

'Daredevil' may be hard sell

Gerri Pare/CNS

NEW YORK — Hoping to give "Spiderman" competition as a new movie franchise, Ben Affleck dons a burgundy cowl and leather suit to pose as New York City's nighttime crime enforcer, "Daredevil" (20th Century Fox). The movie's dark tone and chilly characters, however, will probably leave it far from the box-office success that "Spiderman" achieved.

The set-up is nicely accomplished as we see 12-year-old Matt Murdock (Scott Terra) blinded by an accidental chemical spill, which motivates his father (David Keith) to return to the boxing ring, only to be murdered for refusing to throw a fight. Matt swears he will avenge the death and devote his life to getting justice for the underdog.

As an attorney, Matt defends only the innocent, but by night, using his superhuman, remaining senses and gymnastic vaulting abilities, he seeks out the guilty, such as the rapist he leaves in the path of an oncoming subway train. Matt seeks forgiveness in confession but his parish priest (Derrick O'Connor) will not condone his brand of vigilante justice. Conflicted, Matt becomes ambivalent about taking the law into his own hands.

A *New York Post* reporter (Joe Pantoliano) gives the unknown crimefighter the moniker "Daredevil," but no one suspects it could be a blind barrister. However, Daredevil's "radar sense" allows him to "see" somewhat by the vibrations made by sound, and coupled with his extraordinary other senses his visual handicap is greatly minimized.



20th Century Fox/CNS

Ben Affleck, as a blind attorney who becomes a crime-fighting superhero at night, makes a fiery entrance in a scene from the movie "Daredevil."

The city's criminal underbelly is run by Kingpin (Michael Duncan Clarke) whose partner in crime, Natchios (Erick Avari), wants out. Kingpin orders a hit on Natchios by the rabid killer Bullseye (Colin Farrell).

Matt has just fallen for Natchios' daughter, Electra (Jennifer Garner), whose skill in martial arts equals his own, something they quickly establish upon meeting. But when her father is murdered, she mistakenly thinks Daredevil is the killer and sets out to slay him, unaware she is Bullseye's next target.

Based on the Marvel Comics character created in 1964, "Daredevil"

will draw its comic book aficionados, but may be a tougher sell to the mainstream audience so accustomed to airy, feel-good movies.

Due to its sympathetic treatment of vigilante justice, some brutal but stylized violence, a discreet sexual encounter and an instance of profanity, the USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-IV — adults, with reservations. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

Pare is director of the Office for Film and Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

'Jungle Book' sequel 'delightful'

David DiCerto/CNS

NEW YORK — "The Jungle Book 2" (Disney) is a fun-filled sequel to Disney's 1967 animated classic. It is based on characters from the stories of Rudyard Kipling, and director Steve Trenbirth seamlessly weaves cutting-edge, computer-imaging techniques with traditional animation to create a delightful tale of friendship and family.

"The Jungle Book 2" should serve as an effective box-office stopgap until Pixar, Disney's digital arm, releases the underwater adventure "Finding Nemo" later in the year.

It is set shortly after the first film ended. Mowgli (voice of Haley Joel Osment) finds himself living in a "man-village" on the outskirts of the

jungle he once called home. Lured into civilization by the beauty of a village girl, Shanti (voice of Mae Whitman), he is unaccustomed to life among humans. Though holding his new-found family in genuine affection, he finds men's ways alien, and their rules incompatible with his devil-may-care, jungle-bred spirit.

Mowgli yearns for the *joie de vivre* he enjoyed with his old buddy, Baloo (voice of John Goodman), a bohemian bear who likewise pines for the companionship of his little "man cub." Against the sage counsel of black panther Bagheera (voice of Bob Joles), Baloo aids and abets Mowgli's escape. Fearing for his safety, Shanti pursues the two renegades into the wild accompanied by

Mowgli's kid brother, Ranjan (voice of Connor Funk), an irrepressible toddler who idolizes Mowgli.

Baloo, however, is not the only one eager to see Mowgli away from the safe confines of the village. Having been humiliated by the jungle boy in the earlier film, the man-eating tiger, Shere Khan (voice of Tony Jay), is anxious to sink his claws in Mowgli and exact his revenge.

The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-I — general patronage. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is G — general audiences.

DiCerto is a guest reviewer for the Office for Film and Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Capsules

NEW YORK (CNS) — The following are capsule reviews of movies recently reviewed by the Office for Film & Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

'DARK BLUE'

Powerful drama set against the backdrop of the 1992 Rodney King police brutality trial, in which a corrupt LAPD cop (Kurt Russell) and his rookie partner (Scott Speedman) investigate a quadruple homicide unaware their greedy supervisor (Brendan Gleeson) was behind the crime. Some intense violence, racial epithets and fleeting nudity. The USCCB classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

'GODS AND GENERALS'

Epic Civil War drama focuses on the convictions and strategies of Confederate Gen. Lee and Jackson (Robert Duvall and Stephen Lang) and the North's Gen. Hancock and Lt. Col. Chamberlain (Brian Mollon and Jeff Daniels) in the early war years of 1861-63. The USCCB 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.

'THE LIFE OF DAVID GALE'

A college professor and adamant capital punishment abolitionist (Kevin Spacey) faces execution for the murder of a fellow activist while a brash young journalist (Kate Winslet) pursues the truth behind the accusations. A graphic depiction of a murder with nudity, a few sexual encounters, and recurring crude language and profanities. The USCCB classification is O — morally offensive. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

'OLD SCHOOL'

Three, thirty-something former college classmates (Luke Wilson, Will Ferrell, Vince Vaughn) turn a rented off-campus house into a frat house to attract members and female guests for nonstop, all-around debauchery. Recurring vulgarity, graphic sexual references and some nudity. The USCCB classification is O — morally offensive. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

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