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Pop princesses hit the big screen

Britney 'Spears' starring role



Teen pop star Britney Spears stars in 'Crossroads,' the story of three childhood friends, who after eight years apart, rediscover their friendship on a cross-country trip.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MTV.COM

by Niki Clouse
staff writer

Pop star Britney Spears' "Crossroads" big-screen debut was the hot spot for giggling young girls this weekend at Tinseltown. A few guys also seemed to enjoy it because Spears definitely got the chance to show off her assets. The film is rated PG-13, but it does push toward R at times.

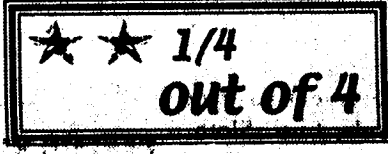
The movie starts out with three eighth grade girls burying a box filled with items that symbolizes their dreams for the future. Four years later, the girls, who grew apart over the years, get together to dig up the box on graduation night. The next day the girls, who are barely on speaking terms, find themselves going on a road trip with a guy that one of the girls saw singing at a local bar.

Lucy (Spears) hopes to find her mother in Arizona. Kit (Zoë Saldana) wants to surprise her fiance out in California where he is attending school. Mimi (Taryn Manning) is pregnant, but wants to get a record deal in L.A., and Ben (Anson Mount) drives the three girls, even though he is alleged to have killed a man. Spears plays "Mimi's friend" at the age of 18, which she has planned to change on graduation night with her lab partner. Saldana's character is the self-centered one of the group.

Kit's attitude really clashes with Mimi's because Kit always tries to act as though she is better than Mimi, which results in numerous fights. Yes, there are punches thrown during those catfights.

Spears does not embarrass herself in front of the camera. She actually makes it look as though she has done acting for the big screen before. Although she's more promising than Mariah Carey in "Glitter" and Mandy Moore in "A Walk to Remember," this is probably not going to be the breakthrough for her in an acting career.

The movie does touch upon real teen problems such as pregnancy, heartbreaks and rape, but it pushes away from these issues once it begins to get into them. This may be because the actress/singer needs to protect her image. The movie is decent for the younger generation, but for a college student who may be deciding on whether to spend the \$7 on a cheap case of beer or to go and see "Crossroads," the beer would most likely be the best choice out of the two.



Mandy adds 'Moore' to her resume

by Emily Linendoll
staff writer

If you find the catchy pop lyrics of Mandy Moore growing on you more and more, then so will her acting in the movie "A Walk to Remember," based on the novel by Nicholas Sparks.

Though her character was irritating at first, Moore's acting was impressive as she toned down her sexy pop star image to play the role of Jamie Sullivan, a conservative and unpopular girl who is more interested in the world and helping others than being part of the "in-crowd" in high school. However, her world gets turned upside down when she encounters Landon Carter (Shane West), a popular, yet troubled boy.

When Landon gets in trouble with the school, he is required to do community service, and he isn't too happy about it. Landon feels that participating in activities such as the school play would hurt his image. At first, he does not put forth much effort, and doesn't take what he is doing seriously. Since Jamie also participates in community service, the two become friends, but strictly "secret" friends.

As they spend more time together, they become closer and closer. Jamie opens Landon's mind and makes him realize that there is more to life than just being cool. Landon starts seeing Jamie as a wonderful and intriguing person, not the geek that all his friends see her as.

The two end up falling in love, and despite what friends say, Landon puts aside his popular image and chooses Jamie over his supposed "real" friends. Unfortunately, their love is caught short, as it must overcome the greatest obstacle ever known to man.

I will forewarn you, this movie is a total tearjerker and chick flick, but definitely touches the heart. Dramatic and inspirational, this story is about the power of true love and enjoying life to the fullest. It will take you on an emotional ride you'll never forget and is

only thing that bothered me in the movie was Moore's character. At times she just seemed a bit too innocent, but as the movie progressed she started to grow on me. Not only was Moore a stunning actress, but an extremely talented singer while performing songs in the movie. And if you still can't get enough of her, she has four songs included in the soundtrack for "A Walk to Remember."

So grab your girlfriends and a box of Kleenex or two, because I promise you, you're going to need them.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROTTENTOMATOES.COM

Set in the lowlands of North Carolina in the mid 1990s, "A Walk to Remember" follows the rite of passage of a jaded, aimless high school senior as he falls in love with a guileless young woman whom he and his friends once scorned.

well worth the splurge to Tinseltown.

