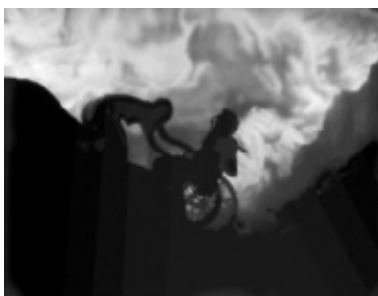


It Is Fine!

EVERYTHING IS FINE.

It Is Fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE. (2007) D: *Crispin Hellion Glover and David Brothers; with Steven C. Stewart, Margit Carstensen, Jami Ferrell, Lauren German.* (NR, 74 min.) **Crispin Glover Live.** The film depicts the autobiographical, psychosexual fantasies of Stewart, its writer and star. Stewart has cerebral palsy, and although the disease doesn't disappear in his fantasies, his speech becomes comprehensible and his appeal to women uncontrollable. Glover will narrate his Big Slide Show prior to the screening and conduct a Q&A afterward. See "The Relativity of Fineness," p.58, for an interview with Glover. @Alamo Ritz, Saturday, 6pm; Monday, 7pm.



HOW SHE MOVE

D: *Ian Iqbal Rashid; with Rutina Wesley, Dwain Murphy, Tre Armstrong, Kevin Duhaney.* (PG-13, 98 min.)

There aren't many surprises in this Canadian film about step dancing, and even if there were, they'd be low-lit and fuzzy (*How She Move*, which screened at last year's Sundance, wears its low budget on its sleeve; the upshot is a cast of unknowns who are naturals). Following competition films' natural trajectory, this one culminates in the mixed-sex team of Raya (Wesley) and Bishop (Murphy) heading to the annual Stepmonster Competition in Detroit, where the competition flies fast and furious in a montage that accents steps' astonishing meld of artistry and brute physicality (although any highlight reel must begin and end with a glorious slow pan of denim-clad booty). This kind of a dance film lives and dies by the routines, and this one wins: Mixing elements of gymnastics, karate, and break with the almighty step – an exceedingly polite term for what is really an awesome stomp – the dance sequences will root out the beat in even the sorriest *Bandstand* bystander. (01/25/2008) – *Kimberley Jones*

★★★ Tinseltown North, Tinseltown South

JUNO

D: *Jason Reitman; with Ellen Page, Michael Cera, Jennifer Garner, Jason Bateman, Allison Janney, J.K. Simmons.* (PG-13, 92 min.)

When 16-year-old Juno (Page) pays for her pregnancy test with the stick still in hand, the cashier wisecracks, "This is one diddle that can't be undid, home skillet." That quip, care of screenwriter and freshly minted Hot New Thing Diablo Cody, almost had me audibly groaning: So it's gonna be like that, is it? Well, yes and no. The quips keep coming, but they slow, and *Juno* settles in to a sharp, winning relationship comedy. But, like everything else in the winsome *Juno*, what plays for laughs has an undeniable ring of real emotion. Spend enough time with Juno's deadpan and her irony, and you learn how to read between the lines, to the scared, confused, and royally pissed teenager underneath the brazen, Buddha-bellied exterior (a "cautionary whale," she calls herself). Page (*Hard Candy*) is marvelous, especially considering what a balancing act the role is between bitchy and twee, and she's backed by a terrific ensemble cast. (12/21/2007) – *Kimberley Jones*

★★★★ Alamo Drafthouse South, Arbor, Barton Creek Square, CM Cedar Park, Hill Country Galleria, CM Round Rock, Southpark Meadows, Dobie, Lakeline, Tinseltown North, Tinseltown South, Westgate

MAD MONEY

D: *Callie Khouri; with Diane Keaton, Katie Holmes, Queen Latifah, Ted Danson, Adam Rothenberg, Roger Cross.* (PG-13, 104 min.)

