

Watch winter doldrums away with these four fine films

Mark Van Hook
Columnist

As January rolls on, moviegoers will see an abhorrent amount of mediocre to flat-out awful films populate their multiplexes. Each year, studios use the January to April period as a dumping ground for films not suitable for lucrative holiday or summer release dates.

This leaves a small window to see films studios attempted to shoehorn into December to qualify for Oscar eligibility.

With no clear-cut favorite emerging in the Oscar race, there is an absurd amount of "must-see" films. Four such films are "Amelie," "The Royal

Tenenbaums," "A Beautiful Mind" and "Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring."

Jean-Pierre Jeunet's "Amelie" is pure cinematic joy, a rapturous story about life's absurdities and coincidences told with visual ingenuity and remarkable style. Amelie Poulin (Audrey Tautou) is a Parisian waitress who sets out to help others, but finds a love of her own in the process. Jeunet's imagery bathes Paris in gorgeous colors that bleed off the screen.

The joy of the film lies in Jeunet and Guillaume Laurent's witty script, which reminds us that life can be both completely random, and yet not random at all.

In "The Royal Tenenbaums," quirk-master Wes Anderson

chronicles the lives a clan of geniuses in New York. The film begins with a comical prologue detailing the separation of Royal Tenenbaum (Gene Hackman) and his wife Etheline (Angelica Houston), and its effect on their three child prodigies.

Despite a cast boasting Ben Stiller, Luke Wilson and Gwyneth Paltrow, it is a lesser film than Anderson and Owen Wilson's previous effort, "Rushmore," because the script is hampered by undeveloped periphery characters.

All told, "Tenenbaums" is unquestionably Anderson-esque, and this is simply a reason for rejoicing.

Russell Crowe and Jennifer Connelly are magnificent as schizophrenic mathematician John Nash and his wife Alicia in the Golden Globe winning "A Beautiful Mind."

In an enigmatic performance, Crowe reminds us that he can actually *act* (for further evidence check out *The Insider*). Connelly realistically depicts the frustration of the



Touchstone / KRT
Ben Stiller, Gwyneth Paltrow and Gene Hackman, part of an all-star cast, play delightfully on the dysfunctional in Wes Anderson's newest film, "The Royal Tenenbaums."

wife and caretaker of her disabled husband.


The performances are so good that its "cue sad music" and "cue moving speech" moments are forgivable. Still, "A Beautiful Mind" is worth a look, if only to see two fine actors at the top of their game.

With "The Fellowship of the Ring," Peter Jackson has delivered,

as promised, an adult fantasy that is both intimate and epic, made with intelligence, attention to detail and a genuine respect for the audience.

Jackson has made up where "Harry Potter" failed, keeping the spirit and energy of the original text intact. The film may not rank with Kurosawa, but I wouldn't hesitate to pair it with Lucas or Spielberg.

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web.watch.  **QuizYourFriends.com**

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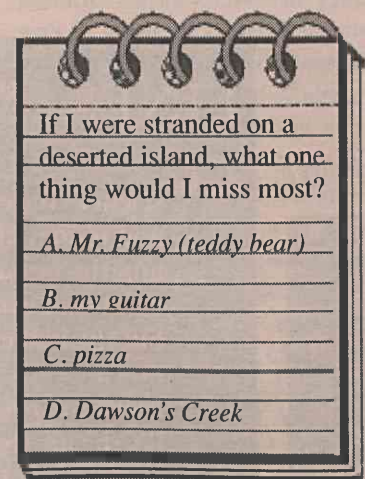
Suzann Magrdichian
Reporter

Hundreds of arguments throughout history have been based on the argument, "You never listen to me."

From their significant other, to their parents and to their best friends, many college students wonder how much their dearest friends and family really know about them.

Now, with the use of a new Web site that seems to be making its way quickly through university e-mail systems, anyone can find out whether the people in their lives are all ears—or all-consumed in something else all together.

QuizYourFriends.com is a free Web site that allows users to create up to 10 multiple choice questions on the topics of their choice—usually themselves.



For a girl wanting to quiz her guy on the finer points of their relationship, or for a guy who wants to check out his friends' knowledge of his favorite bands, the site is a quick, easy way to put them to the test. The quiz stays posted for thirty days.

Users name their quiz and create questions and multiple-choice answers. What's Sally's favorite Crayola crayon?

With the multiple choice answers, there's also always room to add a little humor. (Like adding "your mom" as one of the possible answers every so often.)

The site allows users to study and compare their friends' scores and send additional people the quiz by typing their e-mail addresses into a database.

One downfall of the site is the plethora of banner ads and pop-up windows.

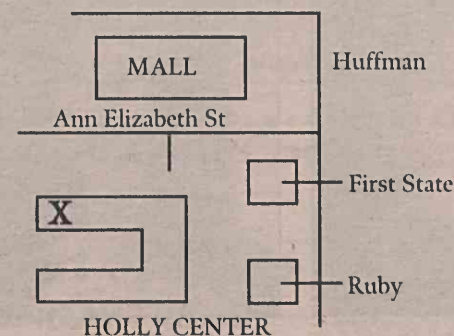
QuizYourFriends.com is a fast and simple way to have some fun with friends.

And you might even find out that Sally's favorite crayon is none other than burnt umber.

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