

FEATURE

Videos take viewers to China, Mars and deep sea

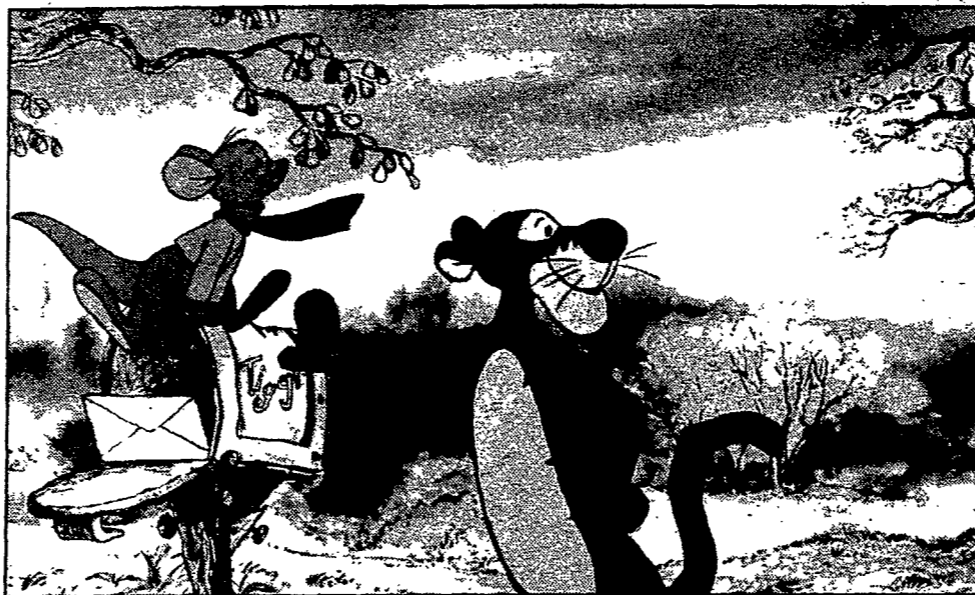
NEW YORK (CNS) — The following are home videocassette reviews from the U.S. Catholic Conference Office for Film and Broadcasting. Each videocassette is available on VHS format. Theatrical movies on video have a U.S. Catholic Conference classification and Motion Picture Association of America rating. All reviews indicate the appropriate age group for the video audience.

'Any Given Sunday'

A frenetically jumbled look at a professional football team as it tries to make the playoffs under a veteran coach (Al Pacino) who puts his career on the line by starting an ailing but reliable old-timer (Dennis Quaid) as quarterback rather than the hotshot young maverick (Jamie Foxx) favored by the club's devious owner (Cameron Diaz). Directed by Oliver Stone, the strictly formula sports story follows the underdogs to the big game in a jazzed-up narrative with jarring scenes of physical and verbal violence on and off the field, in locker rooms, bedrooms and corporate suites, while the coach philosophizes, cajoles, screams and whispers about team unity and the game's dignity. Much stylized violence, brutality, sexual situations, locker-room frontal nudity, drug abuse, recurring rough language and occasional profanity. The USCC classification is A-IV — adults, with reservations. The MPAA rating is R — restricted. (Warner Bros.)

'Jason and the Argonauts'

Imaginative mythological adventure in which a brave young man (Jason London) sets off on a perilous quest to find the coveted Golden Fleece to reclaim his father's (Ciaran Hinds) kingdom from his villainous uncle (Dennis Hopper). Colorful characters, inspired special effects and moments of humor help to balance director Nick Willing's melodramatic miseries when the narrative unfolds as a choppy string of short stories. Some mild adventure violence. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents.



Disney/CNS

Tigger enjoys time with his young pal, Roo, in a scene from the animated feature "The Tigger Movie." The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-I — general patronage. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is G — general audiences.

Not rated by the MPAA. (Artisan)

'Longitude'

Absorbing, fact-based historical drama charts the 18th-century struggle by Englishman John Harrison (Michael Gambon) to determine a ship's exact location at sea, as painstakingly uncovered by an unstable World War I veteran (Jeremy Irons). Although the veteran's involvement proves distracting within the narrative, director Charles Sturridge treats Harrison's significant scientific accomplishment with proper gravity as scenes at sea convey the crucial importance of establishing ships' longitude. Momentary sexual innuendo with fleeting nudity. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. Not rated by the MPAA. (A&E)

'A Map of the World'

Drama in which the life of an unflappable wife and mother (Sigourney Weaver in peak form) living on a farm in Wisconsin is devastatingly altered when an

unimaginable accident happens. As directed by Scott Elliott, the films starts out promisingly, but the plot soon becomes overburdened and jumpy, losing its edge and vitality. Shadowy marital encounters with nudity and minimal rough language. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is R. (USA)

'Mission to Mars'

Sleek space fantasy set in 2020 when four NASA astronauts (led by Tim Robbins and Gary Sinise) head for Mars to rescue the sole survivor (Don Cheadle) of the first manned landing after a catastrophic but unexplained event on the barren red planet. Director Brian De Palma crafts an intriguing, visually alluring if quite fanciful tale of aliens and their connection to human life on Earth. Brief sci-fi violence and mild profanity. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested. (Touchstone)

'The Big Kahuna'

Somewhat absorbing drama about three industrial lubricant salesmen (Kevin Spacey, Danny DeVito, Peter Facinelli) who spend the night in a Wichita convention hospitality suite hoping to land a big account, but tensions between career and personal values among the three escalate before bringing unexpected lessons. First-time director John Swan-

beck brings out good performances in an engaging film spiked with dark humor and sharp observations despite its obvious stage-play origins. Some cynical remarks about religion and recurrent rough language and profanity. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is R. (Universal)

'Not One Less'

Documentary-like tale set in rural China where a 13-year-old substitute teacher (Wei Minzhi) sets out to the city to retrieve an 11-year-old student (Zhang Huike) forced to leave school to make money for his invalid mother. Director Zhang Yimou's portrait of rural poverty depriving Chinese children their right to a basic education makes the government-approved, tacked-on happy ending all the more suspect. Subtitles. The USCC classification is A-I — general patronage. The MPAA rating is G — general audiences. (Columbia)

'Princess Mononoke'

Japanese cartoon feature spins a mythic tale of ancient woodland spirits warring with human intruders while a young warrior (voice of Billy Crudup) tries to make peace between them with the help of the title princess (voice of Claire Danes) who was raised by wolves serving the god of the forest. Writer-director Hayao Miyazaki has created a beautifully animated tale of ancient Japan which mingles a mythic past with its feudal culture, though even those who enjoy its mythic imagination may find the proceedings growing tiresomely overlong. Animated violence with gory visuals and some vulgar language. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13. (Miramax)

'The Tigger Movie'

Buoyant animated feature in which Tigger, Winnie the Pooh's cheerful bouncing friend, tries to learn whether he's the only one as he seeks out his own "tigger" family. The artfully crafted animation leaps out with vivid colors and three-dimensionality in director Jun Falkenstein's happy exploration as Tigger is joined by Pooh, Piglet, Roo, Owl, Rabbit and all the others in the clever musical adventure. The USCC classification is A-I — general patronage. The MPAA rating is G — general audiences. (Disney)



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