Move over, Gordon Gecko: The new poster boy for American greed in the movies isn't a silver-tongued corporate hustler with pomaded hair and a closet full of \$10,000 suits. In fact, the new poster boy for American greed in the movies isn't a boy at all. I know you won't believe me when I tell you, but you've been replaced by Diane Keaton. For Keaton's upper-middle-aged, upper-middle-class suburban housewife-turned-bank-robber Bridget Cardigan, greed isn't good because it's good for America or good for the species; greed is good because it's good for her. How's that for evolution? In *Mad Money*, *Thelma & Louise* screenwriter Khouri once again sets her sights on scorned women (including fellow janitors Latifah and Holmes) getting their revenge on a callous society, but the goal here isn't freedom; it's opportunity, vindication, good times, and the promise of bottomless bags filled with cash money. (01/25/2008) – *Josh Rosenblatt*

★★★ CM Round Rock, Metropolitan, Tinseltown North

MEET THE SPARTANS

D: *Jason Friedberg, Aaron Seltzer; with Sean Maguire, Carmen Electra, Ken Davitian, Kevin Sorbo, Method Man, Diedrich Bader, Jareb Dauplaise, Travis Van Winkle.* (PG-13, 84 min.)

The makers of *Meet the Spartans* – also responsible for *Scary Movie*, *Epic Movie*, *Date Movie*, et al. – mean to parody last year's hugely successful swords-and-sandals actioner *300*; what they really do is compress that film's plot to *300 for Dummies*; insert *Deal or No Deal* references to guarantee a shelf life of, say, last week; and hit the same tired gay jokes ad nauseam. I'll cop to maybe three cracked smiles in this interminable retreat of King Leonidas (Maguire) and his small army of fat boys and no-gooders vs. Xerxes (*Borat's* Davitian) and his bloodthirsty Persians, but it definitely didn't occur when a penguin sht in Leonidas' open mouth. Here's the thing: When *300* came out, everybody had a good laugh about the film's many taut male bodies, even enjoyed a couple viral videos, and then we moved on. Apparently co-writer/directors Friedberg and Seltzer did not. (02/01/2008) – *Kimberley Jones*

📍 Barton Creek Square, CM Cedar Park, Hill Country Galleria, CM Round Rock, Southpark Meadows, Highland, Gateway, Lakeline, Metropolitan, Tinseltown North

NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS

D: *Jon Turteltaub; with Nicolas Cage, Jon Voight, Ed Harris, Helen Mirren, Justin Bartha, Diane Kruger, Harvey Keitel, Bruce Greenwood.* (PG, 124 min.)

Less twisty than its 2004 predecessor and yet somehow more incoherent, *National Treasure: Book of Secrets* plays like a duplicate schematic of the first. Treasure hunter Benjamin Franklin Gates (Cage) lights on a noble cause; enlists a plucky cast of fellow hunters, code crackers, and danger enthusiasts (including the unsung Bartha, as Gates' geekboy Friday); then goes on a globe-hopping quest that amounts to a cinematic series of Russian nesting dolls – crack one clue, and you're awarded with another, equally inscrutable one. I don't mean to sound like a sourpuss: There's certainly a place for this kind of entertainment, and the first outing – same director, same screenwriters (husband-and-wife team Cormac and Marianne Wibberley), same cast – was pleasantly rompy and even sweetly patriotic in its history-buff bent. *Book of Secrets*, however, isn't so much a romp as a long trudge through American history factoids and conspiracy-theory gobbledygook. Cool car chase, though. (12/28/2007) – *Kimberley Jones*

★★ Barton Creek Square, CM Cedar Park, CM Round Rock, Southpark Meadows, Gateway, Tinseltown North, Tinseltown South

NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN

D: *Joel Coen, Ethan Coen; with Tommy Lee Jones, Javier Bardem, Josh Brolin, Kelly Macdonald, Woody Harrelson, Garret Dillahunt, Barry Corbin, Tess Harper, Stephen Root.* (R, 122 min.)

