

REEL CRITIQUE

MOVIE REVIEWS

Stuart Little

Starring Geena Davis and Michael J. Fox (Voice Only)
Directed by Rob Minkoff

Stuart Little is a hilarious and entertaining adventure for people of all ages. After being adopted by the Little family, Stuart, a mouse (voiced by Fox), finds that not everyone in his new home welcomes him with open arms. Forced to compete with a brother who resents his smallness and a family cat who resents his species, Stuart must prove to his family that he belongs.

Filled with great action scenes — including a miniature car chase — and witty dialogue, this film is a clever, fun-filled romp. (Grade: B)

— Matt McCormick

Snow Falling on Cedars

Starring Ethan Hawke and Max von Sydow
Directed by Scott Hicks

Snow Falling on Cedars is a beautiful film. Ishmael (Hawke) is a small-town reporter covering a murder trial in the Pacific Northwest in the '50s who must deal with issues from his past, while witnessing the accused man's fight for life. Depicting the racism Japanese-Americans experienced during World War II, *Snow Falling on Cedars* is a love story, murder mystery and courtroom drama rolled into one. Exquisitely directed, this movie is poignant yet uplifting — despite dragging for 15 minutes in the middle. (Grade: B+)

— Matt McCormick

The Talented Mr. Ripley

Starring Matt Damon and Gwyneth Paltrow
Directed by Anthony Minghella

A surprisingly unsettling, exceedingly well-crafted thriller, *The Talented Mr. Ripley* is a film about a man who would rather be "a fake somebody than a real nobody." Tom Ripley (Damon) is sent to Italy to bring Dickie Greenleaf (Jude Law), the son of a rich shipbuilder, back to America. Ripley becomes obsessed with Dickie's life and his love, Marge (Paltrow). Minghella turns the most innocent of actions into something more sinister and does something few have done since Hitchcock — create an intelligent and compassionate film about the dark side of human nature. (Grade: A)

— Matt McCormick

Princess Mononoke

Starring Claire Danes and Minnie Driver (Voices only)
Directed by Hayao Miyazaki

Princess Mononoke is a visually stunning and dynamic film that mixes Eastern and Western animation and literary styles to make an original and imaginative film. Princess Mononoke is a young woman raised by an ancient species of intelligent wolves and now fights alongside them to defend a sacred forest from an industrial mining colony. In the middle of this war is Ashitaka, a young prince searching for a cure for a dark plague that will eventually kill him. The film is worth seeing for the visual imagery alone. (Grade: A)

— Kyle Whitacre

Magnolia

Starring Tom Cruise and Julianne Moore
Directed by Paul Thomas Anderson

Like a TV broadcast that is randomly changing channels, *Magnolia* tunes you in to such "programming" as a TV game show, an infomercial, a soap opera, and a cop show. Though radically different in their setup, each story is filled with intended parallels and complements, occasionally interacting with each other to create a creative web of drama and humor.

Magnolia weaves three stories together: in one, Jason Robards plays a dying TV producer who has an estranged son (Cruise) he would like to make amends with. In another, Philip Baker Hall plays a dying quiz show host who would like to make peace with his estranged and cocaine addicted daughter, played by Melora Walters. Jeremy Blackburn plays a child genius with a father who isn't dying, but is manipulating his son's gift for personal gain, and William H. Macy plays a former child genius, a washed-up one-

time celebrity robbed of his intellect by a bolt of lightning and of his money by his parents.

Magnolia centers on regret and redemption. There's hardly a character in the entire cast that isn't in some way trying to escape a tainted past, and most of the angst is focused on family matters.

Parental neglect, spousal infidelity, child abuse — it's all there. And more than one person is heard saying something along the lines of, "You may try to forget the past, but the past ain't gonna forget about you."

The film does get carried away with the parallels at times; in fact the entire point behind Macy's story seems only to mirror that of Blackburn's. And the two best performances of the movie, John C. Reilly as the gentle and good-natured cop who falls in love with Walter's fallen character, and Moore as Robard's grieving trophy wife (or soon to be trophy widow), may shine above the rest only because they are allowed to stand alone, without another actor essentially playing the same role.

