

Bong Humor

Stoner comedies on high-per drive

HAROLD AND KUMAR ESCAPE FROM GUANTANAMO BAY: Written and directed by Jon Hurwitz and Hayden Schlossberg. Starring Kal Penn, John Cho, Rob Corddry, Roger Bart, Neil Patrick Harris and Danneel Harris. New Line, 2008. R. 102 minutes. ★★☆☆☆

SUPER HIGH ME: Directed by Michael Blieden. Based on a joke by Doug Benson. Screen Media, 2008. R. 94 minutes. ★★☆☆☆

Super High Me is a dope (smoking) version of Morgan Spurlock’s *Super Size Me*: Comedian Doug Benson figures that if people will watch Spurlock ingest MickeyD’s for a solid month, they ought to be willing to watch him smoke his brains out for an equal duration. But first, in order to get the proper effect (or just have a basis for comparison), Benson spends 30 days not smoking any pot. He takes the SAT, gets a physical (from a surprisingly jovial and blunt-spoken doctor) and takes a number of other tests (including one about his psychic abilities) that mostly go to prove that no one’s taking this little escapade too seriously. Rather than an endless parade of stoner jokes, his standup (he appears to perform more nights than not) becomes focused on how much weed Benson *isn’t* smoking. (He riffs instead, for example, on the possibilities for a mildew remover called *mil-don’t*.)

Super High Me is mostly an extended gag born from a simple joke. It does

manage to squeeze in a few moments of poignant if somewhat muddled commentary about the struggle between Californian dispensary owners and the DEA, which doesn’t recognize California’s medical marijuana laws and cracks down on several



dispensaries during the film. There’s a touch of pot history and a few observations from people who really do use it for medicinal purposes, but mostly there’s Benson, cracking wise and inhaling frequently (or not; debate rages on the IMDb boards as to whether Benson actually inhales much on film) until the experiment rambles to a

finish, ending when the month’s up without much of a conclusion beyond, well, hey, dude! No harm done! Keep smokin’!

Harold and Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay (let’s just call it *HK2*), on the other hand, winds up fairly tidily after a rambling, shambling, ridiculous jaunt across what turns out to be pretty foreign territory for its Jersey-born heroes: the South. Picking up promptly after the end of 2004’s *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle*, in which worried

overachiever Harold Lee (John Cho) and smart, angsty slacker Kumar Patel (Kal Penn) dealt with some serious munchies, *HK2* finds the pair on their way to Amsterdam to find the girl Harold’s crushing on. But it’s a long flight. A guy might need a diversion on such a flight.

Escape from Gitmo — where an over-zealous and under-intelligent government

hardass throws the pair after Kumar’s bong is mistaken for something else that sounds rather like the word bong — is just the beginning. Writer-directors Jon Hurwitz and Hayden Schlossberg paint in broad stripes as the film takes obvious but often still amusing turns, crashing from one pit stop to the next as the guys stay ahead of Homeland Security. Here and there, it offers guffaw-inducing moments of sheer absurdity and sly humor regarding stereotypes and the state of the nation — or simply the snortingly funny vision of sex- and ’shroom-crazed Neil Patrick Harris astride a unicorn (Patrick Harris’ wacky character role subtly underscores the point that Harold and Kumar — the Korean-American and Indian-American — are for once the leads, not the lead’s quirky buddies). What you won’t find, though, is a female role that’s not that of a girlfriend or half-naked accessory to a joke, but perhaps it would be just too much to ask for the film to add sexist nonsense to the list of things it sends up, which includes stereotypes about African-Americans, Jews and poor farmers; debauched former child stars; Dubya; and anti-intellectualism (occasionally, the send-ups fall short, as with most of the prison sequence). Our affable, endearing heroes have got quite a bit on their plates. Still, as A.O. Scott pointed out in *The New York Times*, the film’s “bottomless party” would have benefited from Penn and Cho having the (visible) balls Jason Segel did in *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*. **EW**

Super High Me opens Friday, May 2, at the Bijou. Harold and Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay is now playing at Cinemark and VRC Stadium 15.

movie clips

OPENING OR RETURNING:

Bride With White Hair, The: When the top warriors from two rival families fall in love, their angry clans may force them to fight to the death. Starring Brigitte Lin (*Chunking Express*) and Tony Cheung (*Farewell My Concubine*). 92 min. Bijou LateNite.

