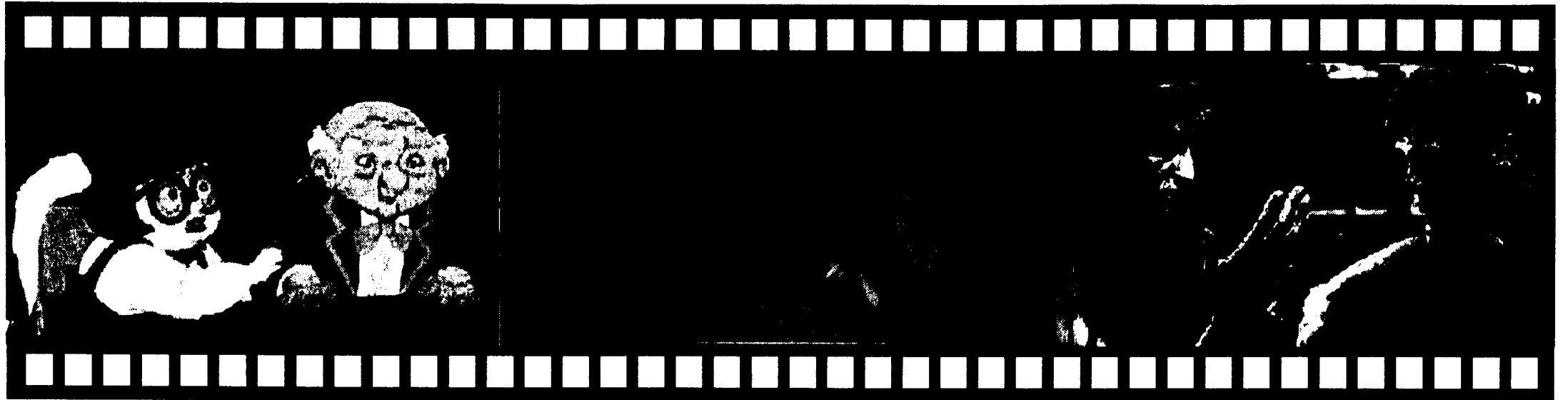


Holiday movies aren't very cheerful



by Daniel J. Stasiewski
staff writer

The holiday movie season started with the release of "Harry Potter" a few weeks ago, but the unusually packed Thanksgiving weekend marks the onslaught of Hollywood's holiday movies. With five major releases on the day before Thanksgiving and no signs of slowing until January, my only hope is that the rest of the movies are better than these three.

Adam Sandler's Eight Crazy Nights ★★ out of 4

After his drunken rampage destroys the city's holiday ice sculptures, Davy Stone (Adam Sandler) faces hard time. The 33 year old delinquent's only way to avoid a trip to the state pen is to help referee youth league basketball with the town's tiny, clubfooted septuagenarian, Whitey. Whitey's gigantic heart affords Davy the opportunity to make up for his past indiscretions, but Davy's stone-cold façade won't soften one bit. It'll take a holiday miracle for Davy let down his guard and start to live the honest life he's been avoiding for years.

"Eight Crazy Nights" is exactly what I

expected from an animated Adam Sandler movie. The animation gives Sandler a chance to be fouler and less mature than any of his previous films.

There is no way he would have been able to get away with half of his disgusting antics in a live-action film. A woman with three breasts and deer defecation is somehow less offensive as cartoon.

Still, Whitey can distract from the film's utter vulgarity with his Mickey Rooney looks and Grandpa Simpson acumen. Whitey's musical numbers, especially "Technical Foul," are funny, if only because the humor is so toned down in comparison with the standard Sandler. Other songs are less like his amusing "Saturday Night Live" ditties and more like half-assed attempts at musical theatre. The awful realization of this being the first animated musical in years should make Walt Disney's cryogenically frozen head spin.

Sandler's holiday picture isn't ever going to be as classic as "The Grinch" or "It's a Wonderful Life," nor would I expect it to be. But for anyone out there looking for the most disgusting Christmas movie of all time, look no further than "Eight Crazy Nights."