It seems at first like an odd pairing: the Coen brothers, they of the dark-humored film genre con-fiations, and Cormac McCarthy, the modern laureate of the Southern Gothic novel. Yet the Coens' adaptation of McCarthy's as-if-written-for-the-screen *No Country for Old Men* becomes a marvelous meld of sensibilities. The film is essentially a crime drama, although also something of a chase film. It holds up against the Coens' earlier genre masterpieces like *Miller's Crossing* and *Fargo* and makes recent genre misfires like *Intolerable Cruelty* and *The Ladykillers* more forgivable. The *No Country for Old Men* storyline is as old as the template for the brothers' first film, *Blood Simple*: Follow the money. At least three characters are chasing a satchel

The War Tapes

The War Tapes (2006) D: *Deborah Scranton.* (NR, 97 min.) **Strauss Center for International Security Film Series.** Three U.S. National Guardsmen become the focus of and the lens through which this chilling and riveting 2006 documentary examines U.S. soldiers in Iraq. The screening will be followed by a Q&A with Sgt. Stephen Pink, whose service in Iraq is portrayed in the film. (*) @Welch Bldg., Room 1.316 (on the UT campus). Monday, 7pm; free.



filled with \$2 million. One of them is Anton Chigurh (Bardem), a character who immediately leaps to the forefront of indelible American monsters. As it unfolds, the cat-and-mouse chase is a sheer delight to watch. The performances are captivating, too. (11/16/2007) – *Marjorie Baumgarten*

★★★★ Alamo Drafthouse Lake Creek, Alamo Drafthouse South, Arbor, Dobie, Tinseltown South

OVER HER DEAD BODY

D: *Jeff Lowell; with Eva Longoria Parker, Paul Rudd, Lake Bell, Jason Biggs, Lindsay Sloane, Stephen Root, William Morgan Sheppard, Wendi McLendon-Covey.* (PG-13, 95 min.)

There's just no end to America's love affair with blandness, is there? San Antonio Spurs superfan Parker plays Kate, a bitchy monster of a bride-to-be who gets her comeuppance when an ice sculpture falls on her head on her wedding day. But not even death can stop a force as vindictive as Kate. Instead, she returns to earth in spirit form to keep an eye on her fiancé-in-mourning, Henry (Rudd, cashing in), and to wreak supernatural havoc on an attractive psychic (Bell) who's using her gifts to wrangle Henry into bed. It's not a bad premise for a movie – rich with the delicious possibilities of transmortal combat between an embittered, but deceased, woman and her usurping rival, who has the distinct advantage of being alive – and in the right hands it could have been something. Where *Over Her Dead Body* should soar with blistering verbal gymnastics, it limps with empty sass. (02/01/2008) – *Josh Rosenblatt*

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

PERSEPOLIS

D: *Marjane Satrapi, Vincent Paronnaud; with the voices of Chiara Mastroianni, Catherine Deneuve, Simon Abkarian, Danielle Darrieux, Iggy Pop.* (PG-13, 95 min., subtitled)

Persepolis is at once a confessional autobiography, historical re-enactment, graphic art object, and deeply involving contemporary story about a girl's coming of age while navigating not only the usual pitfalls of adolescence but also the enforced repression brought on by Iran's Islamic revolution of the Eighties. Satrapi's story, which she and Paronnaud adapted into an animated film from her graphic novels, is both specific and universal, and therein lies a large measure of its appeal. "I had survived a war, but a banal love story nearly killed me," she comments sardonically at one point. The film's flat, mostly black-and-white animation helps convey some of the sense of a graphic novel, but moreover, the visual look complements the story's moral sphere, a realm governed by absolute rights and wrongs and lots of gray in-between areas. As befits a coming-of-age story, there are a couple of indulgent passages, but they hardly get in the way of the overall flow. (02/01/2008) – *Marjorie Baumgarten*

★★★★ Arbor, Dobie

RAMBO

D: *Sylvester Stallone; with Stallone, Julie Benz, Matthew Marsden, Graham McTavish, Reynaldo Gallegos, Jake La Botz, Tim Kang, Ken Howard.* (R, 99 min.)

In this wholly unnecessary fourth installment of the franchise, Stallone's one-man weapon of mass destruction takes on the villainous Burmese army in a mission to rescue a group of kidnapped Christian missionaries deep in the Myanmar jungles. Gone, however, is the manufactured macho image of an oil-slicked physique ready for action. In the 20 years since we last saw him, John Rambo (Stallone) now looks a real human being, albeit one still given to tough-guy utterances accompanied by a don't-fuck-with-me glare. No question, there is a perverse satisfaction in watching Stallone the actor shoot, stab, and strangle his way to victory, and Stallone the director handles those scenes well.

