

# The Beacon's Arts & Entertainment

## A look back at the highs and lows in movies

### 'Minority Report' tops, 'Rollerball' flops

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Twenty years ago, Steven Spielberg's "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial" warmed hearts, "Ghandi's" victory was at the Oscars, "Star Trek" suffered "The Wrath of Kahn," and Richard Gere was both "An Officer and a Gentleman." Of course, it was also the year Rambo spilt "First Blood" and "Grease 2" made a stain out of a classic.

Even though 2002 isn't quite in the books, the year already has its own memorable movies with classic potential. Will any of them actually be remembered 20 years from now? I guess only time will tell. Still, a better may be question whether they will be compared to "Tootsie" or "Rocky III?"

### THE GOOD

There are still a number of upcoming releases with a ton of potential, but I doubt any of them will be able to top "Minority Report." Steven



PHOTO FROM ROTTENTOMATOES.COM  
Cruise catches another pre-criminal in "Minority Report."

Spielberg's sci-fi thriller was not only his biggest adventure film since "Raiders of the Lost Ark," but it was also a timely socio-political piece. In a year where President Bush and Attorney General John Ashcroft seem all too prepared to throw judicial procedures out the window, it's awful fitting for judge, jury, and execu-

tioner John Anderton (played by Tom Cruise) to do the same thing on film.  
Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón's "Y Tú



PHOTO FROM ROTTENTOMATOES.COM  
The three amigos of "Y Tú Mama."

Mama También" was an art house fave. The uninhibited drama takes sexuality to the limits. However, the frankness is hardly the film's only claim to fame. A critical look at Mexico's class culture and wandering focus to the nonspecific pictures make "Y Tú Mama También" one of the most important films in the current revolution in Mexican film.

In "Far From Heaven" Director Todd Haynes creates a stylish throwback to the 1950s melodrama that is so perfect only the color distin-



PHOTO FROM SALON.COM

Quaid and Moore in a heavenly scene from "Far From Heaven."

guishes it from the real period. Julianne Moore gives the performance of her career as she tries to maintain her family's perfect suburban image (dubbed Mr. and Mrs. Magnatech). While the film occasionally borders on parody, the emotionally riveting characters and powerful story prove this is a film not to be taken lightly.

A visually stunning work of Japanese animation, "Spirited Away" is nothing short of a masterpiece. Hayao Miyazaki's mystical world of gods and monsters shows more heart and more creativity than any other film this year. In the tradition of "The Wizard of Oz" and "Star Wars," "Spirited Away" takes the audience to a mesmerizing world where the impossible



PHOTO FROM ROTTENTOMATOES.COM  
Chihiro gets "Spirited Away"

is possible and imagination is boundless.

Dizzying and bizarre are two words that are not usually associated with a romantic comedy, but simply classifying P.T. Anderson's "Punch-Drunk Love" as romantic comedy is a horrible injustice. Anderson's always eclectic casting brought Adam Sandler out of his immature shell, while his unconventional mesh of a modern story and classic styles produced his best directorial work to date.

### This year by the numbers

**\$431 Million** - The total domestic gross of "Spider-Man." The web-crawler broke record after record on its way to becoming the fifth highest grossing film of all-time.

**\$213 Million** - "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" became the highest grossing independent film of all time with its current domestic gross reaching \$213 million.

**\$4 Million** - The production budget of the \$213 Million dollar grossing "My Big Fat Greek Wedding."

**25,000** - The number of cricket fans that provided screams and war chants for the Helm's Deep battle sequence in "Lord of the Rings: the Two Towers."

**151** - The most theatres "Spirited Away" ever played in thanks, to Disney's distribution.

**40** - The James Bond franchise celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the release of "Die Another Day"

**17** - The number of theatres with stadium seating in Erie, PA.

**15** - Sequels dominated the box office 15 weekends of the year. Who says Hollywood doesn't have an original idea?

**4** - The number of weeks "Black Hawk Down" came in No. 1 at the weekend box office, the longest streak of the year.

### THE UGLY



PHOTO FROM ROTTENTOMATOES.COM  
LL Cool J takes one for the "Rollerball" team.

After moving the release date back nearly six months, MGM finally released the sci-fi remake "Rollerball." The film was butchered (quite obviously, I might add) to get a PG-13 rating, making it the worst film of the year.

The Erie film experience seems to be getting worse every year. It took months for the \$200 million indie hit "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" to finally make its Erie debut. The Robin Williams thriller "One Hour Photo" and Jennifer Aniston's dramedy "The Good Girl" only showed at Tinsletown on a weekend with small Hollywood releases.

