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+ Splinter Reviews (IV)

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SUPERSIZE ME (2004)

The Michael Moore-style documentary that Michael Moore's lifestyle wouldn't allow him to make.
-Jason Woloski

OPEN WATER (2004)

Well, at least they stopped arguing.
-Steve Hyland

BEFORE SUNSET (2004)

Urban space and memory collide when Jesse (Ethan Hawke) and Celine (Julie Delpy) meet again. Replace Vienna with Paris and begin the exploration. What do you remember? What do they remember? Interrogate yourself and your memories to see how your perception has altered the so-called facts. Challenge yourself to wind down those alleyways and coffee shops to find the most important conversations that make up your life.
-Janos Sitar



THE BOURNE SUPREMACY (2004)

There are car chases and then there are car chases.

The Expendable: THE ROCK, GONE IN 60 SECONDS, THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS (and its offspring), and the innumerable ones that litter the Bond series—except for the one in TOMORROW NEVER DIES that sees Brosnan and Michelle Yeoh zip through the streets of Saigon on a Mercedes motorcycle. (Sticklers will point out that that's not really a car chase, that it should instead be compared to the cracking motorcycle 'duet' at the climax of John Woo's MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE 2. Agreed.) Bond also gave us another memorable variation on the car chase: the tank-car pursuit in GOLDENEYE.

The Most Worthless of All: DEAD POOL, the dreary final entry in the Dirty Harry series, in which Callahan has to outrun an 'explosive' remote-controlled toy car.

Underrated, though perhaps Justifiably Forgotten: THE CORRUPTOR, MAXIMUM RISK, and THE ITALIAN JOB remake.

The Car Chase Elite of Movie History: BULLIT, RONIN, and THE FRENCH CONNECTION. Now add THE BOURNE SUPREMACY to this list, overshadowing the respectable romp in the previous Bourne film.
-Colin Burnett



ZATOICHI (2003)

Close your eyes. Within all sounds around you lies patterns, and within those patterns, a symphony. All you have to do is stop and listen. As the mysterious master swordsman Zatoichi explains, "The blind are sensitive to such things". A film based on both a timeless story, and (apparently) the ancient Japanese art of tap dancing, ZATOICHI floats, thumps, swipes, strikes, spurts. Like all good samurai flicks before it, action is rhythm, from a sword slowly leaving its sheath to a lightning-quick deathblow. However, the overriding lesson to be learned in Kitano's bleached-blond ZATOICHI, and all other Zatoichi's before it, is this: don't fuck with elderly, blind Japanese masseurs. But stay on their good side and they'll slice-and-dice their way into your heart.
-Owen Livermore



THE STEPFORD WIVES (2004)

For five STAR WARS movies and counting, Yoda has had the same voice. That voice is Frank Oz. As it turns out, Yoda's voice has no vision. Oz's latest effort as a director, a remake of the cult original of the same name, is the kind of mess that has to be seen to be believed. That said, I wouldn't wish this film experience on anyone. Showcasing one of the most inept, incoherent third acts to a film in recent memory (are these wives robots or not?!?), Oz the filmmaker had better be careful, otherwise he's going to have to hire someone to reshoot the ending to his own career as a now flailing, once career-healthy creator of some of Hollywood's lightest, oddest fare (DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS, WHAT ABOUT BOB?).
-Jason Woloski



THE VILLAGE (2004)

Believers of the noble lie are at least a quarter naive; while non-believers are prone to scoff at the believers and the lie alike.
-Colin Burnett



SPIDER-MAN 2 (2004)

If Michel de Certeau were alive I'm certain that he would be all a-tingle over the webslinger's latest adventure. Civic space is turned on its ear by Spidey and Doc Oc as their fisticuffs turn horizontal into the new down. Cool costumes and superpowers aside, SPIDER-MAN 2 stresses that walls are not barriers but surfaces that desperately need to be negotiated, traversed and redefined.
-Janos Sitar



DISCORDIA (2004)

The result isn't the goal; the film is about the process. By not limiting its analysis to the political issues surrounding the events (the fallout of Benjamin Netanyahu's aborted speech at Concordia University in 2002), but instead focusing on the personalities that became involved, DISCORDIA offers an interesting perspective to viewers unfamiliar with the school, the city and the particularities of the clashes involving Netanyahu supporters, protesters and police.

The filmmakers have chosen to focus on 3 distinct individuals, each one playing a dramatic role that summer. Each one envelops the audience into his cause, simultaneously converting and repelling as his personal appeal ebbs and flows. The film makes stars out of these three, acting as a testimony to their ambitions. This gambit doesn't detract from the film or the importance of the issues and in fact enhances both, allowing differing viewpoints to have human faces, and to witness the personal implications of the stances these students were taking. The audience is more invested in their plights as their collective humanity, with all its faults and blemishes, comes shining through.
-Collin Smith



HAROLD AND KUMAR GO TO WHITE CASTLE (2004)

Q: Can dumedy about two mid-twenties stoners take on identity politics and cultural stereotypes?

A: This odd couple for the 00's will be the subject of many undergrad essays in the years to come. The antithesis of Cheech and Chong, Harold (John Cho) and Kumar (Kal Penn) represent the world of functional stoners whose quest for hamburgers leads them on an odyssey which confronts their fear of conforming to some stereotype of cultural identity. Toss in a sexually ravenous Neil Patrick Harris and a group of extreme (white) guys and you get an astute commentary on conflicting ethnicities and masculinity. But then again, they do get high with a cheetah and attempt to ride it to safety.
-Janos Sitar



DODGEBALL: A TRUE UNDERDOG STORY (2004)

Direct from THE WATERBOY school of, "Seeing people get hit really hard is really funny, so why bother paying for a re-write?" comes DODGEBALL: A TRUE UNDERDOG STORY. The only silver lining to be found in this otherwise dull, dreary cloud is that with the release of DODGEBALL, Ben Stiller has managed to maintain his breakneck, Samuel L. Jackson of the mid-1990s pace of starring in nearly a movie a month over the first half of 2004. (For those keeping score, Stiller released ALONG CAME POLLY in January, STARSKY AND HUTCH in March, ENVY in April, DODGEBALL in June, and also has a cameo in ANCHORMAN: THE RON BURGUNDY STORY, which opened in July. Evidently, Stiller laid low during the months of February and May in order to shoot the five or six movies he'll be starring in this fall.)
-Jason Woloski



NAPOLEON DYNAMITE (2004)

Some would have you believe that the debut feature from Jared Hess, NAPOLEON DYNAMITE, is on the leading edge of New American film comedy, equal parts Wes Anderson and Todd Solondz. The reality is quite different. The film is a perfect example of what a terrible mess a first-year film school screenwriting assignment would become when given life on the big screen. All over-simplified story and pmo irony, Hess' film is a derivative bore. This film is not a cult hit. It was quite literally given away for free in a series of Monday night screenings across North America in advance of its proper theatrical release. And anyone who paid a cent and expected something more than the free chapstick and buttons used to shill this fluff deserves an apology.
-Mike Baker

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