

first runs

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THE A-TEAM D: Joe Carnahan; with Liam Neeson, Bradley Cooper, Jessica Biel, Quinton Jackson, Sharlto Copley, Patrick Wilson. (PG-13, 117 min.)

The A-Team is a product that begs to be consumed alongside a jumbo tub of movie-theatre popcorn, complete with the butter-slick, tummy-sick aftereffects that are sure to leave a longer lasting impression than anything mayhem maestro Carnahan cooks up onscreen. The cast seems to have been assembled primarily for its blinking resemblance to the stars of the original Eighties TV series about a renegade group of former Army Rangers now for hire. The plot here is negligible – U.S. Mint engraving plates go missing, and the wrongly accused A-Team must clear its name – but that piddlingness matters only in that it gets the boys from point A to point B, or rather, from one wildly ludicrous and artillery-charged scenario to the next. Still, Carnahan, with co-writers Brian Bloom and Skip Woods, shows real flair with these action set-pieces, even as narrative logic and spatial coherence fly out the window. (06/18/2010) – Kimberley Jones

★★★ Alamo Ritz, Alamo Draffhouse Lake Creek, Barton Creek Square, CM Cedar Park, Hill Country Galleria, CM Round Rock, Southpark Meadows, Highland, Gateway, Gold Class, Lakeline, Tinseltown North, Tinseltown South, Westgate

GET HIM TO THE GREEK D: Nicholas Stoller; with Jonah Hill, Russell Brand, Sean Combs, Elisabeth Moss, Rose Byrne, Colm Meaney. (R, 108 min.)

Get *Him to the Greek* is episodic and spasmodically funny: Good jokes and gags perk up otherwise rambling and sometimes misbegotten sequences. The film feels like a collection of sketches instead of a mad, three-day, drug-and-sex-infused whirl from which junior A&R guy Aaron Green (Hill) has been deputized by his label boss Sergio Roma (Combs) to fetch debauched rock star Aldoux Snow (Brand) in London and fly him to Los Angeles for a commemorative performance at the fabled Greek Theatre. Hill and Brand have good chemistry as the mismatched couple. A side trip to Las Vegas and an aborted sexual three-way slow the proceedings down for meager payoffs, and the rampant sexism and third-act moralizing about the value of monogamy and sobriety may prove to be turnoffs to other viewers. Surprisingly, the women – *Mad Men*'s Moss as Green's girlfriend and Byrne as Jackie Q – deliver rich, sympathetic performances. (06/04/2010) – Marjorie Baumgarten

★★★ Alamo Draffhouse Lake Creek, Alamo Draffhouse South, Barton Creek Square, CM Cedar Park, Hill Country Galleria, CM Round Rock, Southpark Meadows, Dobie, Highland, Gateway, Gold Class, Metropolitan, Tinseltown North, Westgate

★ **THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO** D: Niels Arden Oplev; with Michael Nyqvist, Noomi Rapace, Lena Endre, Peter Haber, Sven Bertil Taube. (NR, 152 min., subtitled)

No one escapes untainted in this grimly fiendish adaptation of Stieg Larsson's bestselling

novel. On the face of it, the film is something of an investigatively inclined thriller. The film quickly realizes itself as vastly intriguing, well-written, and sensationally topical. Chief among those intrigues is the disappearance, some 40 years earlier, of a young girl from a Swedish island. She was the niece of a now-82-year-old retired industrialist who hires Stockholm-based journalist Mikael Blomkvist (Nyqvist) to investigate the cold case. Running parallel to and finally weaving its way into Blomkvist's own storyline is the scrutiny of the fearsomely independent and black-clad, cycle-riding female hacker Lisbeth Salander (Rapace): the girl with the dragon tattoo. Oplev's film is deftly calculated to thrill even as it repulses. This is not your mother's murder mystery, unless your mother's maiden name is de Sade and she has an appallingly bleak vision of modern society that occasionally fixates on the historical misdeeds of the corporate/industrial world and the correction thereof. (04/02/2010) – Marc Savlov

★★★ Arbor, Dobie, Tinseltown South

THE KARATE KID D: Harald Zwart; with Jaden Smith, Jackie Chan, Taraji P. Henson, Han Wenwen, Yu Rongguang, Wu Zhenwei, Wang Zhenwei. (PG, 140 min.)