The brilliant script by director Anderson takes the best of Martin Scorsese, J.D. Salinger, and Ricky Jay and melds them into a film that is both familiar and



PHOTO COURTESY OF NEW LINE CINEMA
Jason Robards (left) and director Anderson (right) behind the scenes of *Magnolia*.

screamingly original. Each character has been given a lifetime of depth and story that could not possibly be put into one movie, even one that clocks in at over three hours, a three hours well worth experiencing. (Grade: A-)

— Juan Loya

The Hurricane

Starring Denzel Washington and Liev Schreiber
Directed by Norman Jewison

The Hurricane is a rousing celebration of the human spirit and a triumph in moviemaking.

Following the true-life story of Rubin "Hurricane" Carter (Washington), a black prize fighter during the '60s, this movie tells the story of his wrongful imprisonment and his subsequent fight for justice. After being framed by a vengeful cop for several murders he didn't commit, Carter writes his autobiography while incarcerated.

Eventually a copy makes its way into the hands of a young African American student in Canada. After reading the book, the student contacts Carter and begins a friendship which leads him to start an all-out fight for the Hurricane's freedom with the help of his teachers.

Director Norman Jewison takes the opportunity to make a strong social message concerning race relations. Focusing on the wrongs Carter suffered as a result of racial prejudice, he crafts a story that demonstrates the

power of hate, mainly by making the audience hate the powers who imprisoned Carter. Entertainingly shot and edited, Jewison also uses actual footage from many of the early protests to free the Hurricane, lending the movie a greater sense of realism.

The acting in this film is superb. Washington delivers one of the most furiously impassioned performances of his career — every action and every word from Washington are captivating as his character journeys from a life of hatred to a life of hope and love. In fact, this performance should be the frontrunner for the best actor category in this year's Oscar race.

The only problem with the film is that it should have placed more focus on the man at the center of the storm than the racism that surrounded him. However, with Washington dominating all his on-screen seconds, the film is elevated through the sheer strength of his amazing talent.

This film is definitely Washington's and he certainly delivers. Sure to be one of the top contenders of the year in the major Oscar categories, *The Hurricane* is a knockout of a movie. (Grade: B+)

— Matt McCormick

Buyers hunt for next Blair Witch at Utah's Sundance Film Festival

PARK CITY, Utah (AP) — Movie buyers trolling the Sundance Film Festival that started Thursday might wish they could ask that witch in the woods whether there are any more at home like her.

The Blair Witch Project, acquired for \$1 million at Sundance last year, went on to gross \$140 million, the first bona fide blockbuster to come out of the nation's premier independent movie showcase.

While the movie's success prompted predictions that festivals like this would become crowded with films copying the shaky, home-video look and improvised approach of *Blair Witch*, there's little evidence of that in this year's 113 features at Sundance.

"It's not an easy film to emulate, the way it mixes genres," Sundance co-director Geoffrey Gilmore said. "It has a very sophisticated sense of documentary and horror films and also imagery, so it's hard to anticipate a lot of different kinds of imitators."

So buyers remain as cautious as

ever about opening their checkbooks at Sundance. Some distributors said there is even more caution this year because of recent box-office underachievers such as *Happy Texas* or *Next Stop, Wonderland*, which were multimillion dollar Sundance acquisitions.

"People are always looking for lightning to strike twice," Gerry Rich, president of worldwide marketing for MGM-United Artists, said. "That can be dangerous if you go to Sundance looking to repeat a phenomenon that happened the year before."

"We don't go there with a mandate to come back with a film under our arms. Maybe we're geniuses if we come back empty-handed."

Founded in 1978 and taken over by Robert Redford's Sundance Institute in 1985, the festival runs through Jan. 30. Though the festival began as a creative showcase, the success of *Blair Witch* emphasizes that it has become as much a movie marketplace where frenzied

See SUNDANCE on Page 6.

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Wednesday, January 26th Interviews* 12pm-9pm
MSC138

Thursday, January 27th Invitation Only Party

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Tables with information will be in the MSC Hallway January 18th through the 21st and January 24th and 25th. A table will also be at the MSC Open House Sunday, January 23rd.

*You must attend an Informational Meeting before you sign up for an interview.

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