

FILM REVIEWS

BY L.A. WEEKLY FILM CRITICS
Wednesday, March 29, 2006 - 6:00 pm

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LARRY THE CABLE GUY: HEALTH INSPECTOR In the vernacular of the Bush era, *Larry the Cable Guy: Health Inspector* can be thought of as unabashedly "playing to its base." Sort of a cracker variation on the Tyler Perry films, it'll give fans exactly what they expect while passing unseen by anyone else. Nothing sums up the movie quite so well as knowing that within the first minute and a half there is a view of Larry's butt crack — and a guy gets racked in the nuts. The logical knot of how a character known as Larry the Cable Guy comes to work as a restaurant health inspector is perhaps best left to bigger minds, though it does guarantee ample fart jokes and the obligatory "Larry on the toilet" scene. Curiously, the script is credited to Jonathan Bernstein and James Greer, two former Spin writers, but there's no sense of meta-sophistication here, and the low road always wins out. Great pains are made to show Larry being friendly to the proprietors of a sushi house, an Indian joint and a soul-food place, but he still refers to it all as "immigrant food" and certainly doesn't much like the stuff. The intriguing tension that lies just beneath the whole film — how does an essentially good-natured good ol' boy come to terms with the complications of a polyglot, Prius-driving, Internet-wired culture? — is left almost entirely unexplored. (Citywide) (Mark Olsen)

LONESOME JIM The title character in this monotone new film from actor-turned-director Steve Buscemi would probably be a little less lonesome if he stopped being such a dick. A would-be writer who's returned to his Indiana family after bottoming out in Manhattan, the 27-year-old Jim (Casey Affleck) advises his divorced older brother (Kevin Corrigan) to kill himself and is continually dismissive and occasionally cruel to both his mother (Mary Kay Place) and the beautiful nurse (Liv Tyler) he supposedly wants to date. Jim's a louse because he's depressed, but first-time screenwriter James C. Strouse (in whose hometown the film was shot) provides so few clues to the source of Jim's malaise, or that of his entire sad-sack family, that the movie remains rudderless and not the least bit believable. Often, Affleck appears to be biting down on his own smile, as if he — or perhaps his director — believes that displaying a moment's charm would betray Jim's angst. Place, who has played her fair share of unappreciated Midwestern moms, could teach Affleck a thing or two about tension-filled smiles, but even she can't breathe life into a character whose defining characteristic is her affection for a "World's Greatest Grandmother" mug that Buscemi never tires of showing in close-up. (Selected theaters) (Chuck Wilson)

MARILYN HOTCHKISS BALLROOM DANCING AND CHARM SCHOOL In the '70s, a movie with this many famous faces — John Goodman, Marisa Tomei, Mary Steenburgen, Camryn Manheim, Sean Astin and half a dozen others — would usually signal a disaster flick. In this case, it's just a disaster. Co-writer-director Randall Miller has essentially grafted pointless celebrity cameos onto his own nostalgic 1990 short film about rowdy boys circa 1962 forced to attend cotillion and learning to like girls. Here, scenes from Miller's short become the rowdy boyhood memories of a dying car-crash victim (Goodman), whose chance meeting with an emotionally shut-off widower (Robert Carlyle) inspires the latter to attend dance classes, where, surprise, love awaits with lonely-heart Tomei. It's all a treacly, shoddily assembled, underwritten mess. Especially bizarre is that Miller did his modestly amusing short no favors by diluting it with the new stuff, which, of course, hardly feels new. *Dancing With the Stars* is more life-affirming. (Selected theaters) (Robert Abele)

