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## REEL CRITIQUE

**The Barbershop**  
MGM  
Directed by Tim Story  
Starring Cedric the Entertainer, Ice Cube

Delivering a great cast and a solid plot, *The Barbershop* is worth more than the cost of a shave and a haircut. Cedric the Entertainer gives a wonderful performance by carrying the comedic weight of the movie while simultaneously playing the role of mentor. Ice Cube, one of today's most underrated actors, also delivers a strong performance. The supporting cast including Sean Patrick Thomas and rapper Eve, who provides a solid performance.

In this film, Ice Cube's character, Calvin, feels weighed down and chained to the barbershop that he inherited from his father. He feels as though he is being held captive by his South Side Chicago barbershop until he sells it to a crooked businessman. It is only then that Calvin is able to see the value of the it as a community treasure. From this point on, Calvin opens his eyes to the everyday events going on in the barbershop, thus increasing the value of it in his eyes. He then struggles to find a way to regain his inheritance.

The beauty of this movie lies in the conversations and the relationships among the people in the barbershop. Another delightful surprise is that *The Barbershop* manages to avoid cliched characters and plot lines. Through the dialogue of its characters, *The Barbershop* creates a story that anyone can relate to while creating a place that is somehow familiar to its audience. This is a movie that is definitely worth seeing in theaters and adding to the home viewing selection when it comes out on DVD and VHS.



—Matt Caffey

**Sweet Home Alabama**  
Touchstone Pictures  
Directed by Andy Tennant  
Starring Reese Witherspoon

The war between the North and the South has never fully ended, and in *Sweet Home Alabama* it chooses Melanie Carmichael's (Reese Witherspoon) love life as its newest battlefield.

After becoming engaged to Andrew (Patrick Dempsey) in New York City, Melanie must return home to Alabama to divorce her husband Jake (Josh Lucas) — who no one in NYC knows anything about. Back on her home territory, Melanie finds her past and future colliding in this romantic comedy.

Having not been home in seven years, Melanie is soon surrounded by old friends, family and the past she'd tried to leave behind. She ends up torn between the sophisticated New York fashion designer she has become and the down-home trouble-maker she used to be, complete with the men each life includes.

Witherspoon brings an honesty to this character that has rightfully earned her the title of "America's New Sweetheart." With excellent

comedic timing, Witherspoon proves you really can take the girl out of the South, but never the South out of the girl.

The soundtrack of this movie deserves a lot of its own as well. With Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Sweet Home Alabama" as the cornerstone of the movie's music, the presence of Avril Lavigne and Dolly Parton perfectly capture the two extremes this movie portrays.

While this movie is plagued by overly cliched portrayals of Southern "trailer folk" and New York "Yankees", *Sweet Home Alabama* is a great date movie that is sure to leave viewers with a smile and thoughts of finding that one true love.



—Denise Schoppe

**Swimfan**  
Twentieth Century Fox  
Directed by John Polson  
Starring Erika Christensen, Jesse Bradford

A movie labeled by critics as "*Fatal Attraction* in a high school setting," *Swimfan* struggles to float.

Ben Cronin (Jesse Bradford), a star swimmer with the perfect girlfriend (Shiri Appleby), finds himself in trouble after cheating on her with the new girl in school, Madison Bell (Erika Christensen). Unfortunately for Ben, the secret lover turns out to be an obsessive psycho.

The plot is fairly predictable — psycho gets rejected by boy, psycho tries to ruin boy's life, add more fuel to the fire, Ben was a drug-abusing thief before becoming a Stanford-worthy athlete, making it easier for Madison to pull off her evil schemes.

*Swimfan* has some awkward lines and a serious lack of depth, turning some of the apparently chilling scenes into jokes. For example, when Madison screams in one of her psychotic fits, the audience laughs.

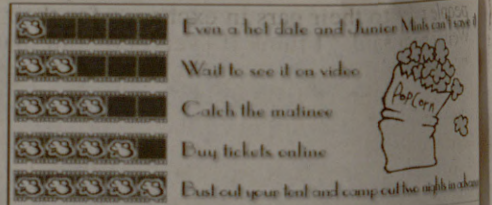
On a more positive note, it's nice to see someone other than Freddie Prinze Jr. or Tara Reid in a movie about high school students. Fresh faces like Jesse Bradford and Erika Christensen make the movie more enjoyable.

The film is not without suspense, however. Though the predictability factor is high, Madison and Ben have a few extra tricks up their sleeves that do come as a surprise.

Overall, if you're looking for an original, thought-provoking Oscar contender, you'd better wait for the next Tom Hanks flick. But if you want to see a semi-thrilling movie that requires little or no thought, *Swimfan* is just the movie for you.



—Erica...

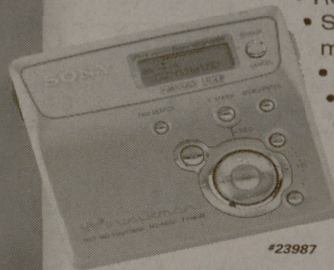


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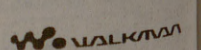
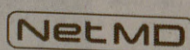
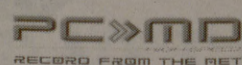


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