

Blood Brothers

Rambow cute and quirky, but no cigar

SON OF RAMBOW: Written and directed by Garth Jennings. Produced by Nick Goldsmith. Cinematography, Jess Hall. Music, Joby Talbot. Starring Bill Milner, Will Poulter, Jessica Stevenson and Jules Sitruk. Paramount Vantage, 2008. PG-13. 96 minutes. ★★☆☆☆

Son of Rambow, the latest film from Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy director Garth Jennings, is a sweet, properly quirky little thing which was an audience favorite at Sundance (the last two years' indie sensations having proven that quirk is something of a necessity). A film about friendship, imagination and the collaborative magic of filmmaking, it follows two preteen boys who (sort of) set out to make a sequel to *First Blood*. Before they meet, one sits in the nonsmoking section of his theater in England, a cigarette in one hand and a video camera in the other as he pirates the film; the other is raised quietly and piously in the Brethren, a religious group that forbids things like the watching of TV. The boys are an unlikely pair, and *Rambow* is at its most delightful as they become friends. The troublemaker, Lee Carter (Will Poulter), nabs the Bible in which Will Proudfoot (Bill Milner), a child with a superbly active imagination, doodles incessantly. The resulting scuffle inadvertently binds the smaller, more naïve

Will to Lee, who decides that this pushover should help with the film he's making for a contest. What this film is about is unclear; what is clear is that when Will catches an accidental screening of *First Blood* in Lee's garage, his entire take on life is changed. War! Adventure! Superhuman feats! Crazy stunts! All of which must be hidden from his loving but strict mother, of course. But Will's family's religion is one of *Son of Rambow's* flaws. It feels as if the family only belongs to the Brethren because it makes Will's introduction to violent entertainment that much more dramatic and because it draws a very clear line between what is permissible for him and what is not. But Will never suffers much of a crisis of conscience, as it's always clear that his imagination and artistic talent — and his sweet heart — trump the Brethren's place in his life. Eventually, it's not just the filmmaking that lures Will to the dark (or not so dark) side, but the charisma of Didier (Jules Sitruck), a French exchange student who, naturally, the boys want to be and the girls want to be with. Sitruck is amusing enough, and some of his scenes — a gaggle of British schoolboy lackeys hovering two paces behind at all times — are among the funniest in the film. Yet when his story melds with Will and Lee's, Jennings loses his grasp on the material's heart, which is the taut friendship

between Will and Lee. Didier is an unknown element, but at the point when he begins to exert another force on our budding directors, the film slips into the ridiculous. One school scene seems to involve one neverending, marker-sniffing, dance-party-having prom. (Jennings explains in production notes that this scene was influenced by *Midnight Cowboy*, which might partly explain why it feels so out of place.) Our French friend is an excuse for our young blood brothers to have the requisite falling out, and his character offers little beyond comic relief. But Lee Carter has a freckled, pinched little face and a home life that is, in its way, as unusual as Will's, and he lands solidly in the safe space between too clever and too adult. Will is a wide-eyed little moppet, initially clueless and easily influenced to a fault, but Milner convincingly shows him growing up just enough. Between these two and Jennings' nose for perfectly executed childhood pranks — the kind that make

adult bones creak and adult viewers flinch — *Son of Rambow* is a playful delight that just doesn't quite come together as well as it should. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't see it, and think about swinging over a few rivers or tormenting a few teachers while you do.

EW

Son of Rambow opens Friday, June 6, at the Bijou.



movie clips BY MOLLY TEMPLETON

Opening or returning:

Bleach: Memories of Nobody:

The North American debut of the film adapted from the popular anime series includes behind-the-scenes peeks and interviews with the film's creators. 7:30 pm June 11, Cinemark.

Dire Straights: A performance from German TV in 1979 and a 1980 French documentary make up this In-Concert Series screening. Bijou LateNite.

Invisible Forest, The: Filmmaker Antero Alli premieres his newest film, in which a theater director desperate to stop a recurring nightmare decides to try hypnotic regression, which sends him into an internal landscape of memory. 9 pm June 5, DIVA. \$5.

Kung Fu Panda: Jack Black — or at least his voice — stars as Po the Panda, a waiter whose love for kung fu serves him well when it turns out there's a prophecy about him saving the world from some powerful enemies. With the voices of Dustin Hoffman, Angelina Jolie and Jackie Chan. PG. 88 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Meet the Browns: Multihyphenate Tyler Perry directed, wrote and stars in his latest film, which is about a Chicago single mother (the recently underseen Angela Bassett) who finds a father she never knew has died — and that his whole small-town Southern family is waiting for her in Georgia. PG13. 100 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. Movies 12.