Federico Fellini: The Great Film Directors Seminar looks at two of the great Italian director’s films: *La Dolce Vita* (1 pm) and *8 1/2* (5:15 pm). Registration is free but required; call 344-3482 to reserve a seat. 1 pm May 4, DIVA.

Iron Man: The first major summer flick (summer? Huh?) stars Robert Downy Jr. as Tony Stark, a wealthy industrialist who devises a suit that gives him the superheroic ability to take down baddies who misuse his destructive technology. Awesome. With Jeff Bridges, Terrence Howard and Gwyneth Paltrow. PG13. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Made of Honor: This sliver of nonsense seems deliberately scheduled opposite *Iron Man*, as if some moron imagined it were a palatable “chick flick” option. Nice going, universe. Even Dr. McDreamy, Patrick Dempsey, as the guy who figures out too late that he’s in love with his best friend (Michelle Monaghan) isn’t enough to make this look anything but embarrassing. PG13. 101 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Marathon Monks of Mount Hiei: Documentary about the Tendai Buddhist monks of Japan, who run incredible distances in their search for spiritual enlightenment, including a 1,000 day challenge that increases in intensity over seven years. Wow. 6:45 pm May 2, Downtown Library. Free.

Never Back Down: Is it just me, or does this film look like just an excuse to shoot a lot of badass fight scenes? (With a story loosely draped around them, of course.) The new kid in school gets, er, schooled by the resident bully, who’s got a hot girlfriend. But if he masters mixed martial arts, the new guy might turn the tables! PG13. 112 min. Movies 12.

Other Boleyn Girl, The: In this film, based on Philippa Gregory’s novel, Anne (Natalie Portman) and Mary (Scarlett Johansson) Boleyn are sent by their family to lure the attentions of the king of England (Eric Bana). Court intrigue, family drama and other period-piece standards fill out the sisters’ stories as they fight for love and power. PG13. 115 min. Movies 12.

Queer Film Festival: This free festival, over several weekends in May, begins with *The Bubble* and “Straight Hike for the Butch Dike.” The latter is a take-off on *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*; the former the story of three Israeli roommates whose bubble of escapism is destroyed by violent outbursts in the Middle East. 11:30 pm May 2, Bijou. Free.

Rocky Horror Picture Show, The: Do the time warp again! Catch the long-term 1970s camp cult classic fave with live performance by Forbidden Fruit. R. Bijou LateNite, Saturday only.

Solving the Klamath Crisis: Keeping Fish and Farms Alive: Documentary about the ongoing issue screens as part of a Klamath Dam Removal panel and discussion of Klamath Riverkeeper’s plans, 7 pm May 6, 100 Willamette, UO.

Super High Me: Comedian Doug Benson, inspired by *Super Size Me*, decides to go without pot for a month – then spend an entire month high as a kite and see what effects the endless inhaling has on his body and mental state. The film mixes Benson’s experiment with his stand-up routine and a bit of history about California’s drug laws; it’s all a bit muddled, but it’s also relatively funny. Bijou. **See review this issue.**

Uncounted: Writer/director/producer David Earnhardt will attend and answer questions after the screening of his film, which explores the troubling issue of voter disenfranchisement via flawed voting machines and intimidation tactics. 6:45 pm and 9 pm May 7, Bijou.