John G. Avildsen's 1984 original has become, in the fullness of time, a genuine pop-cultural touchstone. The intense remake by Zwart isn't likely to take the gleam off Avildsen's *Kid*, but it's directed with sympathetic panache and arrestingly shot on location in China with an eye toward the epic by Roger Pratt. It also benefits tremendously from Christopher Murphey's deliberate and fine script, which takes its time setting up the story and then hits all the right beats until it slips up in a puddle of sappiness mere minutes before the end of the film's lengthy running time. Jaden Smith, son of Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith, is fine and realistically precocious as 12-year-old Dre, who finds himself in Beijing after his mother (a smart, sassy, entirely mom-worthy performance from Henson) is transferred from their hometown of Detroit. Chan does some of his most nuanced work in ages here. (06/18/2010) – Marc Savlov

★★★ Alamo Draffhouse Lake Creek, Alamo Draffhouse Village, Barton Creek Square, CM Cedar Park, Hill Country Galleria, CM Round Rock, Southpark Meadows, Highland, Gateway, Gold Class, Lakeline, Metropolitan, Millennium, Tinseltown North, Westgate

KILLERS D: Robert Luketic; with Ashton Kutcher, Katherine Heigl, Tom Selleck, Catherine O'Hara, Katheryn Winnick, Kevin Sussman, Lisa Ann Walter, Casey Wilson, Rob Riggle, Martin Mull. (PG-13, 100 min.)

Heigl reteams here with her director of *The Ugly Truth* to see, apparently, if they could stoop any lower. The sad truth is that they can and did, although the hackneyed script is a not-insubstantial factor in this tedious romp. Premise: A woman marries her dream guy only to abruptly discover that he was once an assassin for the CIA. *Killers* coasts on the strength of its eye-candy casting of two handsome former models-turned-actors, Heigl and Kutcher. Both have in common a limited emotive range, which grows quickly tiresome, though Heigl, with her ability to play both a shrieking hysteric and uptight sexpot, has double the range of Kutcher. There was potential in the setup to make a mockery of suburban values and lifestyles, but instead the script only calls for violent mayhem and chaotic, nonsensical plotting. Only the underplay of Selleck gets out of this with any dignity, while



Beetlejuice

Beetlejuice (1988) D: Tim Burton; with Michael Keaton, Winona Ryder, Alec Baldwin, Geena Davis, Jeffrey Jones, Catherine O'Hara, Sylvia Sidney. (PG, 92 min.) **101X Summer Cinema.** In this wonderfully comic spook tale, a couple of mild-mannered ghosts call upon the obnoxious demon Betelgeuse to help them reinhabit their house from the new (and living) tenants. Outdoors. @Central Market North, Wednesday, 8:30pm; free.

O'Hara is totally wasted as Jen's one-note tipping mom. (06/11/2010) – Marjorie Baumgarten

★ Barton Creek Square, CM Cedar Park, Hill Country Galleria, CM Round Rock, Southpark Meadows, Gateway, Gold Class, Lakeline, Metropolitan, Tinseltown North, Westgate

MARMADUKE D: Tom Dey; with Lee Pace, Judy Greer, William H. Macy; with the voices of Owen Wilson, Emma Stone, George Lopez, Raugi Yu, Christopher Mintz-Plasse, Steve Coogan. (PG, 87 min.)

You don't get much flimsier than the live-actioning of a 45-year-old comic strip about a big, dumb dog. Marmaduke (amiably voiced by Wilson) is the dog in question: a mammoth Great Dane mix who, in his own words, is going through his awkward teenage years. Marmaduke means well, but he's too ungainly, too uncoordinated, too sloppy and eager to make mischief. He's also a mutt, which docks him major points when Marmaduke's family, the Winslows, moves from Kansas to Orange County, where the dog park division between pedigrees and mixed breeds is framed as a kind of canine clique war. There's also a makeover sequence, hard partying, light ethnic humor, and a princess vs. tomboy love triangle – which sounds like the makings of a totally rad John Hughes movie. Instead, it's an intermittently amusing parable about an outcast's ascension, as performed by a pack of digitally manipulated dogs. Next. (06/11/2010) – Kimberley Jones

★ Metropolitan, Tinseltown North

MOTHER AND CHILD D: Rodrigo Garcia; with Naomi Watts, Annette Bening, Kerry Washington, Jimmy Smits, Samuel L. Jackson, Eileen Ryan, Elpidia Carrillo, Shareeka Epps, Cherry Jones, S. Epatha Merkerson, David Morse, Amy Brenneman, David Ramsey, Elizabeth Peña. (R, 125 min.)