Son of Rambow: Director Garth Jennings (*The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*) offers a sweet story about friendship and collaboration in the '80s, but his film trips over itself at the end. Still, the film charms with winning performances from the two young actors who play a sheltered boy who comes to admire Rambo and a budding filmmaker who's also the school troublemaker. 96 min. PG13. Bijou. **See review this issue.**

Standard Operating Procedure: Oscar-winning documentary director Errol Morris (*The Fog of War*) returns with this look at the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, which uses interviews and vivid re-enactments to explore what happened in the prison and how it relates to what happens in the military. "Disturbing, analytical and morose," said Roger Ebert. R. 117 min. Bijou. **See review this issue.**

Stop-Loss: Director Kimberly Peirce (*Boys Don't Cry*) takes on the military policy that keeps soldiers in the service longer than they expect with this story of a sergeant (Ryan Phillippe) who finds, once he gets home, that the powers that be want to send him back already. With Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Ciaran Hinds. "The first major movie of the new year that touches greatness," says *Rolling Stone*. R. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (4/3) **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 Ferrera and Kate Del Castillo. 109

min. PG13. Movies 12.

Videomaker's Slam: Monthly event invites video artists to submit short videos of up to 10 minutes for a competition that follows the format of the poetry slam. Audience chooses the winner, which goes on to slam fest in December. 7 pm June 9, DIVA. Free.

You Don't Mess With the Zohan: Adam Sandler plays an Israeli commando who really wants to be a hairstylist. Why? I really don't know. This ever so brilliant idea comes from the minds of Sandler, Judd Apatow (*Knocked Up*) and Robert Smigel (*Triumph the Insult Comic Dog*). PG13. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

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 (Tiny 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. Movies 12.

Chronicles of Narnia, The: Prince Caspian: When the Pevensie children find themselves back in Narnia, it's just a year later for them — and 1300 years later for the magical land, now under the control of an evil foreigner. Lucy, Susan, Peter and Edmund (with help, of course) must help get the true

king back on Narnia's throne. PG. 144 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆☆ (5/22)

Drillbit Taylor: When three high school kids get sick of being picked on, they hire Drillbit Taylor (Owen Wilson), who pretends to be a teacher in order to keep an eye on his young clients. There's brand-name talent behind the scenes (Judd Apatow, Seth Rogen) but the reviewers weren't charmed. PG13. 102 min. Movies 12.

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.

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. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (4/24)

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 Who-ville, the tiny world on a speck that Horton discovers and defends from his fellow animals, who think he's gone nuts. G. 110 min. Movies 12.

Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull: It's the only mainstream movie opening this weekend! It's got Harrison Ford and Cate Blanchett and Shia

LeBoeuf and sassy *Raiders of the Lost Ark* dame Karen Allen! Also, it takes place 19 years after the underrated third film in a world facing the possibility of nuclear annihilation. That's about all I've got. That and a big plastic Indy whip. PG13. 124 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆☆ (5/29)

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. ★★☆☆☆ (5/8)

Sex and the City: High heels and ugly dresses (c'mon, you know Carrie wears some truly dreadful stuff) take it to the big screen in what *New York* magazine calls "a joyful wallow." Plot? You want plot? I'm thinking some boy trouble, some mild strife, maybe a happy ending or two for Carrie (Sarah Jessica Parker), Charlotte (Kristin Davis), Samantha (Kim Cattrall) and Miranda (Cynthia Nixon). R. 148 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Strangers, The: Scary masked folks invade the meant-to-be-romantic post-wedding getaway of troubled couple Kristen (Liv Tyler) and James (Scott Speedman). R. 90 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

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 LateNite. ★★☆☆☆ (5/1)

Ten Thousand B.C.: Director Roland Emmerich (*Independence Day*) directs a set-ages-ago story about a young hunter and the lovely woman he'll stop at nothing to save from "mysterious warlords." Other key phrases from the studio's synopsis include "ultimate fate," "tyrannical god" and "empire beyond imagination." PG13. 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. Movies 12.

What Happens in Vegas: Cameron Diaz and Ashton Kutcher star as a couple that gets rather spontaneously wed in Vegas, then realizes they hate each other — only to wind up stuck together when he puts her quarter in a slot machine and hits the jackpot. PG13. 99 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Year My Parents Went on Vacation, The: Cao Hamburger's second film is the lovely, bittersweet story of Mauro (Michel Joelsas), a young boy who finds a new community and new awareness of the world when his parents, fleeing political turmoil in 1970 Brazil, leave him behind. Beautifully shot, elegantly scored and loaded with low-key but affecting performances, Hamburger's film deserves a solid audience. Not rated. 105 min. Bijou. ★★☆☆☆ (5/29)