But even as the body count rises, you're left to wonder whether there can ever be anything more. The initial Rambo film, *First Blood*, was an above-average action film with a real human element to it, but its follow-ups are this side of parody. (02/01/2008) – *Steve Davis*

★ Alamo Drafthouse Lake Creek, Alamo Drafthouse Village, Barton Creek Square, CM Cedar Park, Hill Country Galleria, CM Round Rock, Southpark Meadows, Highland, Gateway, Tinseltown North, Tinseltown South, Westgate

TEETH

D: *Mitchell Lichtenstein; with Jess Weixler, Hale Appleman, Vivienne Benesch, Lenny von Dohlen, John Hensley.* (R, 87 min.)

Teeth explodes the dual myths of sexual freedom and freedom from sex while making castration anxiety and teen-female empowerment fun – or at least *weird* – again. Weixler embodies abstemious good-girl Dawn with just the right amount of repressed naivete to make things semibelievable when she discovers, to her horror, that her naughty bits are bitey. She's the living embodiment of the *vagina dentata* (literally, "toothed vagina") myth, and as such, her incipient lust-crush over new-geek-at-school Appleman leads from blue lagoon to black and beyond. As an ultradark comedy, *Teeth* is all over the tonal map, veering from surrealistic ABC *After School Special*-ness to crimson-drenched Grand Guignol atrocity exhibitionism, often in the same scene. In any other film I'd say that was a flaw, or at the very least the sign of a conflicted script or muddled directorial viewpoint, but *Teeth's* whirling moral compass actually provides the perfect metaphor for the teenage sexual urge in post-pubescent overdrive. (01/25/2008) – *Marc Savlov*

★★★ Alamo Drafthouse South, Tinseltown South

THERE WILL BE BLOOD

D: *Paul Thomas Anderson; with Daniel Day-Lewis, Paul Dano, Kevin J. O'Connor, Ciarán Hinds, Dillon Freasier.* (R, 158 min.)

Opening at the dawn of the 20th century, this film epic is a compelling portrait of capitalism gone mad and the collective shams we hold on to as truths. Anderson's saga is one that rivals films like *Giant* and *Citizen Kane* in our popular lore as stories about how we came to be the people we are. Ambition and greed drive the ascent of Daniel Plainview (Day-Lewis in, hands down, the most gripping film performance of the year), a gold-pro prospector-turned-wildcatter-turned-oil-tycoon. Anderson, the director of such culture-rattling films as *Boogie Nights* and *Magnolia*, here tones down his signature visual and narrative flamboyance in favor of a more classically composed story while leaving intact the trenchant omniscience of his storytelling. The film also tackles America's reliance on faith and the gnarled intersection between pragmatism and belief. At its most forthright, however, *There Will Be Blood* is a rich character study of a fascinating individual who is by turns likable, loathsome, admirable, monstrous, and driven. (01/18/2008) – *Marjorie Baumgarten*

★★★★ Alamo Ritz, Alamo Drafthouse Lake Creek, Alamo Drafthouse Village, Arbor, Barton Creek Square, Hill Country Galleria, Southpark Meadows, Metropolitan, Tinseltown North, Westgate

27 DRESSES

D: *Anne Fletcher; with Katherine Heigl, James Marsden, Edward Burns, Judy Greer, Malin Akerman, Melora Hardin.* (PG-13, 107 min.)

Those 27 dresses mark the time Jane (Heigl) has spent, as one character puts it, in the taf-feta ghetto of bridesmaidery. When Jane's boss and secret object of her affection (Burns, forever toady) falls in love with her sister (Akerman), Jane is stuck planning their wedding while simultaneously dodging the dogged attentions of Kevin (Marsden), a cynical journalist covering the wedding beat. Heigl anchors the film with a spazz-tastic charm, but the real star-making turn