

**Issue 6**

**Free!**



**Cambridge  
Movie  
News**

**November 2001 Issue**

*Inside:*

*Coming Attractions*

*Reviews*

*Everything a good movie fan needs!*

# Letter from the Editor

Greetings Movie Fans!

Well, November has come upon us again bringing falling leaves, cooler temperatures and the busiest day of the year for Theaters. Oh, and there's a small movie about a child wizard coming out this month as well...Harry something or other. Maybe you've heard of it?

November is the month of Thanksgiving. It is the time to be thankful for what you have, and that will be very strong this year. Movies have been taking their full role as an escape vehicle allowing people to get away from the news for awhile. While some films such as *Big Trouble* and *Collateral Damage* have been bumped due to subject matter, we are still seeing the same films come out. Everything from silly comedies to horrific ghost stories has been offered.

This is important, because the initial impulse is to censor anything and everything that might be offensive or related to the incident. With small exceptions filmmakers have resisted that urge. The modifications that have been made are usually thoughtful and appropriate.

The strange part is that the films about terrorism and exploding buildings have become very popular at the rental stores. People still want *Die Hard* and *The Siege*.

*The Siege* is even more important right now, as not only does it deal with terrorism but it also deals with American Islam. While it is a little heavy-handed about it, it directly addresses the fact there is an Islamic presence here and that people of that faith and of Middle Eastern descent are American citizens.

They deserve every right and protection as anyone else.

The future is still undecided on what will come out in future films. New York might finally get a break from all the stomping it has been getting. For the last few years movie-makers were treating NY as Tokyo in the *Godzilla* films. It's been smacked with meteors (*Armageddon*) flattened by tidal waves (*Deep Impact*) chewed up by monsters (*Godzilla*) and blown up by aliens (*Independence Day*). Maybe the big apple will get to avoid the bruises for awhile.

Of course in the movies there will still be aliens and terrorists, wars and disasters along side the teenage comedies and weepy romances. Americans confront their fears at the movies, they don't hide from them. So anything and everything will be on the screen for us to see and discuss.

## New Feature

Closer to home you can see a new feature on this page, The Trailer has been added to the front page, replacing a movie quote. The Trailer will discuss one upcoming movie that you may be interested in. Of course unreleased movies are subject to change at the last minute (as happened to the *Rollerball* remake apparently). But I'll do my best to give you a heads-up in each issue.

If you have any ideas for a new columns, features or would simply like to express some of your views on recent films feel free to send me a note. Disagree

*(Continued on page 6)*

## *Preview: Monster's Ball*

**Plot:** A racist warden (Billy Bob Thornton) falls in love with the black widow (Halle Berry) of a man he's executed.

**Probable Release Date:** December 2001

# Coming Attractions

Here's what we can expect for the mighty cinematic month of November. Remember that release dates are subject to change at the last minute.

## Theater

11/02

The One  
Domestic Disturbance  
Monsters Inc.

11/09

Shallow Hal  
Heist

11/16

Novocaine  
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone  
The New Guy  
The Baker's Son

11/21

Spy Game  
Black Knight

11/30

Last Call  
Affair of the Necklace

## Video

11/06

Shrek  
Legally Blonde  
Baby Boy

11/13

America's Sweethearts  
The Closet  
Crazy/Beautiful  
Lara Croft-Tomb Raider  
Osmosis Jones  
The Calle  
Nico and Dani

11/20

Bride of the Wind  
Planet of the Apes  
How the Grinch Stole Christmas  
The Golden Bowl  
Prancer II

11/28

Divided We Fall  
Pootie Tang  
Bread and Roses  
The Road Home

## DVD

11/06

Sopranos 2<sup>nd</sup> Season  
Star Trek: The Motion Picture  
Legally Blonde  
Doctor Zhivago  
Farscape #8  
A Clockwork Orange, Limited Collector's Set  
Full Metal Jacket, Limited Collector's Set  
Shrek

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*"And was it worth it? The sacrifice for a friend you dont even keep in touch with?"  
"Harry, you might not believe this, but I never considered not sleeping with you a  
sacrifice."*

When Harry Met Sally (1989)

# Reviews

So what should you see? What should you rent? What must be in your collection at all costs and what should have been burned instead of released? Read on, and find the answers below....