If the mother-child bond is the core human relationship, then this movie implies that we are an emotionally doomed species, though I do not think this was writer-director Garcia's intent. Adoption, particularly, is fraught with psychic dangers, is the



The Adventures of Prince Achmed

The Adventures of Prince Achmed (1926) D: Lotte Reiniger. (NR, 65 min.) **Movies & Music.** In addition to laying claim to being the first feature-length work of animation, this silent film uses an unusual technique to create an exquisite effect. Reiniger employs cut-out silhouettes filmed in front of hand-tinted backgrounds to tell stories from *The Arabian Nights*. The effect is like watching lace figurines. An original score will be performed live by Many Birthdays. @Alamo Ritz, Sunday, 7pm.

revelation of each of the three individual storylines in *Mother and Child*. Composed in discrete but concurrent story strands, the characters never physically connect with one another even though the viewers have privileged inklings of the links among them. Garcia's seriously contrived third-act melodramatics also bring some sense of unity to the various narrative arcs. This shift to sappy melodrama, however, pierces the film's tough shell, turning what had theretofore been thorny characterizations into banal stereotypes. Yet if powerhouse performances are the sum of what you're looking for, search no further than this movie. In the lead roles, Watts, Bening, and Washington deliver some of the best work of their careers, as do all the supporting actors. (06/18/2010) – Marjorie Baumgarten

★★ Arbor

OCEANS D: Jacques Perrin, Jacques Cluzaud; narrated by Pierce Brosnan. (G, 84 min.)

In the opening moments of this nature documentary from the French filmmaking team who made *Winged Migration*, narrator Brosnan wonders aloud about the identity – no, the essence – of the substance that covers two-thirds of the planet. (Only a Frenchie film could hook on the ocean's je ne sais quoi.) Brosnan sniggeringly dismisses the idea that Latin names will get you any closer to understanding *la mer* – even though Latin names, in fact, can be quite instructive – and that sort of resistance to hard facts dogs the film. The camera may dive deep, but the content merely skims the surface, with a faux-poetic script that surely sounded better in French (“the ocean smiles at the sky”) and a frustrating tendency to dangle fascinating bits of information and then going silent. The dazzling marine life on display speaks for itself – but it shouldn't have to. (04/30/2010) – Kimberley Jones

★★ Movies 8

Rocco and His Brothers

Rocco and His Brothers (1960) D: Luchino Visconti; with Alain Delon, Renato Salvatori, Annie Girardot, Katina Paxinou, Claudia Cardinale. (NR, 180 min.) **Austin Film Society: A Summer of Restoration – Selections From Milestone Films.** Visconti returns to Milan, the city of his birth, in this story about the politics of class involved in the move to the big city of a family of impoverished southerners. Most memorable are Giuseppe Rotunno's stunning black-and-white cinematography and the baroque brutality of the fight scenes. (*) @Alamo Ritz, Saturday & Sunday, noon; \$6, AFS members free.



Places in the Heart

Places in the Heart (1984) D: Robert Benton; with Sally Field, Danny Glover, John Malkovich, Lindsay Crouse, Ed Harris, Amy Madigan. (PG, 102 min.) **Summer Film Classics: The Texas Connection – Oscar Totin' Texas Gals.** In Depression-era Texas, a suddenly widowed mother of two fights for survival by planting cotton on her land with the help of a black drifter and a blind boarder. Glover and Malkovich both earned their first wide recognition in these roles, while Field captured an Oscar. Benton's script also earned a Best Original Screenplay Oscar. (Double bill: *Terms of Endearment*.) @Paramount, Saturday, 7pm; Sunday, 4:55pm.

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