

**TYLER PERRY'S THE FAMILY THAT PREYS**

**D:** Tyler Perry; with Alfre Woodard, Sanaa Lathan, Rockmond Dunbar, KaDee Strickland, Cole Hauser, Taraji P. Henson, Kathy Bates. (PG-13, 111 min.)

Contradictions abound in this messy and unfocused drama that purports to believe that family is everything, when all else fails. It's as if director/screenwriter Perry created a cast of characters with split personalities. One minute, the nicest guy in the world is clueless about his self-centered wife's infidelities and the fact that she treats him like dirt; the next thing you know, he's hitting her in the jaw. It's drama for the sake of drama, which only underscores the fakery of it all. Perry may think he's given his film's characters dimension and complexity by investing them with multiple characteristics, but all he's really done is demonstrate that he's not spending enough time meshing character development and plot together in a way that it all makes sense. Old pros Bates and Woodard do their best in their performances as the two female leads, but it's not enough to save this movie from itself. (09/19/2008) - Steve Davis

★★ Movies 8

**WALL-E** **D:** Andrew Stanton; with Fred Willard; with the voices of Ben Burtt, Elissa Knight, Jeff Garlin, John Ratzenberger, Kathy Najimy, Sigourney Weaver. (G, 97 min.)

What would Stanley Kubrick - or for that matter, Arthur C. Clarke or even Isaac Asimov - have made of Pixar's *WALL-E*? It's the story of the last functioning robot, who leads a lonely existence cleaning up an ecologically devastated Earth, some 700 years after the last human being abandoned the dying planet. When, without warning, a vessel lands in his back yard and deposits EVE (Knight),

a female robot who has been sent to discover if any life has blossomed on the home world, WALL-E (Burtt) is immediately smitten. While the film eventually takes both the 'droids off-world, the story remains focused on their blossoming romance. This is Pixar's finest and most emotionally powerful film yet, by turns sad, hilarious, exciting, and, ultimately, hopeful. Those past science-fictioners Kubrick, Clarke, and Asimov would've loved it, I think, and I'd wager my first edition of *The Martian Chronicles* that Ray Bradbury, too, will recognize a kindred soul in WALL-E's life-affirming quest for love. (06/27/2008) - Marc Savlov

★★★★ Movies 8

**ZACK AND MIRI MAKE A PORNO**

**D:** Kevin Smith; with Seth Rogen, Elizabeth Banks, Traci Lords, Jason Mewes, Ricky Mabe, Craig Robinson, Katie Morgan, Jeff Anderson. (R, 101 min.)

Smith's new film proves that even though you may be able to take the boy out of Jersey, there's still no chance of sidetracking the filmmaker's dominant id. Setting *Zack and Miri Make a Porno* in Pittsburgh, across the Jersey state line, has not diluted Smith's distinctive comedic raunch in the least. However, there is also a sweetness to *Zack and Miri*, which, when combined with the film's perfect casting, makes this Smith's strongest film since 1997's *Chasing Amy*. A romantic comedy, the film is so faithful to the standards of the Hollywood form as to be almost conventional - but for its obvious porno and scatology. Though it's the films of Judd Apatow (a fellow traveler in the realm of sweet raunch) that brought Rogen's unique leading-man-manqué talents to Smith's attention, in Rogen, Smith has also found a screen soulmate. Along with his smuttiness, Smith wears his heart on his sleeve. (10/31/2008) - Marjorie Baumgarten

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