I was a little hesitant to see this movie at first because I didn't know much about it or what to expect, and that turned out to be the best part. The



Top 25 date movies will keep you in the mood after popcorn is gone

by Megan McNamara
staff writer

A good date movie is one that really puts you and your honey in the mood for love. It appeals to both sexes, sparks an interesting conversation, and might even lead to a little hand holding. E network's "Rank," hosted by Brooke Burke, put in order the best 25 date movies of the last 25 years.

Coming in at No. 25 is "Top Gun" with Tom Cruise. No. 24 is the classic, old-fashioned love story, "The Princess Bride" and No. 23 is "The Bodyguard." No. 22 is "Say Anything," with John Cusack and ranking at No. 21 is "Legends of the Fall."

No. 20, "The Sixth Sense," is the movie you don't want to miss if

you're looking for a good excuse to reach out and touch your date. It's the perfect combination of a scary thriller and touching love story. "My Best Friend's Wedding" ranks at No. 19 while Eddie Murphy and Halle Berry co-star in, "Boomerang," the pick for No. 18. Who can resist a sexy English accent in No. 17, "Four Weddings and a Funeral"? No. 16 is a hilariously funny movie about an affair with some of mom's homemade apple pie. "American Pie" is guaranteed to make you laugh.

No. 15 is "While You Were Sleeping," No. 14 is "Bridget Jones Diary," and No. 13 takes us to the "Moulin Rouge." Coming in at No. 12 is, "Out of Sight," and Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks rank at No. 11 in "Sleepless in Seattle."

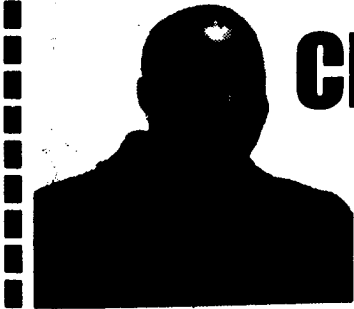
The No. 10 spot belongs to, "Good Will Hunting," a movie about friendship, math, and "seeing about a girl." The No. 9 movie, "Forrest Gump," is a great movie for your first or 50th date and No. 8, "Dirty Dancing" will make even the shyest of guys want to get their groove on.

Coming in at No. 7 is, "Pretty Woman," a story of a hooker who turns a trick that lands her in the lap of her very own prince charming. No. 6 will test your date's ability to laugh at a twisted love story and a new kind of hair gel in, "There's Something About Mary." "Titanic" is No. 5 on the list while the No. 4 position goes to, "Shakespeare In Love."

"If you can't get lucky after this movie, you can't get lucky in a

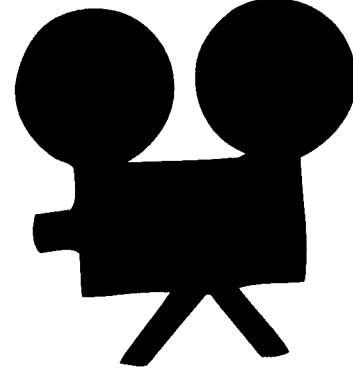
women's prison," said Danny Bonaduce about "Ghost" which came in at third. Earning the silver medal is a movie with a great mix of sports, loyalty and of course, love. "Jerry Maguire" had fans everywhere quoting "Rank's" most memorable pick-up line, "you had me at hello."

Finally, drum roll please...the No. 1 date movie of all time is, "When Harry Met Sally," with Billy Crystal and Meg Ryan asking the question, "Can men and women just be friends?" This movie is the touching story of how opposites attract, how a couple learns to love and respect one another and, oh yeah, how to fake an orgasm.



Chris Flix's Video Picks

A weekly entertainment guide to current movie rentals



Once again, Behrend movie watchers, Chris Flix returns on the scene to give you the high and low of this week's movie rentals.

For all you psychology majors out there, I am sure you guys are going to love my pick this week, if you haven't already seen it. "Don't Say A Word," starring Michael Douglas and Brittany Murphy, is a superb psychological thriller about a girl (Murphy) with important information locked up somewhere in her mind. It is up to a child psychiatrist (Douglas) to get the information out of her, before the bad guys do hurtful things to his family.

This is a great, fast-paced movie and it does really keep you on the edge of your seat from start to finish. The director could have cut out an irrelevant scene or two here or there, but that is my only complaint because I sincerely liked this movie. Douglas does an awesome job as the shrink, and Murphy was remarkable, as well. Want to know my grade for this movie? "I'll never tell..." Just kidding, I couldn't resist.
Chris Flix Grade: B+

While channel surfing on a boring summer day, did you ever happen to land on MTV in the middle of an eight-hour "Daria" marathon, and wonder who watches this stuff? Well,

it has come to my attention that the freaks and geeks of society do have a voice, and the world is interested in dull, weird, mad-at-the-world characters similar to Daria.

