

# FEATURE

## Kilmer helps regenerate 'The Saint'

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 Saint

The updated title character of the Leslie Charteris mysteries of the 1930s is a sly thief (Val Kilmer) who assumes numerous identities in trying to save one of his intended victims (Elizabeth Shue) from a power-mad Russian seeking her revolutionary energy formula. Directed by Philip Noce, the action story is slickly produced and provides undemanding escapist entertainment, although the one-dimensional characters are less than engaging. Some stylized violence, implied affairs 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.



Simon Templar (Val Kilmer) makes a quick getaway in "The Saint." The action-adventure is slickly produced, but offers only one-dimensional characters.

Paramount Pictures

### Inventing the Abbotts

Contrived romantic melodrama set in a 1950s Midwest town where two poor teenage brothers (Billy Crudup and Joaquin Phoenix) uncover long-buried family secrets when they start dating three sisters (Liv Tyler, Jennifer Connelly and Joanna Going) from the community's wealthiest family. Directed by Pat O'Connor, the story's melodramatics detract from the bittersweet portrayal of frail, youthful characters coping with a troubled past. A few discreet bedroom scenes with fleeting nudity, momentary violence, recurring profanity and intermittent rough language. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

### That Old Feeling

Reunited at their daughter's wedding, a bitterly divorced couple (Bette Midler and Dennis Farina) in stable second marriages impulsively surrender to passion then try

to evade facing their horrified spouses and shocked daughter as they ponder what to do next. Director Carl Reiner lampoons matrimony in a farcical story tailor-made for Midler's style. Comic treatment of adultery and instances of profanity and rough language. The USCC classification is A-IV — adults, with reservations. The MPAA rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

### Turbo: A Power Rangers Movie

Inane action fantasy from the children's TV series has the teen Power Rangers trying to stop a power-mad Valkyrie (Hilary Shepard Turner) and a volcano monster from wreaking havoc on the universe. Directed by David Winning and Shuki Levy, the result is a choppy mix of formula myth-

ic characters, derivative situations and martial-arts battles. Special-effects violence and stylized mayhem. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

### The Sixth Man

Lame comic fantasy in which a college basketball star (Kadeem Hardison) dies in mid-season but his spirit returns to help his brother (Marlon Wayans) lead their team to the championship. Directed by Randall Miller, the cliched sports story offers no surprises and the one-joke premise of a ghostly sixth player seen only by his brother delivers few giggles before growing tiresome. Player's death during a game, strong sexual innuendo and coarse 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.

## Views change about divorce

*The Divorce Culture*, by Barbara Dafoe Whitehead. Alfred A. Knopf (New York, 1997), 224 pp., \$24.

Reviewed by Mary Kenny  
Catholic News Service



In the United States today almost every family has been touched by divorce. Long-married parents find one or more of their children have divorced. Long-time friends announce that they are divorcing. "What's going on here?" many people wonder.

In *The Divorce Culture*, Barbara Dafoe Whitehead asserts that in the past 30 years a revolution has taken place in our thinking about divorce.

Marriage is the central institution of family life. Marriage is a permanent bond in which, with effort on the part of both spouses, love changes but persists and grows over the years. There is an obligation on the spouses, even in the face of hardship, to preserve the marriage because marital stability and child well-being are culturally linked. Divorce is a necessary evil that is needed for severe marital breakdown — particularly in cases of desertion or abuse — but its occurrence should be rare. Divorce is a social problem because it affects not only the spouses but other family members and society as well.

If you agree with the preceding paragraph, you reflect pre-revolutionary thinking about divorce.

Post-revolutionary thinking is very different. Individual wellbeing, a rich emotional life, personal growth and the opportunity for self-expression are the most important objectives in living. The object of marriage is to foster the emotional life and personal happiness of the partners. Divorce is an individual event defined by and responsive to the interest of the spouses. Rather than being a social problem, divorce offers the potential for growth of the spouses and the betterment of children, this model of thinking says.

Today, Whitehead asserts, political leaders, advice givers, even etiquette manuals and therapists reflect post-revolutionary thinking. Political leaders, many divorced themselves, agree that family values have broken down. Liberals blame the failure of the government to support women and children. Conservatives blame welfare moms. Neither side even mentions the rate of divorces in the United States, the highest in the western world.

The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, the main professional organization for that field, in 1994 gave a major press award to a magazine article arguing that fathers are not necessary in the home. Whitehead's main point in this book is to explain when, why and how our thinking about divorce changed so dramatically.

Whitehead's second objective is to assess the effect of divorce upon children. Here her book is factual and sobering. Unlike adult advice on divorce, which focuses on opportunities for decision-making, freedom, and growth, divorce advice for children deals with sadness, anxiety and loss. She analyzes specifically and at length how on any scale of measurement, children are the victims in divorce. The sad testimony from children of divorce themselves is particularly moving.

Admittedly, Whitehead's suggestions as to how to change the thinking about divorce are somewhat weak. She suggests that education is a beginning.

Kenny is co-author of the CNS weekly column "Family Talk."



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