

# Cage and Connery Break Out With Thrilling, Escapist 'Rock'

With summer comes a slew of inevitable action films, but you'll be hard pressed to find a more high-octane assault on the senses than "The Rock," a thrilling action film starring Nicolas Cage and Sean Connery. The sheer amount of destruction that goes on in this film makes it the prototype of Hollywood excess that your mother warned you about.

**BRENT SIMON**  
**Movie Review**  
**"The Rock"**  
**B**

Some will deride "The Rock" as nothing more than high-gloss, derivative drivel, but they're missing the point, because it's really "good" drivel. Producers Jerry Bruckheimer and the late Don Simpson ("Top Gun," "Beverly Hills Cop") have always emphasized style over substance. If you sit back and pout about the film's dozen or so problems, you'll ultimately miss out on a superb performance by Cage, not to mention one hell of a good time.

The plot goes something like this: an ex-

Marine elite corp leader (Ed Harris) holes up on Alcatraz with 81 hostages, four poison gas rockets aimed at nearby San Francisco and a demand for \$100 million.

The money is ostensibly for the families of every man who died under his command on secret missions and who was denied an official recognition of bravery and a military burial. He also wants to keep a some money for himself and his Fisher Price "My Very First Disenfranchised Mercenary" team, but who's counting?

Faced with a lose-lose scenario, the FBI puts together an elite team to infiltrate the supposedly inescapable prison. Thrown into the mix are FBI lab rat and chemical weapons specialist Stanley Goodspeed (Cage) and British spy/imprisoned convict John Mason (Connery), who was the only man ever to successfully break out of the high-profile prison.

Connery is Connery, but his co-star steals the show. As Goodspeed, Cage is the unlikelyst of action heroes. His performance breathes fresh air into a fairly con-

ventional role. The film picks up quickly, hurtling forward for the next hour and 45 minutes.

The camera work and editing are above average, but there are several technical glitches that detract from the overall quality of the film. The sound mixing is especially poor at times. I know part of this is due to the fact that Connery likes to gargle with small pebbles while he talks, but it's hard enough following the plot without having to lean forward in order to catch the lines of dialogue.

Much has been made about Jan De Bont's talented direction of "Speed" and "Twister." But Michael Bay, the director of "Bad Boys," is an action master of a different sort. Bay's style bursts forth with the force and irrepressible intensity of a Glock 9mm semi-automatic spray. He has a knack for masterfully mixing action and comedy, never losing sight of his ram-it-down-your-throat narrative. "The Rock" is a lot of fun. And it still makes more sense than "Mission: Impossible."



Nicholas Cage and Sean Connery star in "The Rock," a smash-em-up action thriller which provides constant excitement.

## 'H' Proves a Masterful Insight Into Realm of Psychosis

Imagine living in a world filled with "h"-shaped beings called Elliotts, and having your hometown called Elliotttown. Only you can journey to this world, and while you are there, the society

**TODD DARLING**  
**Book Review**  
**"H"**

you normally live in becomes a blur. This is the portrait that Elizabeth Shepard paints for the reader in her new novel "H."

The main protagonist is a 12-year-old, deeply troubled boy named Benjamin Sherman. Not your typical bright-eyed, mischievous youth, Benjamin is looked upon by his peers as an outcast, having no

connection to his suburban lifestyle. The sole link between him and his imaginary Elliotttown is a small, stuffed toy in the shape of the letter "h."

The novel opens with Benjamin's parents, Lucy and Reston, preparing to send him off to Camp Onianta. Shepard utilizes letters from Benjamin's doctor and his parents to develop his character. This unique style, while not providing active dialogue for character development, utilizes an indirect method of characterization that is particularly useful for this novel.

The reader is first given an impression of Benjamin by his parents as a "... quiet boy (who) likes to be left alone." This is the typical, biased view of parents who are trying to make their son's illness seem less severe than it is. Shepard gives the reader the impressions that Benjamin makes on secondary characters before allowing the reader to see inside Benjamin's world.

The entire second half of the novel is devoted to letters from Benjamin to his imaginary friend, Elliott. In reading these letters, one can see how disturbed he is. Benjamin has created an entire other-universe in such detail, that it is beyond that of a typical "imaginary friend" scenario and borders on schizophrenia. Elliott has almost become a secondary character in the novel, the driving force by which Benjamin lives.