*Unless otherwise noted all reviews are by Chris DeKalb.*

## Theater

### Monsters Inc.

Comedy [G]

The premise of this movie had me worried: it's about monsters that come out of closets in order to scare children, but it's made by Pixar and is going to be a comedy for the whole family. How can that be done without traumatizing all the little ones and still make it believable?

Surprisingly enough Monsters Inc. accomplishes both. It's an intelligent movie with excellent voice-performances from John Goodman and Billy Crystal as the two main monsters. Turns out Monsters come out to scare children because kid screams are used for power, like natural gas.

The problem is that kids today are jaded and aren't scared easily. The Monsters Inc. company is in dire straights. Things get worse when a young girl manages to slip into monster land. As it turns out the big nasty monsters are deeply afraid of the scary kids.

So while the kid is running around causing all kinds of mischief, Goodman and Crystal's monsters (a big furry horned bigfoot named Sully and a small one-eyed green guy named Mike) try to get the girl home and also discover that Monster's Inc is about to take drastic measures to get more kids' screams.

As Sully and Mike try to herd the girl back to the human world they begin to see that maybe scaring kids isn't a good thing.

The ending is predictable, but well done. It manages to wrap up the storylines and is heart-warming as well.

The movie is well up to Pixar's previous movies in all respects. The animation is smooth and presents some fantastic action sequences. While humans still look like they're made out of plastic, it works in this setting.

This movie has a Short with it, a small film about birds. But there aren't any outtakes on this one like for Toy Story II. Of course they may be released within a few weeks as they did with Bug's Life.

All in all, Monsters Inc. is definitely worth seeing on the big screen.

### 13 Ghosts

Horror [R]

There are some films where you should always look gift horses in the mouth, especially if they're from deceased eccentric Uncles. A lovable family, severely distressed by the loss of the mother a few months ago, has inherited an estate from an Uncle that they barely knew. So the father and his late-teens daughter and young son take off to check out the house with a lawyer and the son's nanny in tow. (one slight problem here, if they're in such dire economic straights how can they afford a nanny? Oh well..it's a ghost movie and they needed a token black person..)

What they don't know is that their Uncle has been

*(Continued on page 5)*

*"What's Happening?"*

*"Well, if it was anymore quiet we could hear owls farting."*

Nightmare on Elm Street (1984)

# Reviews

(Continued from page 4)

capturing revenants (very nasty ghosts) over the last year and has trapped them in this house. The family, along with a psychic who had helped the uncle and a ghost-hunter who fought him, are exploring the haunted house. Just then all the doors shut and the house seals itself up. Turns out it's a giant machine, powered by the spirits. And it needs just one more ghost to help power it, the ghost of the Father who is being manipulated into giving sacrificing himself.

This movie does a great job with the effects and the mood of the movie but it seems constantly held back. It *could* have been very scary and very disturbing. The ghosts are all well done and disgusting to look at. But they almost never do anything. Of the twelve ghosts that inhabit the house only about four are given any personality. And even those are treated lightly at best.

Good examples of this are the two ghosts known as the Jackal and the Revenant. They are repeatedly talked about how evil and vicious they are, and they are shown in two of the prominent attack scenes in the movie. But that's all they do..they come out and attack to prove that things are dangerous and then they're forgotten about.

Admittedly to give all 12 ghosts a full back story would have made the movie 7 hours long, but having at least one of them being fully developed would have been nice.

The movie has a surprisingly low body count, and again that seems to be because the ghosts are just there for table dressing.

13 Ghosts has some great effects and some good ideas. The idea of 12 ghosts representing a "dark

zodiac" is intriguing and it's nice to see a movie with an ancient magical book and not claiming it's the Necronomicon.

All in all the film is worth seeing, especially if you liked House on Haunted Hill which this film bears a significant similarity. (Both films were produced by the same company)

## **From Hell** Horror [R]

To pull in an audience a movie needs style and substance. From Hell has plenty of style. The substance part is the problem.