Never making it to Erie were star-powered indies like "Punch-Drunk Love" with Adam Sandler and "Moonlight Mile" with Susan Sarandon and Dustin Hoffman. Even the Tom Hanks mob drama "Road to Perdition" didn't make it to Tinsletown. We did, however, have "XXX" on two screens.

And to top off the Erie film slump, the Great Lakes Film Association may abandon Erie for the town of Blackburg, Virginia. Short of a governmentally funded miracle, Erie will once again have to rely on the belated indie releases at Mercyhurst College for a well-rounded film experience.

### Unforgettable Performances

**Robin Williams as Seymour in "One Hour Photo"**

Williams created a maniac comparable to Norman Bates or Hannibal Lecter with his performance as a one-hour photo clerk who lives his life through his customers' pictures. His haunting performance will make you a little nervous every time you finish off a roll of film.



**Dennis Quaid as Frank Whitaker in "Far From Heaven"**

As the closeted suburban professional, Quaid's struggle with his desires is heartbreaking. Even when he comes off as the bad guy, Quaid just



won't allow hatred for Frank Whitaker to overtake compassion.

**Jennifer Aniston as Justine Last in "The Good Girl"**

The Emmy-winner turned in her glamour girl image to play a discount store clerk. Her dramatic turn was not only surprising, but also impressive, as Aniston made it clear her career won't evaporate, post-"Friends".



**Kenneth Branagh as Gilderoy Lockhart in "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets"**

Branagh steals every scene as the arrogant, but entirely phony Defense of the Dark Arts teacher. Sure, Gilderoy is no Henry V, but Branagh showed his passion for acting goes far beyond the realm of Shakespeare.



PHOTOS FROM ZAP2IT.COM



PHOTO FROM ROTTENTOMATOES.COM  
Wes Bentley falls flat, like "The Four Feathers."

### THE BAD

Every year there is a film so caught up in winning an Oscar it turns into nothing more than a lackluster piece of pretentious garbage. In 2002, that film was "The Four Feathers." Its obvious attempts at equaling recent epics like "The English Patient" are marred by its even more obvious lack of confidence from cast and crew, alike. Even the meticulous eye of director Shekhar Kaphur is blinded by the pressure to duplicate the success of his period drama, "Elizabeth."

After "The Fast and the Furious" made him a star, Vin Diesel needed a film that would allow him to flex his action star muscle again. The laughable

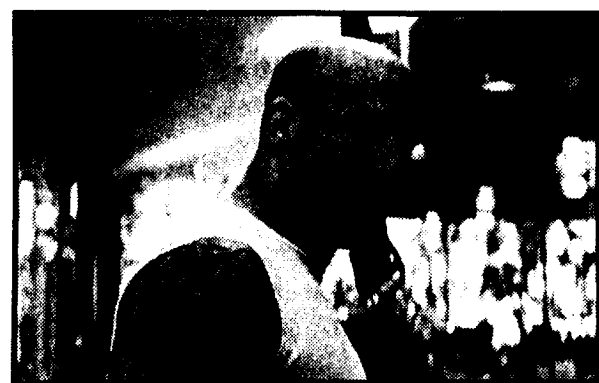


PHOTO FROM ROTTENTOMATOES.COM  
Vin Diesel flexes his action muscle too hard in "XXX"

action spectacle "XXX" was thrown together for

just that reason. With its B-movie action, crude script, and brainless characters, "XXX" was the movie equivalent of prostitution (and that is not a critique of the awkward sex scenes). Even worse, "XXX" has condemned Vin Diesel to forever face comparisons with Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger when his performances in "Saving Private Ryan" and "Boiler Room" prove he's more than a set of pecs.



PHOTO FROM ROTTENTOMATOES.COM  
Even the Jedi couldn't save "Attack of the Clones"

"Star Wars: Episode 2: Attack of the Clones" will go down in history as the first studio release to be shot completely digitally. Now, if only George Lucas would have been able to make the love story a little less awkward, the dialogue a little less contrived, the action a little less silly, the story a little....

The film might have been magnificent, but Disney's handling of "Spirited Away" was far from remarkable. The industry leader in film animation fumbled the distribution of the Japanese animated film, never allowing the film to make a wide release. The highest grossing film in Japan's history went completely unnoticed in America. If it wasn't for my previous mention of the film, you wouldn't have a clue of what I'm talking about.

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