Treasure Planet ★ 1/2 out of 4

When a spacecraft crash lands outside of his house, the rebellious Jim Hawkins is quick to help rescue the pilot. The mortally wounded pilot gives Jim a metal sphere and warns him to watch out for "the cyborg." When Jim discovers that sphere is actually a map to the legendary Treasure Planet, the young man, along with family friend Dr. Doppler, sets out to find the loot of a thousands worlds.

At the spaceport, Jim and Doppler board a ship, and Jim is immediately designated cabin boy. His supervisor is the ship's boisterous cook, John Silver, who just happens to be a cyborg. Jim warily works with Silver, and soon becomes a first rate spacer (space sailor). Additionally, Jim befriends the affable cook. When Jim discovers Silver is actually a pirate who's just out to steal treasure, the adventure he expected becomes a test of his courage, ability, and spirit.

Since "Treasure Island" is the first book I can remember reading, I can't help feeling saddened by this arrogant perversion of Robert Lewis Stevenson's classic novel. The 19th Century design of both costumes and backgrounds fits so awkwardly with the outer space setting

and alien characters that it begs the question, why didn't Disney just make "Treasure Island?"

The story still has the soul of Stevenson's original adventure, but the futuristic concept is so fundamentally flawed that it ruins the entire experience.

Disney's filmmakers should know a period-sci-fi movie won't work, especially after the failure of "Atlantis." Instead, they opted to muddle up a classic. Would you really want to see "A Tale of Two Galaxies," "Around the Universe in 80 Days," or "Little Women of the Crab Nebula?" It's this unnecessary and unflattering re-imagining that makes "Treasure Planet" Disney's worst animated feature to ever get a theatrical release.

Solaris ★★ out of 4

After receiving a ghostly message from an old friend, therapist Dr. Chris Kelvin (George Clooney) travels to a space station orbiting the seemingly conscious planet Solaris. There he finds two crew members are dead, including the friend who summoned him. Two others are alive, but show numerous signs of mental instability. Kelvin isn't able to understand

what is causing their behavior until he falls asleep and then wakes up next to his wife, who died years ago.

Suspicious at first, Kelvin soon decides this visitor is too much like his wife to let it escape. The second chance at love blinds Kelvin from the obviously inhuman traits of his reincarnated wife until he sacrifices his own reality to be with her again.

In "Solaris," rationality and emotion clash. George Clooney's character is completely incapable of having his heart and mind meet. Yet, the film requires the audience to do the very thing it says is impossible. If the story is followed as attentively as is required to understand it, it's hard to become emotionally entranced. If you try to fall in love with the characters, you become confused. Two clashing sides make "Solaris" hard to love or appreciate.

Because "Solaris" is a remake of the 1972 science fiction film "Solyaris," it's no wonder the dull sets and tedious dialogue are so reminiscent of the period. The film, however, feels more unnatural than mysterious when the sci-fi roots are combined with Steven Soderbergh's trademark directing. Hardly entertaining and rarely moving, the film's biggest highlights are the eerily serene images of Solaris.

Kelly Rowland follows her own Destiny on new CD

by Olivia Page
staff writer

Kelly Rowland's new album reveals the changes she had to go through to be an individual without Destiny's Child.

Rowland sang about boys, bills and independence with Destiny's Child. Now, on her own, she sings about peer pressure, self esteem and innocence lost, and love.



The song "Dilemma," with rapper Nelly, hit No. 1 by the end of its first month out, where it stayed for seven weeks. "Dilemma" also topped the rap singles chart and the R&B/hip-hop singles and tracks chart.

"Stole" is a bold, moving story about an outcast high school student. The song displays the student's alienation with vivid detail. Rowland hit the top 40 solo with "Stole." "Haven't Told You" is an alto version about a guy she gave her heart to and it has a guitar ballad. The songs on this album prove

that Rowland has an impressive soprano/ alto voice. Her "pop-princess" image appears on "Make You Wanna Stay," a catchy song about a guy she has not met but has talked to and it features rapper Joe Budden.