The story involves a rather famous set of murders in London involving a madman named Jack who slaughtered several prostitutes with surgical precision. In From Hell we follow a psychic detective as he struggles to find the killer while his superiors keep calling for him to find a scapegoat. Soon enough he finds out that there is far more going on than just Jack the Ripper's killings.

Things get even more complicated when he falls in love with one of the prostitutes who will likely be one of the victims.

While the movie takes some liberties with history it does provides a decent story. Where the movie really shines is in some of the visuals. From the beginning with a shot of gothic London under a blood-red sky, to the light of the first killing. (the woman is pulled into a dark alley and the only thing we see is the quick flashes of the knife as it goes up and down. They are amazing shots.

The acting is pretty good, with Johnny Depp doing a

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*"All major theme parks have delays. When they opened Disneyland in 1956, nothing worked."  
"Yeah, but John, if the Pirates of the Caribbean breaks down, the pirates don't eat the tourists."  
Jurassic Park (1993)*

## *Coming Attractions*, Editor's Comments

(Continued from page 3)

### DVD Continued

11/13

Lara Croft-Tomb Raider  
X-Files, 4<sup>th</sup> Season  
America's Sweethearts  
The Closet  
Crazy/Beautiful  
Osmosis Jones  
A Room with a View  
When Harry Met Sally  
The Toy  
Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (30<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary Edition)

11/20

Planet of the Apes  
Apocalypse Now Redux  
The Grinch  
The Matrix Revisited  
Cowboy Bebop (complete series boxed set)  
Daleks-Invasion Earth 2150 AD  
St. Elmo's Fire

11/27

Willow  
Farscape #9  
Star Trek: Original Series 37, 38  
Pootie Tang  
The Owl and the Pussycat  
Bread and Roses  
The Last Wave-Criterion  
Matrix Gold Edition (2 Disc set)

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with one of our reviews? Write a Counterpoint review and send it in.

Full submission guidelines are posted on the back page as usual.

### Best of times and worst of times in Animation

Animation films tend to be a hard sell for American audiences, beyond the Disney release. But this year has been different.

This year there have been four major animated releases, all aiming beyond the under-10 years old set. Two crashed and two were great hits.

Final Fantasy came out to great acclaim for its special effects but did very poorly in the theaters. (it cost over \$120 million, and took in roughly \$40 million in the theaters). Because of this loss Sony has pulled its funding from the Square Pictures.

The studios are still around (unlike Fox Animation, which was canned after Titan A.E. flopped) but its future is uncertain.

Disney's release Atlantis also pored fairly but its Pixar release Monster's Inc. is doing very well with good reviews.

And for the entire summer all of the critics kept praising Shrek as the best film to have come out this year. Its Dreamworks first computer-animated film and has done extremely well. A sequel has already been announced for around 2004.

Whether the big flops and big successes lead to more animation from Hollywood remains to be seen.

So until next issue enjoy Thanksgiving and seeing the films on the Friday after. And remember, talking during the movie is not allowed.

*"Whoever wrote this episode should DIE!"*

Galaxy Quest (1999)

# Reviews

(Continued from page 5)

fine job. Heather Graham does well, but her character is both surprisingly noble for her situation (and friends) and is far more attractive than any of the other actresses in the movie.

## Iron Monkey

Martial Arts [PG-13]

In ancient China a village is being threatened by famine and corrupt officials. They are horribly exploited, half-starved and kept in poverty. Luckily the people have a protector! It is Iron Monkey, a mysterious ninja who robs the rich and gives to the poor. Soon he is facing the corrupt officials guards and even corrupted Shaolin Monks!

Well you don't go to martial arts movies for the plot anyways. Iron Monkey is the kung-fu on wires style that Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon made acceptable in America (and has been popular in Hong Kong for years). Warriors jump around to incredible heights, balancing on the most improbable of surfaces. And of course they smack each other around with really nifty moves.

The characters are interesting, with some character growth. The plot does have a few twists in it, and it keeps the action going.