By using this stream-of-consciousness effect in these letters, the true nature of Benjamin's sickness is revealed. He lives in this other-world and has no lasting touch with reality. When he arrives at the camp, his disorder becomes worse. He cuts himself off from his other campmates, as Elliott tells Benjamin that "... (humans) are bad and they don't understand us."

*"Endorsed by the National Mental Health Society; Shepard's novel is a work that explores mental illness on several levels. Not only is the clinical side explored, but the reader is also brought into the mind of Benjamin Sherman."*

The novel ends with Benjamin at home after spending the summer at camp. He has left the hospital, and although Dr. Dysan has come to the opinion that he has improved, Benjamin is deeply depressed at having to come to grips with reality. In his final letter, Benjamin's strained, troubled emotions surface as his confusion and pain are apparent. He does not want to leave his other-world, yet he shows signs of wanting to rejoin society.

Shepard's style throughout the novel is truly unique, using only letters to advance the plot. Endorsed by the National Mental Health Association, Shepard's novel is a work that explores mental illness from several levels. Not only is the clinical, medical side explored, but the reader is also brought into the mind of Benjamin Sherman in addition to the Sherman family's characterizations of him through their letters.

"H" is a startlingly real book that has applications in today's society, as people with mental disabilities are often scorned as freaks and outcasts. By reading this book, the reader can gain healthy insight into, though not necessarily comprehension of, the workings of a disturbed mind.

## 'Phantom' Haunts Box Office With Cheesy Appeal

Paramount must have wanted to cash in on the highly profitable Warner Brothers' franchise of developing comic book heroes into multi-million dollar movies. Viewing the success of such blockbuster series as "Superman" and "Batman," Paramount has now delivered its comic book hero turned movie star. Lee Falk of King Features created "The Phantom" in 1936, and it is amazing that it has taken Hollywood over half a century to develop it into a film.

**DEAN HAIR**  
**Movie Review**  
**"The Phantom"**  
**C-**

Little problems bothered me throughout the film, like where in the middle of the jungle did the Phantom (Billy Zane) find purple spandex? Not that he does not fill it out nicely with his recently buffed body, however. The Phantom is like Tarzan with a little more attitude and class, but not much more. Zane comes across as very likeable and appealing, though you have to keep a box of crackers nearby to catch all of the cheesy dialogue.

The action scenes are pathetic. The only interesting scene involves a truck crossing an ancient bridge and of course you know

the bridge is going to break. Kristy Swanson plays Zane's love interest and sports one of the worst Amelia Earhart hairstyles I have seen. Swanson's performance is like her performance in "Buffy The Vampire Slayer," airheaded.

The plot centers around the hunt for three magical skulls, which, when put together, create an evil force the likes of which God has never seen. The Phantom then begins a cheeseball chase through the jungle and New York City to foil the bad guys' ambitions of controlling the world. Mix in an ancient brotherhood of bad guys, namely pirates, and you have, well, an even worse mishmash of disaster than what Alec Baldwin delivered in "The Shadow."

There are a few good things about "The Phantom." The cinematography is warm and inviting. Crisp shots of the jungle and wonderful map paintings of New York in the 1930s help distract you from the messy acting going on in front of them. I would bank on this film making a modest opening and then quickly slipping into the \$1 theaters before the month is over and into the video store before Fall. If you want to taste the best that comic book heroes have to offer, stick to the comics.

## Arts & Entertainment Calendar

### FRIDAY, JUNE 14

**COLD COFFEE.** Ninth Street Bakery, 776 Ninth St., Durham. 286-0303.

### SATURDAY, JUNE 15

**JACKIE AND PATTIE LESUER with RICK LARENO.** Ninth Street Bakery, 776 Ninth St., Durham. 286-0303.

### SUNDAY, JUNE 16

**ERRATICA with KUNG FUSION.** The Cave.

452 1/2 W. Franklin St., Chapel Hill. 968-9308.

### MONDAY, JUNE 17

**THE VAN GOGH GOGHS.** The Cave. 452 1/2 W. Franklin St., Chapel Hill. 968-9308.

### TUESDAY, JUNE 18

**JAMIE NOTARTHOMAS.** The Cave. 452 1/2 W. Franklin St., Chapel Hill. 968-9308.

### WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19

**GIBB DROLL with EVAN & JARON.** Cat's Cradle. 300 E. Main St., Carrboro. 967-9053.

### THURSDAY JUNE 20

**DOUBTING THOMAS.** The Cave. 452 1/2 W. Franklin St., Chapel Hill. 968-9308.

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