

FEATURE

Films excite, educate, entertain and fall short

NEW YORK (CNS) — The following are capsule reviews of movies recently reviewed by the U.S. Catholic Conference Office for Film and Broadcasting. Each review includes USCC and Motion Picture Association of America ratings.

The Devil's Own

Solid thriller in which an upright New York policeman (Harrison Ford) welcomes an Irish immigrant (Brad Pitt) into his home unaware the young man is an IRA agent whose attempt to buy Stinger missiles inadvertently enmeshes the cop, his family and his police partner (Ruben Blades) in a web of violence. Director Alan J. Pakula focuses on the complex moral dilemmas facing the cop and the IRA man while skillfully building the suspense in the gripping narrative. Intermittent violence, recurring rough language and some profanity. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

Selena

Musical biography of vivacious Mexican-American Selena Quintanilla Perez (Jennifer Lopez) who grows up under the guidance of her strict father (Edward James Olmos) to become a leading tejano singer on the verge of mainstream stardom when, tragically, she is murdered at age 23. Written and directed by Gregory Nava, the picture of a close and loving Latino family is treated with such heavy-handed earnestness that it ends up being more than a little dull, despite Lopez's and Olmos' best efforts. Momentary mild language and brief domestic tension. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.



Ruben Blades, Harrison Ford and Brad Pitt explore complex moral dilemmas in the suspense thriller *The Devil's Own*.

Liar Liar

Unremarkable comedy in which a divorced dad (Jim Carrey) who is an habitual liar, especially defending clients in court, is thrown for a loss when his little boy's birthday wish that Dad stop lying comes true. Directed by Tom Shadyac, Carrey's eccentric brand of physical humor is the only reason to see this sappy but occasionally risqué tale of a father learning about honesty and caring from his child. Brief comic violence, some sexual references and an instance of profanity. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children

under 13.

Mandela

Engrossing documentary on the life of Nelson Mandela from his youth in the Xhosa tribal lands of the Transkei and rise in the leadership of the African National Congress in the fight against apartheid to his 27 years in prison, Nobel Peace Prize and 1994 election as South Africa's first black president. Co-directed by South African filmmakers Jo Menell and Angus Gibson, the documentary interweaves interviews with Mandela, his political colleagues and several family members with historical footage and contemporary

scenes as they recall the struggles of a painful past while stressing the need for national reconciliation in facing the new challenges of a post-apartheid society. Newsreel scenes of violence and the injustices of apartheid. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. Not rated by the MPAA.

Cats Don't Dance

Animated feature in which a young hep cat (voiced by Scott Bakula) from Kokomo, Ind., comes to 1930s Hollywood to sing and dance his way to movie stardom but can only get a job as an animal extra until proving he and his friends are top talents. Directed by Mark Dindal, the colorful animation is lost in the threadbare animal story of an unknown's break into show biz, with most of the humor directed at the era's movie stars and studio moguls, but the result offers little to charm the imagination of young viewers. The USCC classification is A-I — general patronage. The MPAA rating is G — general audiences.

BAPS

Clumsy comedy set in Beverly Hills where two dim young women (Halle Berry and Natalie Desselle) befriend a sickly millionaire (Martin Landau), then are nearly framed for a crime but end up as wealthy heiresses. Director Robert Townsend's mushy comedy is straight out of the dumb-and-dumber school, though its central characters are likable lugheads. Fleeting comic violence, brief toilet humor and some rough language. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

Writer critiques 'liberalism'

Heart of the World, Center of the Church: Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism and Liberation, by David L. Schindler, William B. Eerdmans (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1996). 322 pp., \$37.50.

Reviewed by Jon Nilson
Catholic News Service

Heart of the World, Center of the Church is a substantial contribution to the contemporary debate on the proper interpretation of Vatican II and its implications for the contemporary church.

Inspired and guided by the theology of von Balthasar and the thought of John Paul II, David L. Schindler first presents a sustained critique of dominant American Catholic models of the relationship between church and world and then his own position, grounded in what he terms a "communio" ecclesiology.

After a lengthy introduction, Schindler puts Catholic liberalism, as it emerges in the work of John Courtney Murray, George Weigel, Richard John Neuhaus, Michael Novak, and Theodore Hesburgh, under his logical microscope.

While Schindler denies any intention of denigrating their accomplishments, he still finds their constructive efforts severely — even dangerously — wanting. Their fatal flaw, disclosed by an analysis that is "directed toward the unintended 'logic' of their positions," is their accommodation with contemporary liberalism.

For Schindler, liberalism masquerades as the open, neutral arena in which the truth will emerge from dialogue, whereas it is actually founded on an anthropology that is deeply antithetical to the Catholic vision. Only those who are formed spiritually, intellectually, and practically by this

vision can further the proper mission of the church in this world and contribute to the only liberation that is worthy of the name.

In the second half of the book, Schindler argues his basic thesis, which he frames as the antithesis of liberalism's atomistic, activist, technical and pragmatic ethos. Although the treatment here is, by his own admission, neither systematic nor exhaustive, he wants to show that "the Trinitarian communio, present in the sacramental communio that is the essence of the church, reveals the meaning of all of being in its full integrity, and thereby reveals as well the inner logic and dynamic of the Christian presence in the world." Here again von Balthasar and John Paul II provide the inspiration and guidance.



Within these space limitations, it is not possible to do justice to this book. Readers must be ready to wrestle with the metaphysics which, for Schindler, structure liberalism and authentic Catholicism, as well as with the precisions of Trinitarian theology which ought to structure Catholic ecclesiology and the church-world relationship that derives from it.

Readers already sympathetic to Schindler's approach will find much support for their views. Readers whose thinking owes more to, say, Father Rahner and Father Lonergan will find themselves in a serious, multifaceted debate with a worthy and generous opponent. They will come away with their own positions refined, if not necessarily changed.

Nilson, an associate professor of theology at Loyola University, Chicago, specializes in contemporary Roman Catholicism.

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