

It's no 'Secret:' 'Harry Potter' is fantastic



PHOTO FROM ROTTENTOMATOS.COM

Harry Potter (left) returns for those who are young at heart.

by Daniel J. Stasiewski
staff writer



Like its predecessor, "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets" is a surefire blockbuster. Children will love it, teenagers will love it, and adults will love it. To the executives at Warner Bros., this huge audience is easily translated into dollar signs. With all the money "The Chamber of Secrets" is bound to earn, Warner Bros. saw no reason to limit the budget to anything less than \$100 million.

"The Chamber of Secrets" takes full advantage of its colossal budget, extravagant costumes, and magnificent visual effects. Money is an important factor in this production, even more than most Hollywood pictures. The beauty of bankability may be what made "The Chamber of Secrets" a reality, but it's the magnificent heart that makes it an instant classic.

Right before his second year at Hogwart's School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Harry Potter (Daniel Radcliffe) is visited by a peculiar little house elf named Dobby. Dobby warns Harry that bad things will happen if Harry goes back to Hogwarts. However, the only other option is staying in the muggle (non-magic folk) world with the Dursleys. Even the possibility of death is better than living with his dreadful aunt and uncle, so Harry takes a chance and returns to Hogwarts.

It doesn't take long for Harry to catch up with his pals Hermione (Emma Watson) and Ron (Rupert Grint). Soon, the entire school is back in the swing of things with Quidditch competitions, screaming Mandrake potting, and the occasional visit from Nearly Headless Nick. The only thing out of the ordinary is the new Defense of the Dark Arts teacher, Gilderoy Lockhart (Kenneth Branagh).

The routine is suddenly interrupted, when Mrs. Norris,

the caretaker's cat, is found petrified with a bloody message just above her saying, "The Chamber of Secrets has been opened. Enemies of the heir, beware." Soon, students begin to fall prey to the mysterious predator. Harry, however, is faced with an even bigger problem; he's the only person in the school who can actually hear the invisible villain.

Call it the kid in me, but I absolutely loved "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets." Between the mystery and the magic, this film is alive in more ways than most movies out there today. The visuals are eye-popping, as expected. The sets, especially the Weasley's house that looks like it belongs in a Seussian ghetto, are spectacular in their enormity, as expected. In "Harry Potter," success doesn't lie in its bigger,

badder adventure. Rather, the colorful performers and the ever growing characters make this "Harry Potter" a worthy follow-up.

You can tell the kids are more comfortable in their characters this time around. Daniel Radcliffe and Rupert Grint are a charming duo. While their characters seem to undergo only minimal developments this time around, the pair still has the adventure aspect under control.

Emma Watson, on the other hand, sees her character, Hermione face bigotry based solely on her parentage. Watson handles Hermione's new layer like a pro, giving a marvelously dynamic performance for a novice actress.

Last time, Robbie Coltrane's Hagrid stole the show, but in this installment, his character is part of a darker story. This leaves room for Kenneth Branagh to take the narcissistic and arrogant Gilderoy Lockhart to the extreme of pomposity. Branagh's Lockhart is the highlight of an already dazzling movie. His scenes are easily the most fun, triggering the hardest laughter and widest smiles.

I won't ever say this is a better film than the first movie, but if there is one improvement it's in director Chris Columbus' vision. Other than being brave enough to cut a little more from the book, Columbus begins to take chances by moving the camera more. Sure, it may not seem like much, but his treatment of the unseen baddie was more creative than his usual straightforward direction. His bold new approach also amplifies the darker tone of Steven Kloves' screenplay.

"The Chamber of Secrets" isn't just another big-budget film; it's a celebration of cinema. In an industry where an exploding White House makes the most money, it's a relief to see the heart triumph, even just once in a while. Films like "Harry Potter" make me believe Hollywood can still produce a sincere blockbuster. If that's not magic, I don't know what is.

