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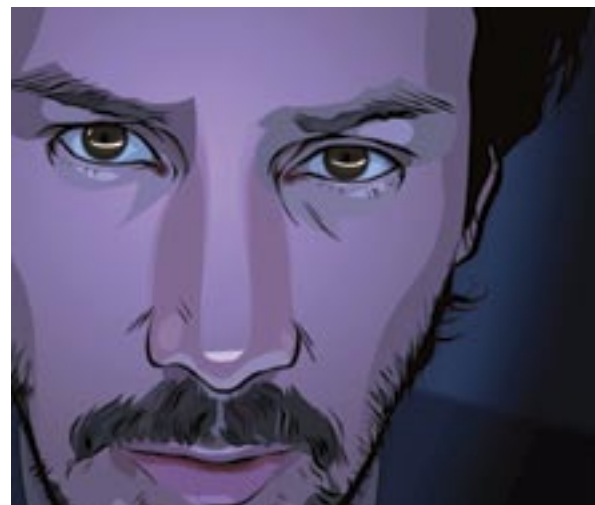
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film CLIPS

A Scanner Darkly

To describe *A Scanner Darkly* as a futuristic film about drug use that mixes live action and animation will immediately give the wrong idea to anyone who cut their teeth on “head” films of the early 1970s. This is not a cinematic trip, a la *2001* or *Fantasia* or whatever other movies you used to see while under the influence. Adapting Philip K. Dick’s early 1970s novel about an Orange County undercover cop (Keanu Reeves) who is also one of the drug addicts he is assigned to infiltrate, director Richard Linklater uses the same rotoscoping process he employed in *Waking Life*, in which conventionally photographed images are treated to become animation. But where *Waking Life* varied the degree of animation in step with its shifting menu of ideas and discussions, it’s more or less omnipresent here, and much more static. Watching it gives the effect of a brief initial high followed by a bad buzz, which is not inappropriate to Dick’s story of loss of identity, surveillance and paranoia in an America that more resembles the one we live in than the one in which he wrote. Dick fans will be pleased that Linklater’s adaptation is far truer to its source than any previous film based on the late writer’s work. Others may enjoy the stoned repartee between Robert Downey Jr. and Woody Harrelson as Reeves’ roommates but otherwise find this heavy going.



—m. faust

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You, Me and Dupree

If I had to guess, I’d say that *You, Me and Dupree* was written as a vehicle for Ben Stiller and Owen Wilson, but Stiller turned it down on the grounds that it’s the same movie he’s already made a hundred times. At which point the studio substituted the first available actor with dark enough hair to provide a visual contrast with Wilson and proceeded.



Given the low quality of the comedies Stiller has accepted, you can imagine how bad something he (I’m guessing) chose to turn down must be. Matt Dillon made the unwise decision to take the role of Carl Peterson, newly married to Molly (Kate Hudson) and working for her father (Michael Douglas), a real estate developer who clearly has issues about losing his only daughter: He asks Carl to hyphenate his name and get a vasectomy. Worse, he makes his work life hell. So Carl’s already in a poor frame of mind when his best friend Dupree (Wilson) loses his job and his apartment and moves in with them for a “temporary” stay. Of course, the visit drags out, and Dupree’s slacker ways (which include casual attitudes toward nudity, bathroom etiquette and other things most of us do in private) begin to drive a wedge between Carl and Molly that exacerbates his already tenuous work situation.

You, Me and Dupree is a comedy of embarrassment built around the kind of misunderstandings that real people settle with a few minutes of reasonable talk. Undemanding fans of Wilson who want to see him run through the same goofball schtick he can do in his sleep can watch him do just that; ditto those who want to see Hudson prance around in skimpy underwear and not tax her thespic skills any.

—m. faust

Iron Island

International cinema is generally an accessible medium despite national and cultural barriers. It's able to transcend these obstacles—including language—by virtue of commonly understood human stories and predicaments, and, of course, the use of subtitles and dubbing.

Aesthetically, Mohammad Rasoulof's *Iron Island* is an involving, occasionally compelling film. But it's oblique allusive style and the cultural assumptions that underlie its storyline may well lock American audiences out of an understanding of it.

The title refers to a rusting hulk of an oil tanker sitting in water off the southern Iranian shore. The ship is home to scores of Sunni Arab refugees (their ethnicity is only implicit) who have been organized into a crude social order by a domineering but energetically resourceful man known as Captain Nemat (Ali Nassirian).

This ad hoc community's situation is becoming even more straightened: the ship is beginning to sink and its owner wanted to evict the refugees and scrap it. Meanwhile the "captain" is pursuing an elaborate solution.

Summarized thusly, the film sounds coherent and comprehensible, but much of this information has to be summarized and some of the most crucial matters are never clearly addressed. Even more challenging, the characters and their various efforts become more opaquely symbolic, and the film turns to allegorical, inaccessible themes, culminating in its last, mysteriously metaphorical sequence.

Iron Island has forceful, apparently complex performances—especially Nassirian's—but placing them into a context is difficult. Reza Jalali's cinematography is luminously dramatic, but it and the film's other formal qualities can only go so far toward allowing us into an appreciation of *Iron Island's* significance. It plays on Wednesday and Thursday on the Emerging Cinema screen at the Market Arcade Film and Arts Center.

—george sax



Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest

People in my line of work like to give the impression that we've seen every movie ever made, but somehow I never got around to seeing the original *Pirates of the Caribbean* before I had to watch this sequel. I thus attributed my utter confusion through the film's 2 1/2 hour length to ignorance. Having since watched the original, I can see that it wouldn't have made all that much difference: while *Dead Man's Chest* presumes familiarity with its blockbuster predecessor, it's such a grab bag of comic

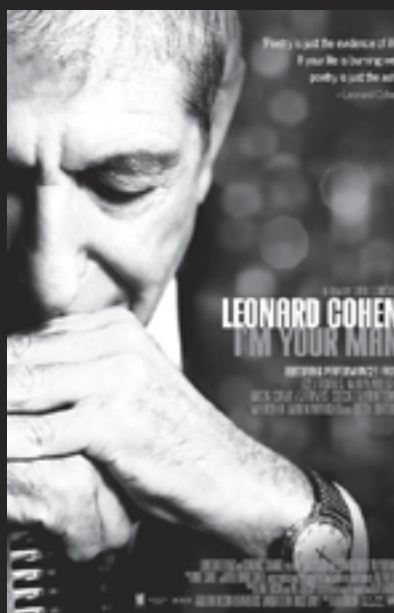


set pieces, special effects and star turns that you'd probably have to see it several times to make much sense out of it. Like the *Star Wars* and *Matrix* sequels, it expands on a premise that was more or less complete to begin with, and the element it most sorely lacks is the freshness of the original. Johnny Depp's Captain Jack Sparrow is lost here among the breakneck pacing, and if he's been marginalized you can imagine what happens to bland romantic leads Orlanda Bloom and Keira Knightley. The only cast member to emerge with his dignity intact (the others presumably content with fat paychecks) is Stellan Skarsgard as Bloom's undead father. *Dead Man's Chest* is not lacking in entertainment value: there are a few stunt sequences inspired by Buster Keaton, and enough gruesomely conceived monsters (the best of them hiding an unrecognizable Bill Nighy) to give young kids nightmares for a week. Still, one comes away from it feeling less exhilarated than exhausted. (If your bladder can hold out, there's a funny moment after the ten minutes of end credits.)

—m. faust


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