



RACHEL WEISZ IN DENIAL

DENIAL

Of all the things in this world to be in denial of, the Holocaust is perhaps the most odious. The British-American film *Denial* is based on American historian Deborah Esther Lipstadt's 2005 book *History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier*, in which the author recounts being brought to court for libel by British Holocaust denier David Irving for labeling him, accurately, a Holocaust denier. As the defendant, Lipstadt bore the burden of proof, and she had the ghastly and absurd task of proving to the court that the Holocaust actually happened. Rachel Weisz, Tom Wilkinson and Timothy Spall star. (*Broadway Metro*)

MASCOTS

Dear Christopher Guest. Wha happened?! The yellow-brick road you paved from your exquisitely daft performance as Nigel Tufnel in *This Is Spinal Tap* to your directorial (and acting) credits for the wonderfully silly *Waiting for Guffman*, *Best in Show* and even *A Mighty Wind*, has seemingly come to a dead, stale end with *Mascots*. There were certainly clues: 2006's *For Your Consideration* was good for a few laughs, but was entirely unmemorable.

Which brings us to *Mascots*, made in the same "mockumentary" vein as Guest's other films, about the world of competitive sports *mascotting* — yes, like everything these days, it's a verb — where the best fight it out to win the World Mascot Association's Gold Fluffy Award. It's basically a rehashed *Best in Show* — Guest's film about competitive dog shows à la Westminster — but much less funny and with a cast (many who also starred in his former films) that just can't find its

chemistry. The humor feels altogether dated this time around; perhaps Guest is finally showing his baby boomer stripes. For one, there's quite a bit of groping, like the pervy fist mascot played by Chris O'Dowd (who finally broke his typecast and is decidedly uncharming), who mimes screwing the wife of the owner of his team in the stands while she objects in horror. In a time of Donald Trump's rhetoric, this feels incredibly tone-deaf, and a cheap joke at that. There are a few redeeming points; the beloved Corky St. Clair of *Waiting for Guffman* fame (played by Guest) returns and is a bright spot, as is Parker Posey, who nails the goofy and self-serious Southern belle Cindi Babineaux. Then there's one scene that is truly laugh-out-loud funny: For the competition, a plumber mascot pulls from a large plastic prop toilet a sidekick costumed as a cartoony piece of excrement and the two go on to do some hilariously upbeat choreography. In the end, sadly, there's not enough of this playfulness to pull the film out of the lame, formulaic category. Luckily, *Mascots* not only opened in select theaters Oct. 13, but also debuted on Netflix, so you can fast-forward to the dancing poop scene. You're welcome. (*Netflix*)

EIGHT DAYS A WEEK

Director Ron Howard has said that he hoped to make *Eight Days a Week* both for dedicated Beatles fans and for a younger generation that has little sense of who the Beatles were. And *Eight Days* is fine — a solid mix of archival footage, new interviews with Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr, crowd-sourced footage and reminiscences from now-famous people who once saw the Beatles. But *Eight Days* has a lot to cover, which makes it feel more like a primer than a story about a band that managed to tour for only a few years

of its wildly popular existence. They made a lot of money touring, and yet could still afford to quit — but what this says about their success is never explored. How did fans react, knowing they'd never see the Beatles again? As an introductory text, *Eight Days* gets the job done, and superfans will appreciate the new footage (including scenes from the final public performance at Candlestick Park and the true last performance on a rooftop in London). There's just too much cultural weight around the Beatles to fit into this movie, which leaves it feeling like we're revisiting familiar ground. (*Broadway Metro*)

HELL OR HIGH WATER

From its starkly gorgeous cinematography and atmospheric Western soundtrack to its top-notch cast and propulsive narrative, *Hell or High Water* is a heartbreaking movie that hums with the undeniable weight of tragedy. A pair of busted-out brothers in west Texas, Tanner (Ben Foster) and Toby (Chris Pine) begin robbing small banks, stealing just enough to pay off the reverse-mortgage that is holding the family's property hostage. As their crime spree escalates, the brothers are pursued by a crusty Texas marshal approaching retirement (Jeff Bridges) and his partner (Gil Birmingham). But beneath the suspenseful cat-and-mouse story, *Hell or High Water* evokes a deep and complex sense of inevitability. If *The Big Short* revealed to us exactly how the banks screwed the middle class from the top down, *Hell or High Water* shows us what getting fiscally fucked looks like at the ground level, in backwater towns where generations of ranchers watch helplessly as their hereditary holdings go up on the auction block of blatant corruption. (*Broadway Metro*)

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