This is a film that you should see if you want to have some fun and enjoy your popcorn. It is a must for Kung-Fu movie fans.

## DVD

### The Mummy Returns

Action/Horror [PG-13]

A rather silly jaunt through 1930s England, Egypt and various parts of Arabia this movie shows the characters from the Mummy and how time has treated them. Our hero Rick has married the Librarian Evie and had a son. Life is going pretty good for them.

Unfortunately fate has other plans, as Evie has started having visions depicting ancient Egypt. It

turns out that a group of cultists are about to resurrect the Mummy.

As Evie hunts down her ancient past she runs afoul of the cult and soon she and Rick are fighting off Mummies all over the place.

The movie is fun, albeit not quite as good as the original. The humor and action have been pumped up and there



is almost no horror. (other than dead bodies running around trying to kill people). Also the effects are excellent, with some pretty nice fight scenes. Only the Scorpion King monster at the end looks too computerized.

The movie also has several references to the first, so it is definitely worth watching that again before viewing this one.

The DVD has tons of extras on it. A decent commentary describes the various mis-adventures

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*“Let's go blow this guy.”*  
*“Away! Let's go blow this guy away!”*  
 Demolition Man (1993)

# Reviews

(Continued from page 7)

during filming and gives some neat trivia. It doesn't really discuss the plot or story ideas too much, but it's worth listening too. The Disc also contains a few documentaries, a music video, Trailer, deleted scenes and DVD-ROM sections. Pick it up if you like silly horror-action flicks.

## Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace

SF/Fantasy [PG]

Review by John Grow

When the first trailer for *The Phantom Menace* hit theaters in late 1998, some enterprising soul with a digital camcorder had the thing taped and uploaded to the internet less than 24 hours later. And it was the most downloaded non-porn file on the internet at the time. This was not merely an anticipated film. After a twenty-year wait, this movie was *lusted after*.

The DVD version of *Phantom Menace* has been equally sought. George Lucas understands that, and made this one worth the wait. *The Phantom Menace* DVD is a two-disc set in an Amaray keep-case. Disc 1 is the movie itself in anamorphic widescreen with commentary by Lucas, Rick McCallum and others intimately involved in the production. Disc 2 is filled with an extensive set of extra material including documentaries and photos and a weblink to exclusive content, including images from Episode II, in post-production.



At first glance, one may think this isn't much in terms of material--most DVDs have this kind of stuff, if they're well made. But then, this is Lucas, and this is *Star Wars*. There's a lot of hype to live up to, and it does exactly that.

It's really not necessary to go through the plot--if you're familiar with *Star Wars* at all, you know it. Of course, if you're familiar with *Star Wars*, chances are you have this DVD already, so whatever. Episode I is the beginning of the *Star Wars* story--the Skywalker Saga, if you will. It introduces nine-year-old Anakin Skywalker, and the political intrigues and story threads that shape the universe of *A New*

*Hope* (the rather clumsy title grafted onto the original *Star Wars* in its 1980 re-release).

As one would expect from a *Star Wars* film, the special effects are mind blowing--as mind blowing to today's audience as *Star Wars* was to audiences in 1977. The video transfer to DVD is impressive, with good color and contrast and few compression artifacts noticeable. The Dolby Digital audio is equally impressive. Not as LOUD as some recent DVD releases that come to mind, but with excellent separation and dynamic range.

In Disc 2, there is the most extensive set of special features committed to DVD so far. The closest DVDs to this would probably be *The Godfather* series boxed set, or the upcoming *Star Trek: The*

(Continued on page 9)

*“Mr. Preston, this operation will be a failure if we all die!”*  
Fire Birds (1993)

# Reviews

(Continued from page 8)

*Motion Picture*, in terms of depth of content and the amount of care given to the presentation of that content. Lucas went the extra mile and went to the trouble of completing the Computer Graphics work for the deleted sequences, so that the scenes are fully developed as he envisioned them. Only Lucas would do such a thing. On the other hand, one surmises he had no choice. *The Phantom Menace* is a CG-heavy movie, and undoubtedly these sequences were dropped before CG work was done on them, so they would be unpresentable without such committed work. And like any director, Lucas can't leave well enough alone: One deleted sequence, a scene where the main characters take an air taxi through the Galactic Republic capital of Coruscant, was restored to the DVD version of the film. These deleted sequences are presented on their own, and also encapsulated within a documentary by Lucas, McCallum and others. There is also an hour-long documentary called *The Beginning*, which highlights the development and production of the movie, culled from hundreds of hours of video footage. Like the commentary track, this is fascinating in and of itself, as it reveals how this particular groundbreaking director's thought process works in dealing with this particular groundbreaking film.