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

CONTINUING:

Baby Mama: When successful businesswoman Kate (Tina Fey) finds that she can’t conceive the kid she wants, she hires Angie (Amy Poehler) as her surrogate. It’s a clash of personalities and more when Angie shows up on Kate’s doorstep. “An essentially sweet-natured picture that doesn’t go as far as it could,” says Salon.com. PG13. 96 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Bucket List, The: Jack Nicholson, I expect this kind of thing from. But Morgan Freeman? In this schmaltzy-sounding flick about two new friends trying to cram all the adventures of a lifetime into a considerably shorter amount of time? Oh, Rob Reiner. Once upon a time, you made a good movie or two. PG13. 97 min. Movies 12.

Counterfeiters, The: This year’s Oscar winner for Best Foreign Language Film focuses on Salomon Sorowitsch (Karl Markovics), a talented forger whose abilities make him relatively valuable in WWII Germany, and whose ability to adapt to survive raises moral and idealistic questions as his talents are put to use by the Germans. R. 98 min. Bijou. ★★☆☆☆ (4/24)

Deception: An ordinary fellow (Ewan McGregor) has his life bizarrely changed when he meets a lawyer (Hugh Jackman) and a woman known as S (Michelle Williams). R. 108 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15. **See review this issue.**

Eighty-eight Minutes: College professor slash forensic psychiatrist (seriously, you still reading after that?) Jack Gramm (Al Pacino) deals with a death threat that claims he has 88 minutes to live; three grumpy folks might be behind the threat. R. 108 min (isn’t that cheating?). Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed: Ben Stein’s documentary explores the division between proponents of intelligent design and Darwinian evolution, and finds that “Big Science” allows no diversion from Darwin. “Freedom of inquiry has been greatly compromised, and this is not only anti-science, it’s anti-American,” says Stein in press materials. PG. 90 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Flawless: Demi Moore and Michael Caine star in the ’60s-set diamond heist flick that lacks intensity and spark but does, after all, have Michael Caine, whose presence

kicks the film and Moore’s character into high gear against the sexist diamond company for which she works. PG13. 109 min. Bijou. ★★☆☆☆ (4/17)

Fool’s Gold: Fools’ choices? Kate Hudson and Matthew McConaughey play a divorced couple who reteam to bicker endlessly – and search for a sunken treasure. Totally sure they stay divorced in the end, too. PG13. Movies 12.

Forbidden Kingdom: When an American teenager finds a lost relic of the legendary Monkey King, he also finds himself sent back in time to join a band of warriors fighting to free said king. The important bits? Jackie Chan and Jet Li costar, and Wo Ping (*Crouching Tiger; The Matrix*) handles the fight sequences. Awesome. PG13. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Forgetting Sarah Marshall: The Apatow Onslaught continues with this romantic comedy about a guy (Jason Segel, who also wrote the screenplay) who tries get away from it all after his famous girlfriend (the fantabulous Kristen Bell) dumps him – only to find that she, and her strange new boyfriend, are at the same Hawaiian resort. With Mila Kunis, Jonah Hill, Paul Rudd and a lot of other funny people. R. 112 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆☆ (4/24)

Harold and Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay: John Cho and Kal Penn revisit their hilarious stoner characters from *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle*. When they sneak a bong onboard a flight to Amsterdam, our heroes are suspected of terrorism. And, needless to say, all manner of wackiness ensues. R. 102 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15. **See review this issue.**

Horton Hears a Who: The Dr. Seuss classic gets the animated treatment from the creators of *Ice Age*, with Jim Carrey as Horton and Steve Carell as the mayor of Whoville, the tiny world on a speck that Horton discovers and defends from his fellow animals, who think he’s gone nuts. G. 110 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Jumper: Adapted from a novel by Steven Gould, this film follows “jumpers” who can leap through space and time. Among these lucky few are Hayden Christensen and Jamie Bell; Samuel L. Jackson provides the tension as a fella who doesn’t approve of these crazy hijinks. Directed by Doug Liman (*The Bourne Identity*). PG13. 88 min. Movies 12.

