 sug. don. ★★★★★ (10/26/06)
Road House: The classic Patrick Swayze bouncer flick gets even better when it shows as part of the new Heckler’s Movie Night series, 7 pm Dec. 5, Wandering Goat. Free.

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. 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. ★★★★★ (11/8)
August Rush: Keri Russell and Jonathan Rhys Meyers star as a musical young couple whose lovelorn encounter produces a child. Orphaned “by circumstance” (says the description), the boy (Freddie Highmore) grows up to become a musical prodigy. PG. 113 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.
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.
Bella: A bad day for two people — one a former soccer player, the other a pregnant waitress — results in an unexpected connection. “A heart-tugger with the confidence not to tug too hard,” said Roger Ebert. PG13. 100 min. Cinemark.
Beowulf: Robert Zemeckis, working from a screenplay by Roger Avary and Neil Gaiman, directs this version of the story of the warrior Beowulf, with Ray Winstone in the title role and Angelina Jolie as Grendel’s mother. Reviews are good, but it still looks like a video game. PG13. 114 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆☆ (11/21)
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)
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. 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)

Dragon Wars: The good: Dragons! In L.A.! The bad: The plot is a convoluted thing about magical powers, resurrected lovers and a dragon that will be able to ascend into heaven. Also, the biggest names in the cast are Jason Behr (*Roswell*) and Robert Forster. But still ... dragons! In L.A.! Can it be better than *Reign of Fire*? PG13. 90 min. Movies 12.
Enchanted: Beautiful princesses! Handsome princes! And ... midtown Manhattan? Amy Adams (*Junebug*), James Marsters (*X-Men*) and Patrick Dempsey (*Grey’s Anatomy*) star in this fairy tale in the real world, which follows Princess Giselle (Adams) after a wicked witch banishes her from her magical kingdom. Why does this Disney flick look so charming? PG. 107 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.
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.
Good Luck Chuck: Chuck (Dane Cook) has a hex on him: every girl he dates finds true love with the *next* guy she dates. Enter Cam (Jessica Alba), a klutzy sweetheart Chuck falls for hard. Clearly, he’s got to wiggle out from under his strange curse. R. 101 min. Movies 12.
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)
Heartbreak Kid, The: Wasn’t this movie called *Meet the Parents* a few years ago? OK, OK, so this time it’s the girl who’s the problem. And this adaptation of Neil Simon’s 1972 play is directed by the Farrelly Brothers, who struck gold with Stiller and humiliation comedy with *There’s Something About Mary*. R. 115 min. Movies 12.
Hitman: Timothy Olyphant, go back to *Deadwood*! No, kidding, kidding. But honestly, I’m not sure this videogame-based film about a professional assassin trying to find out who set him up (wait, does this remind anyone of Jason Bourne?) is the best place for you. R. 100 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.
Labyrinth: Don’t make me start singing the song. You know which one I mean. And don’t miss a screening of this shiny new print of Jim Henson’s *Labyrinth*, one of the most wonderful movies of the 1980s. Jennifer Connelly! David Bowie in tights! Goblins, fairies and talking worms, oh my! PG. 122 min. Bijou LateNite and Saturday matinee.
Love in the Time of Cholera: Mike Newell (*Donnie Brasco*, *Pushing Tin*) directs this adaptation of Gabriel Garcia Marquez’ novel about a man who waits more than 50 years for his true love, engaging in many affairs while he waits for her to be free. Starring Javier Bardem and Giovanna Mezzogiorno. R. 139 min. Movies 12. ★☆☆☆☆ (11/21)

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. Movies 12.
Mist, The: I keep wondering what’s next. *The Cloud?* *The Hailstorm?* Stephen King can make monsters out of anything, right? Frank Darabont directs this adaptation of a King short story about a creepy mist that hides even creepier creatures. R. 124 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.
Mr. Magorium’s Wonder Emporium: This story about a magical toy store, its owner (Dustin Hoffman) and the young shop employee who might inherit it (Natalie Portman) is written and directed by Zach Helm, who also wrote last year’s *Stranger Than Fiction*. G. 94 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.
No Country for Old Men: The latest from the Coen brothers is a near-masterpiece, an adaptation of Cormac McCarthy’s acclaimed novel, and it’s earning plenty of acclaim itself. The story involves a small-town sheriff, a deadly drug deal and a psychopathic killer (Javier Bardem). The reviewers say “intense,” “searing,” “an evil delight.” R. 122 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15. **See review this issue.**
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)
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)
Superbad: Judd Apatow and Seth Rogen both have fingers in this pie, as co-producer and co-writer, respectively. It’s the story of two high school friends, Evan (Michael Cera, *Arrested Development*) and Seth (Jonah Hill), who are trying — well, in classic teen movie fashion, they’re trying really hard to get laid. They’re about to go off to college; what do you expect? R. 114 min. Movies 12. ★★★★★ (8/23)
310 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. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (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.