

USCCB rates recent movies

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

'FROM JUSTIN TO KELLY'

Pointless musical romantic comedy in which reality TV's "American Idol" winner Kelly Clarkson and her frizzy-haired runner-up, Justin Guarini, play star-crossed lovers among the thong-and-tequila-spring break crowd in sunny Florida. With forgettable songs and cardboard performances, director Robert Iscove's uninspired ode to 1960s beach-party flicks hits a flat note on every level. Sexually suggestive situations, frat-house humor, mild language, and a glamorized attitude toward alcohol. The USCCB classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

'SWIMMING POOL'

A dowdy British crime novelist (Charlotte Rampling) uses episodes of her publisher's sexually prolific daughter's life for her new book until matters turn deadly. Director Francois Ozon elicits nuanced performances but the film's effectiveness is dampened by an ambiguous ending and a contention that promiscuity is conducive to creativity. Some subtitles. Sexual encounters with nudity, violence and substance abuse, rough language and profanity. The USCCB classification is O — morally offensive. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

'28 DAYS LATER'

Violent blood and gore sci-fi thriller about a handful of survivors (including Gillian Murphy and Naomie Harris) struggling to stay alive in a post-apocalyptic England decimated by a virus that turns infected humans into rabid, bloodthirsty maniacs. Director Danny Boyle raises interesting questions about man's capacity for inhumanity. Graphic violence, rough language and profanity, fleeting full frontal nudity (during medical treatment). The USCCB classification is A-IV — adults with reservations. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

Script defeats 'The Hulk'

Anne Navarro/CNS

NEW YORK — Angry and larger than life, director Ang Lee's "The Hulk" (Universal) bounds into theaters and fills up the screen, but a problematic script and indulgent length may leave some viewers similarly temperamental.

The film is initially intriguing as it sets up the story of mild-mannered scientist Bruce Banner (Eric Bana). Working with his colleague, former girlfriend Betty Ross (Jennifer Connelly), he hopes to discover the key to some knotty genetic questions.

When a normally deadly dose of gamma radiation freakishly makes him better, stronger and different, his repressed anger ignites a monster within. And the misunderstood Goliath's rage is only fueled as the military hunts him down to stop his destructive ways and use his genetic mutations as fodder for research.

The film explores Bruce's repressed memories of his scientist father (Nick Nolte) and the explosive turning point that left Bruce supposedly orphaned. Lee once again proves that he is a visual master, using split screens to create a comic-book effect.

With lifelike hair and musculature, the computer-generated Hulk moves with agility. Its facial features closely resemble those of Bana's, making the evolution more convincing. In some scenes the digital technology



Universal Studios/CNS

The big green man is pursued by the military through the streets of San Francisco in "The Hulk," inspired by Marvel Comics' "The Incredible Hulk."

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slips into the gimmicky, even producing a few chuckles.

The script becomes overwhelmed in its attempt to tie together too many loose plot strands, at times becoming one long big-budget scene slapped onto the next without being very engaging. With sporadic mayhem, violence and destruction, dis-

turbing images, minimal crass language and profanity and a flash of rear nudity, the USCCB classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

Navarro is a part-time reviewer in the Office for Film & Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

'Angels' sequel is goofy, but fun

Anne Navarro/CNS

NEW YORK — Like letting champagne bubbles tickle one's nose, "Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle" (Columbia) is an effervescent, giddy ride that duplicates the first, which isn't necessarily a bad thing.

The film is inspired by the popular 1970s' TV show and again directed by McG. Three private eye Angels (Cameron Diaz, Drew Barrymore and Lucy Liu) investigate the theft of two titanium finger rings on which are encrypted the list of people in the federal witness protection program now that several of the witnesses have turned up dead.

The shallow premise is a perfunctory measure for action scenes with the Angels scantily clad in haute couture doing slow motion flips and kicks to outwit the villains. It's a big budget B-movie that ludicrously equates female empowerment with brawn and a bodacious body. Watching the film, one could un-

derstand how young girls could be attracted to the Angels. They are strong, smart and tough, while still being feminine and fun. Yet "feminine" here is women in their skintight, baring outfits, using not only their flowing hair and bright-white smiles, but their abundant cleavage and tight abs and butts to distract and clobber the enemy.

The film's tone is lighthearted and frivolous with leading ladies almost winking at the camera as they shake their booties, seeming not to mind gratuitous derriere shots.

The new Bosley is Bernie Mac, who adds a bit of zing and his unique comedic flair. John Forsyth returns as the voice of Charlie, recalling its TV roots. Demi Moore stars as Madison Lee, a fallen Angel who just may pose the biggest threat to the good-hearted, crime-fighting threesome.

The film has a toe-tapping, finger-snapping score that dares anyone not to bounce along with the beat. Diaz shines as the flighty Natalie, mix-

ing an irrepressible smile and giggle with a deadly "hi-yah!" martial arts chop. Liu is still the aloof acrobat, stretching her folded body out of a crate and flipping her hair as if to say, "no big deal." Barrymore keeps up with her buddies, as the former bad-girl-turned-Angel who still has a soft spot for the bad guys.

This goofy, exciting, completely forgettable film perfectly fits the definition of popcorn summer fare.

With intermittent stylized violence, fleeting crass language and profanity, a live-in relationship and mild sexual innuendo, the USCCB classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

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