

# DIVERSIONS

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Cindy Acts?

Cindy Crawford makes a less than "fair" debut in "Fair Game."



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Elevator Music?

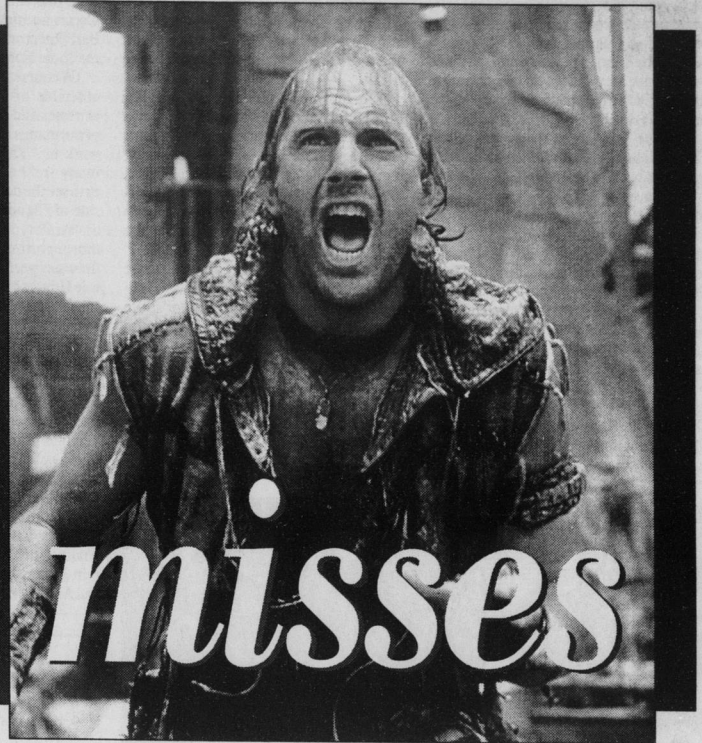
Arnie Roth performs Antonio Vivaldi's well-known "The Four Seasons."



# hits



# &



# misses

## 1995: The Year in Movies

### The Good, The Bad, The Ugly: Movies Reviewed

BY TODD GILCHRIST  
STAFF WRITER

Despite the fact that it's only November, we're already at our Top 10 Films of the Year. Sadly, there hasn't been that much to choose from, but the fall brought in just enough that I could scrape together a Top 10 List ("Casino," "Heat," etc. notwithstanding):