"Love/Hate" shows how she loves a guy but also hates him, so he has to go. Some of her songs are about boys but in a more mature way than her earlier works, such as only having a guy to pay bills.

Many people are going to have different opinions on music, but she has a nice voice and the album is pretty good, although Vibe magazine trashed her album by giving it a 2 and saying it was a sorry attempt.

Rowland credits her manager, Mathew Knowles (who is Beyonce's father) for coming up with the

idea for her to go solo. Rowland admitted to BET that she was in a rush to get "Simply Deep" finished.

The songs are very personal to Rowland. She goes in depth about how she grew up without a father and about how she and her mother struggled. Yes, Rowland's songs are very emotional. Her songs aren't exactly too happy.

She looked upon her cousin Solange Knowles (Beyonce's sister) to write the lyrics to "Alone," and three other songs. Rowland told her she wanted songs that showed the pain that she felt as a child.

Rowland has future plans with Destiny's Child, such as an upcoming album due next fall.

Even mobsters need help, again

By Philip Wuntch
The Dallas Morning News
(KRT)

Robert De Niro, Billy Crystal and director Harold Ramis may curse the day "The Sopranos" was born.

Their current venture, "Analyze That," a continuation of 1999's "Analyze This," benefits from the De Niro/Crystal bonhomie and several sharp one-liners. But it's never as pungent, clever or resonant as HBO's inspection of the angst-filled baggage that comes with organized crime.

The moviemakers may cry foul at comparing a film with a cable series. But even using their earlier movie as a point of reference, "Analyze That" marches to a been-there, done-that cadence. Attempting to recapture the electricity of "Analyze This" was possibly futile. That film was released three years ago, when the idea of De Niro making merry was still a novelty. By now, his comedic scowls and boisterous blustering are funny but famil-

iar. Viewers get the idea that they're watching him audition for a movie version of "All in the Family."

Still, he and Crystal give every evidence of enjoying each other's company, and some of their high spirits are contagious.

Once again, Crystal plays psychiatrist Ben Sobel. When first seen, Dr. Sobel is preparing to speak at the funeral of his father, a psychotherapist beloved by everyone except his family. Just as the surviving Sobel is about to eulogize, a cell phone rings and, in a cute sight gag, everyone at the services checks to see if it's theirs.

The call is from Sing Sing Prison, where mob boss Paul Vitti (De Niro) fakes a nervous breakdown and is released in Dr. Sobel's care. In the increasingly outlandish chain of events, Vitti tries a number of short-lived "civilian" jobs before becoming consultant on "Little Caesar," a television series about organized crime. Mean-

while, Dr. Sobel fluctuates between trying to care for Vitti and coming to terms with the demise of an unloved parent.

The screenplay flounders under the weight of too many storylines. To use pop psych vernacular, the movie's many plots never achieve a sense of

closure.

Under Ramis' adequate but uninspired direction, the large supporting cast responds with mixed results. In a tiny role as Dr. Sobel's wife, Lisa Kudrow appears to be in a consistent, and understandable, foul mood. Cathy Moriarty-Gentile, billed simply as Cathy Moriarty in her "Raging Bull" days, nimbly goes through the motions of an underworld godmother, while Joe Viterelli's mobster is a walking sight gag.

Don't be surprised if one day "Analyze That" turns up on a movie trivia show as the flick in which De Niro sings a "West Side Story" medley. He commits this misdeed in Sing Sing in order to prove that he's going bananas. His singing voice is horrifyingly funny, and that's probably what everyone will remember from "Analyze That."



PHOTO FROM KRTCAMPUS.COM
Billy Crystal and Robert DiNiro return in "Analyze That."

ANALYZE THAT
Grade: C+

Coming next week: The Beacon looks back at the best and worst of music and movies for 2002