The DVD-ROM content is an extension to the starwars.com website, and contains extra articles and images from *Episode I* and *Episode II*. This is also the place to go on November 9, when it's expected that the trailer for *Episode II* will be released online. Right now, there is a QuickTime movie online called *Choices*. Look for it.

As mentioned above, Lucas understands his

audience. This DVD release may not seem to push the envelope of DVD watching (though it could be argued that it does), it has everything one expects from a *Star Wars* DVD. To paraphrase the saying, it's not hype if you can back it up. *The Phantom Menace* does that. And more.

## Internet

### F! True Hollywood Story: Jar Jar Binks

(www.ifilm.com)

Comedy/Spoof [NR]

Just in case you were deeply concerned with what Jar Jar's life was like...here's the answer. We see Jar Jar growing up, his massive comedy career that took off in France, and his fall after *The Phantom Menace*.

This is a pretty funny film, with some remarkable look-alikes for George Lucas, Natalie Portman and others. (no, they aren't the real actors) With it being a docudrama spoof there isn't a lot of plot here, but the story isn't bad. Some of the jokes work really well, especially the interview with R2-D2.

It's a short film, so go watch it when you want something silly and haven't had your fill of *Star Wars* parodies yet.

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## CounterReview

Disagree with any of the reviews here? Wish to point out something that was missed? Then write a response and send it in! It will get it's own spiffy "CounterReview" banner and everything when it is printed.

Send your CounterReviews to the Editor at [cdkboston@earthlink.net](mailto:cdkboston@earthlink.net)

*"When I introduce you, and I tell them who you are, I don't think anyone will stay for dinner."*

Meet Joe Black (1998)

# Next Issue, Submissions

## Next Issue

December, Christmas and buying of presents. In the next issue we present a buying guide for going online or offline for your DVD purchases.

And as always we'll have all the coming attractions, reviews and everything that a movie fan needs. See you next month.

## Submit something!

I'm always looking for help in putting this magazine out. So if you have any opinions, views, interesting facts or long ramblings please send them to me

Right now this is a free zine, so no payments are offered. Other than the nice warm fuzzy feeling that you'll get to see your name in print.

Send any submissions to:

Cambridge Movie News  
C/o Chris DeKalb  
1 McLean Place, Apt. 3  
Cambridge MA  
02140

Or email:

Cdkboston@earthlink.net

## What I'm looking for:

### Reviews.

**Current or recently released films.** Please include the genre and the rating, along with your thoughts about how good the film was. Anything that was in release 4-6 weeks before the publication month are fair game. In the review please have a little bit more than "it was neat", and try for about three paragraphs.

**Videos and DVDs,** write down a brief description of the movie, and if it's a DVD please include the special features, or lack there-of. With DVD reviews the "recent release" rule is greatly relaxed. New stuff, is nice, but there is plenty of other releases to talk about.

**TV films, Internet films.** Reviews of this sort are also appreciated. Please include the source (website, or network) of the broadcast.

**Columns, articles.** If you want to write on something long, I would love to see your work. An article will hopefully fill an entire page or more. If you want to cover a topic every month, then you're a columnist. Write a page every month and figure out a name for your wonderful new feature.

Right now I'm looking for the following columnists: Anime and Behind-the-scenes/Filmmaking. Suggestions for others are always appreciated.

**Artwork** of theaters and other cinema affects would also be useful.

### Negative Clippings

New York is still the city of where anything can happen. The following movies celebrate the place of dreams and hope.

Coyote Ugly  
Secret of My Success  
Ghostbusters II

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