#### The Best

10. "Crimson Tide" — Directing aside, this is one hell of an entertaining movie. Gene Hackman and Denzel Washington bolstered their careers with terrific performances, Tony Scott finally gained an ounce of credibility, and the summer got its first major hit. If you're curious about where Tarantino added his signature hipster dialogue, look to a few choice references about the Silver Surfer and "Mutiny On the Bounty."
9. "Seven" — Except for his brief (but hilarious) performance in "True Romance," Brad Pitt finally turns in a pretty good performance as a dimwitted detective whose fists keep interfering with a fascinating (and gruesome) investigation. Morgan Freeman's world-weary character is the same as we've seen in his past four or five movies, but against the impetuous Pitt, he actually escapes typecasting. Even David Fincher, who butchered the "Alien" series, turned this noir nightmare into a watchable and genuinely disturbing thriller (with a little help from Kevin Spacey).
8. "Mighty Aphrodite" — Any Woody Allen film is sure to make the year's ten best, but "Aphrodite" is a brilliantly written and acted film that surpasses 98 percent of the rest of the drive-in released on sheer intelligence alone. Energetic and entertaining as ever, Allen, for the first time since his controversy, seems eager to subject his audiences to a little relationship humor, even if it is distanced from his previous works about the same subject. Allen can somehow get a good performance from anyone (remember Juliette Lewis in "Husbands and Wives"?), and this film should receive several nods from Mr. Oscar, most notably for F. Murray Abraham as the Greek Chorus Leader and Mira Sorvino as the prostitute with a heart of gold.
7. "Immortal Beloved" — Absurdly melodramatic and grossly inaccurate historically, "Beloved" is nevertheless one of the most consistently watchable films of the year, due, by and large, to the completely overpowering performance of Gary Oldman. His Beethoven is as maniacal as Axl Rose, as romantic as Don Juan and as tortured as Trent Reznor. Isabella Rossellini also turns in a great performance, demonstrating that her acting is only improving. Bernard Rose, above everyone else, proved that he can do more than make horror films (and good ones at that with "Candyman").
6. "Get Shorty" — Barry Sonnenfeld, the director of two "Addams Family" films, demonstrated that he can be a player. His adaptation of the novel of the same name filled the gap that "Pulp Fiction" created from last year, even if it didn't quite live up to it. Still, the presences of John Travolta, Delroy Lindo, and Gene Hackman made this the most easy-on-the-eyes film of the year. Not in another recent film have the actors made performance look so easy. Travolta might be nominated again for his great performance as Chili Palmer, but Delroy Lindo sneaks in and steals almost half of the movie.
5. "Dead Presidents" — The Hughes Brothers are absolutely incredible, and if Menace II Society left this unjustified, "Dead Presidents" surely proved their worth. They turn simple stories into mortal tragedies, imbuing every moment with colorful characterization and an incredible sense of reality; it wouldn't surprise me if they were nominated for their writing work, if not for their directing.
4. "The Usual Suspects" — "Now that's a f\*\*\*ing movie." This was all I could repeat to myself for the next twenty minutes after leaving the theater. Few movies go exactly the way you want — which is the way you would least expect — but this film tosses up the biggest plot twist in any of the past five years' releases ("Reservoir Dogs"

- was probably the previous mind-fuck champion). Flawless performances from the entire cast benefit a decidedly non-indie looking film, covered with a loud and powerful score and enough interesting characters to fill three more films. "Pulp Fiction" was the most common point of reference, but "The Usual Suspects" easily stands alone, distant from the indie-rock king of films.
3. "To Live" — I don't know how long Zhang Yimou is going to continue to get overlooked by Americans, but with each of his films, he improves and surpasses greater and greater percentages of U.S. filmmakers. Banned in his homeland, this story of Maoist China during the '40s, '50s and '60s is so powerful that I barely could sit through the two hours of triumph and tragedy. With the release of "Shanghai Triad" late this year, Yimou perhaps will receive some of the western recognition that he deserves.
  2. "Smoke" — This is just a terrific film. A tiny little film about a tiny cigar store, "Smoke" spawned a sequel (of sorts) and a large underground following that somehow didn't translate into profit. Harvey Keitel at his most likeable (and not coincidentally, his least violent) lit up the screen and bullshitted us all. William Hurt took scholasticism to dizzying heights, and Forest Whitaker showed us the true pain of loss. In a film where the truth is tossed out after five minutes, we come to realize, in the end, that it is exactly what we do in our own relationships.
  1. "Braveheart" — Yes, after all of this artsy crap is a Mel Gibson movie!!!! I couldn't believe it either, but I could watch this movie four times in a row right now. Beauty was no substitute for ability in this film, and "Braveheart's" female leads performed incredibly well (much better than Julia Ormond's vacant stares in "First Knight"), as did the film's male lead. Though I once dismissed him as yet another action star, Mel Gibson has steadily increased as an actor and is a phenomenal director. This film is worthy of several Oscars (especially if "Dances With Wolves" direction was worthy) and all of the money people can heap upon it.
- #### The Worst
5. "Powder" — Dangerously homoerotic, badly acted and uninterestingly written and directed. I can only walk around muttering "Powder" because I had such a great time laughing at this piece of garbage.
  4. "The Net" — Clocking in at just under fourteen hours, this film receives the second place award for Longest Film of the Year To Have To Suffer Through. Even with an attractive date this film couldn't be saved. Sandra Bullock, you're cute, but this movie is as boring as hell! Get out while you can and never, NEVER return to this land again.
  3. "Nine Months" — Chris Columbus has officially sold out, and Hugh Grant is nothing more than a shameless mugfest. With exactly four facial expressions (ask me to imitate them sometime), this film became grating exactly fourteen minutes after it began. Robin Williams delivered nothing but bad gynecology jokes, Jeff Goldblum changed character more times than I shifted in my seat, and Julianne Moore had to suffer along in the middle of this crap. You know it's bad when Tom Arnold (who's starting to grow on me) was one of the film's saving graces.
  2. "Showgirls" — A piece of shit all-around. It was trashy, exploitative and horribly acted, and Elizabeth Berkely made a fatal mistake in not getting another job before the film was released. Kyle MacLachlan's hair was out of control, and Joe Eszterhas's script is the worst thing I've ever seen filmed in American cinema.
  1. "Waterworld" — Not content with being just one of this year's losers, it had to be the absolute worst of the year. Winning the blue ribbon for Longest Film Of The Year To Have To Suffer Through, "Waterworld" ran approximately twenty-three hours long, and its plot metaphorically explained the movie: way too many people got onto a floating trash heap and only barely managed to escape with their lives — or their careers — intact. This may have been the most agonizing moviegoing experience of my life. At least I could laugh at "Showgirls."