GO RAPE OF THE SOUL Artists and bishops are evil, and they want to make us as bad as they are. We already suspected it before *Rape of the Soul*, a delightful talking-heads romp through the world of Satanism, pederasty and alien infiltration as represented in religious art. But now, confronted with *The Evidence* by director Michael A. Calace, we know it for sure. Is *Rape* a hilariously stupid documentary or an ingenious put-on? Honest to God, it's hard to tell, but in these *Da Vinci Code* days, one is tempted by cryptic Dan Brown-like clues to come down on the side of the latter: (1) Though Calace seizes credibility by the balls as our outraged goombah narrator, he describes himself as an actor and an "inventor" who holds a patent in golf technology. (2) The way the film turns everything into an acronym ("the Greater Toronto Area, or GTA") is just too funny. (3) Calace finds the English word S-E-X embedded in paintings from the Italian Renaissance. (4) Hundreds of years ago, an artist precognitively painted an exact portrait of Vladimir Putin; Calace suggests the devil gave him access to future visions. Find your own clues! The real joke is that, though many of the subliminal "faces," "penises" and "666s" Calace discovers in his 140-minute assault are pure fantasies, a lot are plainly visible! They may not have actually stimulated our modern wave of child molestation and general immorality, but they reap their own potent consequences: Instead of seeing penises in Christ, I'm seeing Christ in my penis. And that ain't good. (Fairfax) (Greg Burk)

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TOP VIEWED TOP COMMENTED FILM+TV

ADDICTION: BUYING THE CURE AT PASSAGES MALIBU

BY MARK GROUBERT
At upscale "rehab," all you need is faith. And \$67,000 a month

KING HUA'S DIM SUM: BREAKFAST, À LA CART

BY JONATHAN GOLD
In the Cantonese restaurant wars, Alhambra kitchen brings morning firepower

THE PARISIAN ROOM: ALAIN GIRAUD'S ANISETTE BRASSERIE

BY JONATHAN GOLD
A glass of Sancerre, a half-dozen oysters, and a French chef who's found home

THE GAYEST WEDDING, AT LA BREA TAR PITS

BY DAVE WHITE
With doughnuts from Bob's for afters

VIOLENCE IS GOLDEN: TIMUR BEKMAMBETOV'S WANTED

BY ELLA TAYLOR
Director's stalk rises with action-movie fans

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QUEER TOWN: MCCAIN PLAYS SMALL BALL IN CALIFORNIA
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Sun, Jun 25, 5:06 pm

STYLE COUNCIL
LAFF 2008: HELL TO THE YEAH
Sun, Jun 25, 11:39 am

CATCH OF THE DAY
THE ROCKET'S RED GLARE
Sun, Jun 25, 10:45 am

PLAY
THIS WEEKEND: THE MAE SHI, FLEET FOXES, T.A.M.I. SHOW AT CINESPIA
Fri, Jun 27, 2:54 pm

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MOVIE REVIEWS: ENCOUNTERS AT THE END OF THE WORLD, FINDING AMANDA, WANTED

BY L.A. WEEKLY FILM CRITICS
Wed, Jun 25, 6:55 pm
Also, The Unknown Woman, Expired and more

FILM REVIEWS: GET SMART, GUY MADDIN'S MY WINNIPEG

BY L.A. WEEKLY FILM CRITICS
Wed, Jun 18, 9:00 pm
Also, *Never Forever*, *Viva, Brick Lane*

MOVIE REVIEWS: THE HAPPENING, POULTRYGEIST, SAVAGE GRACE

BY L.A. WEEKLY FILM CRITICS
Wed, Jun 11, 6:13 pm
Also, Meet Bill, Quid Pro Quo and more

MOVIE REVIEWS: KUNG FU PANDA, MONGOL, MOTHER OF TEARS

BY L.A. WEEKLY FILM CRITICS
Wed, Jun 4, 2:53 pm
Also, The Go-Getter, Trying to Get Good and more

MOVIE REVIEWS: THE EDGE OF HEAVEN, THE FOOT FIST WAY, THE STRANGERS

BY L.A. WEEKLY FILM CRITICS
Wed, May 28, 5:57 pm
Also, Blindsight, Hollywood Chinese and more

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LOS ANGELES FILM FESTIVAL GUIDE 2008

Wed, Jun 18, 5:54 pm

LAFF HONORS RECENTLY DECEASED MOVIE-MAKING GREATS

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Gone but not forgotten

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PERSONAL OF THE DAY



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