

## Tribute Never Stands Still

**Modern Dance Documentary Pays Tribute to Jacob's Pillow Festival**

**Review by Kam Williams  
Special to TheSkanner News**

The Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival traces its roots back to the Thirties when it was founded on a farm nestled in the Berkshire Mountains by the legendary Ted Shawn (1891-1972). He envisioned the retreat as an oasis where modern dance might be practiced, choreographed and performed as a legitimate art form independent of classical ballet.

Other than being derailed by a temporary setback during The Depression, the festival's stature grew steadily over the ensuing years. In 1942, Shawn built a theater in a converted barn so that patrons could enjoy modern for modern's sake, independent of the distracting trappings of a big city opera house.

Now celebrating its 80th anniversary, Jacob's Pillow is a veritable mecca recognized as America's longest-running dance festival. Direct-

ed by Ron Honsa, 'Never Stand Still' is an enchanting tribute destined to delight both modern dance devotees and the curious alike.

Narrated by Bill T. Jones, this alternately educational and entertaining documentary divides its time between concert footage and informative interviews with industry icons like Merce Cunningham, Bill Irwin, Paul Taylor, Judith Jamison and Suzanne Farrell. We learn that dance is definitely a calling and not a life for anyone who wants a secure career path, since you're always just an ingénue or an injury away from losing the limelight forever.

Jamison reminds us, however, that to reach the top, you have to be more than merely technically adept. You need to be among those rarest of talents also capable of touching the human spirit.

Modern dance appreciated as a sacred endeavor enabling one to fly above the fray, if not literally, vicariously, at the very least.

**Excellent (4 stars)  
Unrated  
Running time: 74 minutes  
Distributor: First Run Features**



Never Stand Still

## Battleships fight Space Invaders



**International Armada Defends Earth from Aliens in Epic Naval Showdown**

**Review by Kam Williams  
Special to TheSkanner News**

Though ostensibly inspired by the Hasbro board game of the same name, "Battle-ship" is a special f/x-driven, sci-fi adventure that actually has much more in common with bombastic blockbusters like "Armageddon" (1998), "Transformers" (2007) and "Independence Day" (1996). To its credit, this variation on the theme does devote considerable attention to developing a back story before letting all hell break loose.

That gives the audience a reason to care about the characters upon the breakout of war with bloodthirsty invaders from outer space. Another positive is director Peter Berg's capable cast, led by veteran thespian Liam Neeson, Taylor Kitsch, Alexander Skarsgard and Brooklyn Decker. Along for the roller coaster ride is pop icon Rihanna, who more than holds her own in an auspicious acting debut as Petty Officer Cora Raikes.

However, the diva's diehard fans might be disappointed that she doesn't get to sing here, unless whispering a few bars of "Sentimental Journey" counts. Furthermore, her curvy physique is kept camouflaged for most of the movie under unflattering military fatigues.

The picture's point of departure is 2005, which is when we meet Stone (Skarsgard) and Alex Hopper (Kitsch), two brothers seemingly headed in opposite directions. The former is serving his country as captain of the destroyer USS Sampson, while his ne'er-do-well sibling

lands in jail over an attractive blonde (Decker) whose father (Neeson) is in charge of the entire Pacific fleet.

Fast forward to the present where we learn that Alex has not only enlisted in the Navy, but that he's already risen to the rank of Lieutenant. He is also dating Samantha over the objections of her disapproving dad who doesn't 100 percent trust that her hot-headed suitor has turned a new leaf.

Alex is in the process of summoning up the courage to ask Admiral Shane for permission to marry his daughter when five vessels arrive from planet G and proceed, without provocation, to decimate an international armada on maneuvers in the middle of the ocean. Suddenly, wedding plans have to take a back seat to defending the planet.

Furthermore, as the most senior officer aboard his ship to survive the initial attack, Alex assumes command of the USS John Paul Jones. This affords the former bad boy an opportunity to exhibit his bravery (in the tradition of Revolutionary War hero Jones' "I have not yet begun to fight!") as well as a much-needed chance to redeem himself in the eyes of his future father-in-law.

The epitome of a summer blockbuster: a dizzying display of derring-do, patriotism and fearlessness in the face of an overwhelming alien invasion on the high seas. And the guy even gets the girl.

**Very Good (3 stars)  
Rated PG-13 for profanity and intense violence.  
Running time: 131 minutes  
Distributor: Universal Pictures**

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