BY JENNIFER PALCHER  
STAFF WRITER

1995 will be remembered for many things: It was the year of the O.J. Simpson trial; the year that Colin Powell almost ran for president; the year that Hugh Grant took a walk on the wild side; and the year of movies starring pigs.

Yes, who could forget "Gordy" and "Babe," two films featuring the lovable, if smelly, hoofed creatures. Actually, it probably wouldn't be too hard to forget either of them (though "Babe" did garner quite a bit of critical praise). Like any other year, 1995 had its share of forgettable flicks. But it also had quite a few memorable ones.

"Waterworld" probably gained the most attention. Even before it was released, the movie was billed as an enormous financial fiasco. Although the film didn't exactly revive Kevin Costner's career as he'd expected, it did, however, prove that smokers are true villains.

Ron Howard's "Apollo 13," on the other hand, fulfilled the expectations of both moviegoers and filmmakers. Of course, with a star like Tom Hanks, and Ron Howard directing, how could it not be? Tom Hanks merely has to sneeze on a film to make it a hit.

Speaking of big names in the movie business, Steven Spielberg brought "Casper" back to life this summer. The kiddie-crowd pleaser haunted theaters much longer than people expected (or hoped), while "Pocahontas," another family film, proved that Disney's animated division may not always maintain the level of charm and success established in "The Little Mermaid." Frequently denounced for its historical inaccuracies, "Pocahontas" fell far short of its predecessors, which grossed somewhere around seven gazillion dollars altogether. The filmmakers took creative liberties when recreating the true story of the Native American heroine. A similar thing happened with "Batman Forever."

Joel Shumacher, the sequel's director, took liberties with the film's style, opting not to use the dark, mysterious mood of the first two in lieu of using dynamic, offset colors in order to recreate the feel of a comic book. Although Michael Keaton fans were chagrined to learn that Val Kilmer had taken over as the caped crusader, "Batman Forever" was still considered a fun film, and this summer's biggest hit. And Jim Carrey added ... slightly to the movie's appeal.

"Die Hard With a Vengeance" was yet another big sequel. Starring Bruce Willis and Samuel Jackson, "Vengeance" showed that the third time may not always be the charm. "Die Hard With a Vengeance" was like the third "Lethal Weapon" film: the first two movies were so great that the third paled in comparison.

Any examination of 1995 movies would be incomplete without a mention of "The Bridges of Madison County," which paired Meryl Streep and Clint Eastwood. Eastwood, Mr. Big Action Star, proved he could do romance in adapting a best-selling book into a film that girls couldn't pay their boyfriends to watch. However, Sandra Bullock brought droves of males to see "While You Were Sleeping."

Bullock also expanded her repertoire with the cyberthriller "The Net," which was one of many computer/technology oriented films. In addition to "The Net," films like "Hackers," "Johnny Mnemonic" and "Virtuosity" set a new trend in cyberspace cinema. However, Hollywood's saturation of cyberspace and internet films resulted in mostly low box office returns.