Juno: Jason Reitman directs from a screenplay by newcomer Diablo Cody. Ellen Page (who was outstanding in *Hard Candy*) plays a pregnant teenager dealing with herself, her future, her parents, the best friend who fathered the kid and the couple who wants to adopt it. “Hilarious and sweet-tempered, perceptive and surprisingly grounded,” said the *Los Angeles Times*. ACADEMY AWARD: BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY. PG13. 96 min. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (1/10)

Leatherheads: George Clooney directs and stars in this romantic comedy set in the 1920s against the start of the pro football league. With Jon Krazinski (*The Office*) as a golden-boy quarterback and Renee Zellweger as the reporter determined to prove he’s not as perfect as he seems. PG13. 113 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆☆ (4/10)

National Treasure: Book of Secrets: Nicolas Cage returns for more adventure and hijinks – something to

do with the president’s secret book (hey, this sounds like *Crooked Little Vein!*) and clearing his family’s name; did great-great grandpa have something to do with Lincoln’s assassination? With Helen Mirren. PG. Movies 12.

Nim’s Island: Moppet-of-the-moment Abigail Breslin stars as Nim, a girl who lives with her scientist father (Gerard Butler) on an island and has a literary heroine whose life is rather similar. When Nim’s father disappears, life brings Nim and her favorite author together to find him. With Jodie Foster. PG. 95 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Penelope: Christina Ricci stars as the title character of this modern-day sorta fairytale, a girl cursed with a pig’s snout instead of a nose. Her family tries to lure suitors (true love will break the curse, of course), but they all run screaming – until the always-charming James McAvoy happens along. With Catherine O’Hara and Reese Witherspoon. PG. 102 min. Movies 12.

Prom Night: If I tell you this is a horror flick set around prom night, is that enough? ‘Cause it seems like all you’d really need to know. Y’know, prom’s supposed to be the best night ever! So it’s really meaningful to make it scary and horrifying! With Brittany Snow and Idris Elba. PG13. 88 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Spiderwick Chronicles, The: Adaptation of Holly Black and Tony DiTerlizzi’s books about a young boy (Freddie Highmore, playing twins) who finds that there’s much more than meets the eye to an old family estate. Black has a knack for a different kind of fairy tale; let’s hope the movie can translate that to the screen. With Mary-Louise Parker. PG. Movies 12.

Street Kings: Tom Ludlow (Keanu Reeves) is tracking down the men who killed his former partner; his supervisor (Forest Whitaker) struggles to keep him in line and out of the way of an Internal Affairs supervisor (Hugh Laurie). With Jay Mohr, Common and The Game. R. 109 min. Movies 12.

Twenty-one: An unconventional math professor (Kevin Spacey) recruits his brightest students (among them Kate Bosworth and Jim Sturgess) to count cards in Vegas, leading to tuition money for them and, one assumes, mad loot for the boss. Until things get complicated. PG13. 123 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Twenty-seven Dresses: Current It Girl Katherine Heigl (*Knocked Up*) stars in this always a bridesmaid, never a bride story of Jane, whose sister gets the guy Jane’s in love with. But with James Marsden (*Enchanted*) around, you’ve got to assume Jane’s not going to have a totally unhappy ending. PG. 107 min. Movies 12.

Under the Same Moon: When nine-year-old Carlitos’ (Adrian Alonso) grandmother dies, he leaves his home in Mexico in search of his mother, who went to work in the U.S. to support her family. Costarring American Ferrara and Kate Del Castillo. 109 min. PG13. Cinemark.

Vantage Point: Dennis Quaid, Matthew Fox, Forest Whitaker and Sigourney Weaver are just half the people – and perspectives – in this thriller about an assassination attempt made on the American president (William Hurt) as he gives a speech about the war on terror. I think the real story might be, uh, complicated? PG13. 90 min. Movies 12.