My example is "Ghost World," starring Steve Buscemi and Thora Birch. It is about a pair of high school friends who have big plans after graduation, but one of them (Birch) falls short as she gets tangled in her life of self-misery and gloominess. So, she meets a nerdy jazz fanatic (Buscemi) and plays with his emotions to keep herself entertained.

Now, I myself have never been into the whole Daria-like "life sucks" thing, so I thought this movie was

pretty bad, saved only by the weird corner-store junkie with the mullet. But, for all you Daria fans, and those who are interested in the comic books the movie is based on, I'm sure you will love it.

Chris Flix Grade: D

Now get to your video store, movie watchers, and take my word for it. I am Chris Flix, your No. 1 movie man, and I will see you next week.

Chris used to be a manager at a movie theatre in Virginia and is currently an employee at Giant Eagle Video.

'John Q' will do anything

by Daniel J. Stasiewski
staff writer

In 1942, Warner Bros. released a propaganda film in which love is sacrificed for the greater good of stopping the Nazis. You may have heard of it; it's called "Casablanca."

While "Casablanca" had a superb story wrapped around its very subtle message, director Nick Cassavetes doesn't hide the fact that his new film "John Q" is propaganda. The film's often-blatant drive for national health insurance may provide some food for thought, but the inability to mesh any opinion with its story makes "John Q" as monotonous as its title.

John Q. Archibald (Denzel Washington) and his wife Denise (Kimberly Elise) have hit hard times during the slow economic period. John had been cut back to part-time at the plant, and Denise just took a job as a grocery store clerk to make ends meet. The couple still can't seem to keep up with all the bills.

When their son Mike (Daniel E. Smith) collapses at his Little League game, John and Denise find out Mike's heart is gradually, undoubtedly failing. Dr. Turner (James Woods), Mike's cardiologist, tells the Archibalds their son is in desperate need of a transplant, but a hospital financial officer, Rebecca Payne (Anne Heche), informs them that their insurance won't pay for the procedure.

John searches everywhere for financial aid, but even the government can't help him. His frantic attempts to raise the \$75,000 down payment for the \$250,000 operation also fails. Without any other clear choice, John Q. takes Dr. Turner and the entire emergency room hostage. His only demand is to have his son's name put on the donor list.

I have no problem with a politically biased film. Even some of the heaviest message movies, like 2000's "The Contender," manage to let their real agenda take a backseat to the story. "John Q," however, sees its political motives take the forefront and the film suffers because of it.

The not-so-hidden agenda of "John Q" tends to split the film in two. The plot of John struggling to save his son has its screen time, but it's too often interrupted with dialogue that is nothing more than a public service an-

nouncement. Loud and almost obnoxious outbursts regarding HMOs and health coverage turn what could have been a serious debate into laughable one-sided arguments.

The soapbox speeches wouldn't be half as distracting if they would stick to the topic of national health insurance. Writer Jeffrey Kearns throws in additional comments about gun control, satirizes the media, and takes shots at political campaign public relations. The inept comments only add to the distraction of the excessively preachy dialogue.

One of the biggest mistakes a filmmaker could make is showing a lack of confidence in an obviously standard story. Cassavetes makes this mistake when he relies on clips of talk shows and politicians to hammer the issue at hand at home. It's quite sad that the strongest line in the film comes not from any of the characters, but from "Politically Incorrect's" Bill Maher.

Telling us the lack of a national health insurance program is our own fault, the short Bill Maher clip makes the political statement the film wants to but doesn't.

Washington is naturally amazing as the distraught father who makes a bad decision for a good reason. With Washington, a tremendous performance is expected, regardless of the caliber of film. His emotional performance remains sturdy in the otherwise feeble film.

The other cast members see their performances fall prey to the film's political agenda. Only one actor other than Washington gives a heartfelt performance. The son's male nurse, whose credit is impossible to find, is the strong supporting role this film needs. His sincere and personal touch to the minor role stands out in a big way.

Will "John Q" have people writing their congressmen like the film suggests on two separate occasions? Who knows? Even if it succeeds in raising awareness about the state of America's health care system, "John Q" will never amount to anything more than a shoddy propaganda film.