Many other films had common themes in 1995. The aforementioned "Babe" and "Gordy" each let their porcine stars do

the talking. "French Kiss" and "Forget Paris" followed the cliched idea that romance is better in the City of Lights. "Rob Roy" and "Braveheart" both featured hunky Celtic heroes. While different in their approaches, "Clueless" and "Kids" addressed the concerns and issues of today's adolescents. "Showgirls" and "Jade" were both unpopular Joe Eszterhas films with controversial content and advertising.

Similarly, "To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar," "Priest," "Jeffrey" and "The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love" all contained stories that revolved around characters with questionable sexualities, but they didn't receive nearly the hoopla the two Eszterhas films received.

Kevin Smith and Robert Rodriguez, both of whom debuted with films that cost almost nothing to make, scored big with their sophomore flicks, "Mallrats" and "Desperado," respectively. Their matinee-ready films shot leagues above most of the higher-cost films released.

Children's films in 1995 offered an interesting selection. There were video-game martial arts ("Mortal Kombat"), questionably violent for the teens, and pre-teen camp ("Mighty Morphin Power Rangers"). There were little people in a cabinet ("The Indian in the Cupboard") and big creatures in the ocean ("Free Willy 2"). Movies like "Operation Dumbo Drop" and "A Goofy Movie" rounded out the youngster movie choices.

Several of 1995's films not appropriate for kids were also frightfully bad attempts at horror: "The Prophecy," "Village of the Damned," "Lord of Illusions" and "Powder."

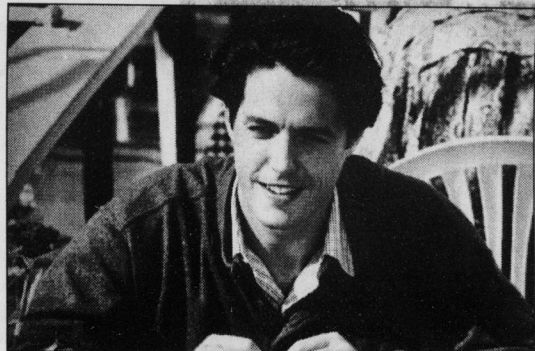
In general, many of the movies followed the same, standard Hollywood formulas. Films that fit into this category include "First Knight," "Congo," "Nine Months," "Species," "Judge Dredd," "The Tie That Binds," and "Bad Boys."

Still, "Get Shorty" filled in as the hipster film of the year and logged another successful mile on John Travolta's comeback trail. "To Die For" was another boost to Nicole Kidman's rising career. Brad Pitt and Morgan Freeman examined the frightening potential of the deadly sins in "Seven," while "The Brady Bunch Movie" examined the frightening potential of introducing the tacky style of the early '70s to a new generation.

As it turned out, some of the best films of 1995 weren't the big moneymakers; they were the smaller, independent films that were refreshing diversions from the standard Hollywood fare. The Australian "Muriel's Wedding" was a wonderful story about a girl who learned to watch what she asked for because she just might get it. Another pleasantly non-American film, "The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill But Came Down a Mountain" (with Hugh Grant) featured a quirky Welsh village that came together in the name of community pride. Grant showed up again in "An Awfully Big Adventure," a story about a Liverpudlian girl who learned the darker side of the theater world.

"Clockers," "Smoke," "Dead Presidents," "The Brothers McMullen" and "The Usual Suspects" were a few of the Great American films of 1995. "The Usual Suspects," in particular, was a fantastic film with a twisting plot that consistently surprised audiences, and many believe it to be the best film of the year.

Like any year, 1995 had its share of ups and downs on the silver screen. The downs could get pretty low, but the occasional ups made moviegoing worthwhile. After all, any year that introduces the concepts of Michelle Pfeiffer as an ex-Marine, Demi Moore as a Puritan and Cindy Crawford as an actress can't be a total loss.



Hugh Grant has starred in three films this year, and none have been as successful as "Four Weddings and a Funeral."



"First Knight" was one of the biggest blunders of the summer.