Def Jam brings some bling-bling to the arcade

by Olivia Page
staff writer

Rappers are infamous for getting in trouble for committing violent acts. Now, they will be rewarded for it, that is, in the video game Def Jam Vendetta.

Has anyone ever wondered what a video game would be like with Def Jam music? Ok, that's already happened with NBA Streets. Electronic Arts teamed up with WWF No Mercy, Aki, to put together a game that has DMX, Ludacris, Methodman, Redman, N.O.R.E, and Scarface, to name a few, in the character

cap. Each game has a unique style. There is a tag team competition and the bosses are Method-Man and Red-Man. There will also be total of 15,000 moves with the 47 characters.

Def Jam Vendetta has sort of a different story theme than most video games. The story is based on an underground fighting circuit in New York. The fights are bossed by D-Mob, the pinstriped overlord who ran the main character out of the scene and out of town.

Now the main character is brought in to replace an old friend who had to quit the tournament with an injury. The main

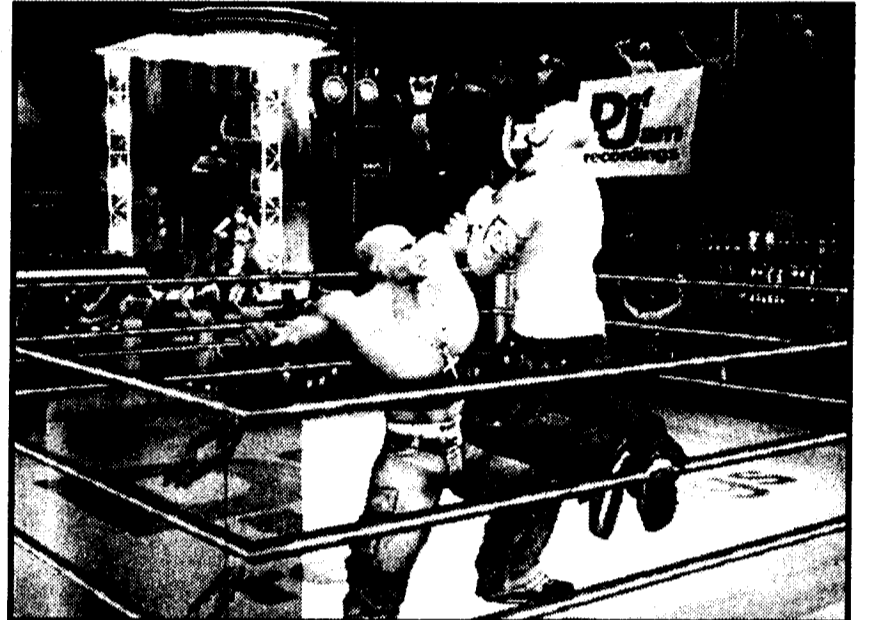


PHOTO FROM IDG.NET

Too bad 2 Pac and Biggy couldn't have settled their feud on a video game.

lineup. It actually includes 12 Def Jam artists and their music, with more than 40 characters in total. Def Jam Vendetta comes out in February 2003.

The game is an arcade style game whose setting is an underground fight club. This fight match meets a wrestling game category. Each different game is filled with different characters and original music with commentary provided by Funk Master Flex. The sound effects are provided by Effects House, who worked on The Matrix film. Def Jam records will supply the music and are making sure that the game represents the company accurately as the artist has a lot of say on how their characters fight. There are more than 10 venues and five are based on the styling of various Def Jam artists.

There are several modes of play including single-player, free for all, tag and handi-

characters tasks include winning the tournament by defeating D-Mob and getting back with his old girlfriend, Angel, who seems to have found the D-Mob's company more comfortable. He must first fight a dozen boss characters who are guest starring Def Jam artists. Another feature in the game is a part where there is a fight between the main characters' various girlfriends, because if the main character wants to get another girlfriend he has to use that girl to beat up his previous.

