

# FOR UNADORNED CARNAL KNOWLEDGE

Nymphomaniac: Vol. I *follows one women's stark sexual obsession deep into the rabbit hole*

If you're a little wary of Lars von Trier — never sure whether you're going to take him seriously and get laughed at, or laugh at him and find you should've taken him seriously — you are hardly alone. His last film, *Melancholia*, was surprising for *not* offending or pushing buttons; instead, it left me crushed and dazed.

I can't say the same for *Nymphomaniac: Vol. I*, but I also couldn't stop myself from watching both volumes, which are very much pieces of a whole. Throughout both, a battered and bloody Joe (Charlotte Gainsbourg) relates the story of her life in sex to Seligman (Stellan Skarsgård), the older gent who finds her in an alley. He sets her up in his bed with a cup of tea and an eager ear; and she demurs briefly before diving into a tale that encompasses losing her virginity; competing with her best friend for the most conquests in one night; her father's death; her ability to juggle eight or more lovers; and her eventual rediscovery of the man she first had sex with. (Along the way, Uma Thurman turns up as a jilted wife in a scene both campy and brilliant.)

About sex, Joe and von Trier are both matter-of-fact: Joe's plain narration goes hand in hand with the white lighting and unremarkable rooms in which all the (cleverly edited) sex takes place. As Joe's opposite, Seligman relates her physical tales to something he understands, like fly-fishing or polyphony. Their dialogue, rife with references, has an instructive formality; the paths it takes are as carefully laid out as an English garden. But to what end?

The sense that Joe is full of shit hovers over *Vol. I*, which my date suspected of being “a porny *Usual Suspects*” — but I don't think von Trier cares if you believe her or not. *Nymphomaniac* isn't as much about female power as the dialogue occasionally suggests; it's more about being misunderstood because of the things you choose (or are compelled) to pursue. *Vol. I* doesn't stand alone, but if the parade of cocks doesn't scare you away, you'll be back for *Vol. II* — even if only to see what the hell happens. ■

*Look for a review of Nymphomaniac: Vol. II in EW's April 17 issue.*

**THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL** This European adventure set between two world wars is a visual delight directed by Wes Anderson. Memorable characters are played by top-notch actors you might not recognize at first: Ralph Fiennes, Adrien Brody, Jeff Goldblum, Harvey Keitel, Jude Law, Bill Murray and many more. Word of mouth is packing theaters. (*Regal Valley River Center*)

**GLORIA** Chilean director Sebastián Lelio's new film is a triumphant corrective to the lame idea that old people have few concerns beyond Metamucil and bucket lists. Thanks to a stellar performance by Paulina García, *Gloria* becomes a kind of middle-age coming of age story — the portrait of a woman, not in mid-life crisis but simply in crisis, and seeking to wrangle love and meaning from the lonely circumstances of her life. (*Bijou Art Cinemas*)

**HER** In Spike Jonze's latest movie, a sad man named Theodore (Joaquin Phoenix) falls in love with his new operating system, Samantha (voiced by Scarlett Johansson). The palpable loneliness of *Her* is as much Samantha's as it is Theodore's: She may be hyper-intelligent, but she can never sit on a rooftop watching the sunrise. If Jonze occasionally misses a beat, by the end, *Her's* sympathy is for everyone. (*Bijou Metro*)



**ROBOCOP** It's no *Showgirls*, but Paul Verhoeven's 1987 movie about a half-human/half-machine superfuzz remains a cult classic — part neo-fascist parody, part black comedy about vigilante justice run amok, and altogether a rippin' good action flick featuring *That '70s Show's* Red (Kurtwood Smith) as a corporate baddie. (*Bijou Metro*)

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3:15, 7:05, 10:25

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11:50, 3:10, 7:10, 10:15

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12:00

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12:30

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3:20, 6:55, 9:45

**ENDLESS LOVE (PG-13)**  
11:30, 2:05, 4:40, 7:15, 9:50

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12:25, 3:30, 8:00, 10:30

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11:40, 6:50

**THE HUNGER GAMES: CATCHING FIRE (PG-13)**  
12:15, 3:25, 7:00, 10:05

**NUT JOB (PG)**  
12:20, 2:30, 4:35, 7:20, 9:35

**PHILOMENA (PG-13)**  
11:35, 2:20, 4:55, 7:35, 10:10

**POMPEII (3D) (PG-13)**  
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**SABOTAGE [CC,DV] (R)** Fri. - Sat. (1140 345) 655 955

**CESAR CHAVEZ (PG-13)** Fri. - Sat. (1205 235) 510 745 1030

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**BAD WORDS [CC,DV] (R)** Fri. - Sat. (1150 215) 445 720 945

**NEED FOR SPEED (PG-13)** Fri. - Sat. 1000 PM

**THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL [CC,DV] (R)** Fri. - Sat. (1220) 405 640 935

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