Of the 25 Behrend students asked, 17 students said that they would be interested in playing the game. Eight students said that they would not play the game. Some of the reasons students answered no were because they did not own systems that are running the game, which are Playstation 2 and Game Cube.

Two of rock's best stay on top with new CDs



PHOTO FROM ROLLING STONE.COM

The 90s were the decade U2 members discovered sunglasses, they even wear them at night.

by Kevin Fallon
staff writer

U2: "The Best of 1990-2000"

In the 80s, U2 emerged as a prolific, thoughtful, and earnest rock band. However, U2 guitar player the Edge, described U2's music in the 90s as the sound of four guys chopping down the Joshua Tree. U2 celebrates the decade by releasing "The Best of 1990-2000."

In the 90s, U2 defied everything that

made it famous in the 80s. Out was a group of humble Irish lads; in was a band of flamboyant rock stars complete with sunglasses and big screen TVs. With its first release of the decade, "Achtung Baby," U2 slapped its basic rock format in the face and successfully experimented with fusing electronic music with rock. With "Zooropa" and "Pop" the band pushed boundaries further.

"Best of 1990-2000" is not a "best of" album in the literal sense, "Achtung

Baby" is the most complete collection of U2's best music of the time. "Best of 1990-2000" however, does revisit some of U2's great moments in a new light.

Much of U2's music in the 90s was overshadowed by the greatness of the "Joshua Tree" or criticized for being too artsy.

"Best of" features classics like the anthem "Beautiful Day," and the ballad "One," but also showcases some of the more passed over songs in the bands catalog such as "Stay, (Faraway, So Close)."

Unlike most best of albums that offer nothing new for fans, "Best of 1990-2000" has much to offer to the fan with all the studio albums. The special edition version of "Best of 1990-2000" features an extra "B-Sides" disk. Between the two CDs, there are 12 songs either released for the first time, B-sides, or from soundtracks. There are also 10 remixes. Many of these new mixes revisit the "Pop" album because the band admits it was rushed to finish it.

"Best" forces us to take notice that underneath the sunglasses and flashing lights, U2 wrote some damn good music.

Grade: B

Pearl Jam: "Riot Act"

Don't call it a comeback. Pearl Jam has been here for years. Let the riot begin.

With all the talk about rock's revival by all the "the" bands, it's easy to forget that Pearl Jam has been making solid rock records since it and Nirvana started the last rock revolution nearly a decade ago. The Jam's newest album "Riot Act," shows that after 10 years and 79 albums (74 of which were live) Pearl Jam still

has something new to say.

"Riot Act," in typical P.J. fashion, throws 70s stadium rock, youth angst, and textured, melodic guitars into a blender. The result is a smooth mix of powerful and driving songs.

Vedder's inner struggles. "Riot Act" also features "Love Boat Captain," a tribute to the nine fans who died at a Pearl Jam concert, where Vedder quotes the Beatles by saying, "All you need is love."

"Riot Act" features a few unusual



PHOTO FROM ROLLINGSTONE.COM

Pearl Jam keep on rockin' in the free world.

Vedder's vocals are more subdued on "Riot Act" and he comes off more thoughtful and understated compared to the in your face approach of his rock peers. "I Am Mine" is an introspective song where Vedder sings, "I know I was born and I know I will die, the in between is mine."

Pearl Jam returns to its angrier grunge sound while still showing the progression of a more mature rock band. "Save You," is aggressive and sounds like it could be a "Vitalogy" B-side, while "Thumbing My Way" is a stunning acoustic look at

moments. "You Are" is an atypical Pearl Jam song that sounds more like Tool. Pearl Jam also gets political on "Bushleager." Here, Vedder takes a few swings at Dubya such as when he sings, "born on third thinks he got a triple."

Pearl Jam has reaffirmed its place as a band that puts quality music over commercial interest. Trends come and go but Pearl Jam has proven it can evolve and stay fresh while keeping its own identity. This "Riot" is a prolific act.

Grade A-