

The Back Lot

FILM NEWS & RUMINATIONS

Louisville's 'My True Self' premiere

"My True Self" is the first film by Louisville native Rohit Nahata, a Ballard High alumnus and California State film graduate. Filmed in and around Louisville (including the LEO office), his movie is both local and universal. The plot is anchored by the classic unanswerable questions: "What's a good life?" and "Who am I?"

The movie follows a Louisville medical student (played by Jerod Edington) who learns he has cancer and only has a few months to live. Instead of spending his remaining time being bitter (as I no doubt would), he decides to do his best to leave the world a happier place than when he entered. Mostly, that means explaining to his friends and family that life is short and they have to follow their passions.

If it sounds like weighty stuff, that's the point. Nahata cites "Million Dollar Baby" and "Good Will Hunting" as influences. He explained his filmmaking philosophy this way: "I really like emotional movies that take you places inside and inspire greatness. That's what movies are all about for me."

"My True Self" will play at the Village 8 on April 25 at 7 and 9 p.m. Go to [www.mytrueselfmovie.com](http://www.mytrueselfmovie.com) or [apextheaters.com](http://apextheaters.com) for more information. —Alan Abbott



Jerod Edington in "My True Self."

'88 Minutes' worth of crap

(Starring Al Pacino, Alicia Witt, Leelee Sobieski, Neal McDonough and Benjamin McKenzie. Directed by Jon Avnet. Rated R; 1:48. LEO Report Card: D-)

"Closure, man! Give 'em closure!" yells Al Pacino into the phone about 80 minutes into "88 Minutes." The scene may not top the classic camp of Pacino as Satan in the "The Devil's Advocate," but it offers the biggest unintentional laugh that bumps up the letter grade on this wannabe thriller to a D-.

Director Jon Avnet ("Fried Green Tomatoes") wants to push the audience's buttons, but "88 Minutes" feels as if it was directed with the enthusiasm of someone hitting reheat on the microwave to warm up Applebee's leftovers.

How depressing is "88 Minutes"? The movie somehow manages to make its ticking-clock structure feel like an interminable series of cell phones ringing. The action in the central frame is so static that I found myself studying the corners of each shot in order to get a feel of the layout of downtown Seattle. (Unfortunately, all I recognized was the Starbucks and Seattle's Best Coffee product placement).

Watching the movie felt like packing in a couple of months of the Pacific Northwest's long spouts of drizzle. But the weather has more personality than any of the characters. At least the movie serves up multiple — if unintended — laughs. Check out these awesomely lame exchanges of dialogue:

- "It's my job to be convincing." "I thought it was to be right."



Al Pacino and Alicia Witt star in "88 Minutes."

- "Do you think he's dead?" "It doesn't look good."

- And, my second favorite, which Pacino delivers through barely suppressed tears: "It took him 88 minutes to hack my sister to bits." (See how the movie's title is loaded with meaning!)

A little background: Pacino plays Dr. Jack Gramm, a forensics psychiatrist who earns millions for helping killers in courtrooms through his clinical testimony. He also wows his female students as a professor at the university in Seattle on his discussions on the definition of insanity. Jack receives a threat on his cell phone that he has — you guessed it — 88 minutes to live. He thinks this is the doing of Jon Forster (Neal McDonough), a convicted killer who is scheduled for execution that day.

But who has Forster hired to pull the strings on the outside? Is it Pacino's sexy students, played by Alicia Witt, Leelee Sobieski and Benjamin McKenzie? Is it the campus security guard giving Gramm the stink-eye? Maybe it's the butler with the candlestick? Character

development is minimal, aside from the typical genre staples: Gramm's guilt about his past, sexual advances with mixed motives, and his impossibly stylized apartment straight out of a Pottery Barn catalogue.

"Narration is based on fact, which is based on logic," Gramm tells his students. The movie could care less about logic. But "88 Minutes" is too safe, too dull to reach for the go-for-broke loopiness that a director like Brian De Palma would have brought to the picture. —Jamie Peters

'Forgetting Sarah Marshall' is not easy to do

(Starring Jason Segel, Kristen Bell, Mila Kunis, Russell Brand and Bill Hader. Directed by Nicholas Stoller. Rated R; 1:52. LEO Report Card: B)

Nick Stoller's "Forgetting Sarah Marshall" is produced — and no doubt inspired — by Judd Apatow, the man who's been involved with pretty much all of the recent American comedies that are actually funny. Apatow's movies ("40-Year Old Virgin," etc.) highlight emas-

culated but well-meaning men who ultimately end up with women way out of their league. They're very adult, sometimes shocking films about men acting like children.

In Stoller's movie, the manchild protagonist is Peter Bretter (Jason Segel), a slightly overweight musician of minor accomplishment. He's been dumped by TV hottie Sarah Marshall (Kristen Bell) and, completely crushed, he takes a vacation to Hawaii. When he arrives, he finds that he's at the same hotel as Sarah and her new beau, uber-hunk Aldous (Russell Brand). He doesn't take it well.

As is the case in "40-Year Old Virgin" and the Apatow-produced "Superbad," the humor comes with a healthy dose of embarrassment. After all, Peter can barely go five minutes in the film without tearing up.

The highlight is not Peter or Sarah, but Brand's hilarious envisioning of Aldous. He is filled with the type of contradictions that only the most observant of character actors can pull off: As a British pop star, he's both thoughtful and selfish, charismatic and repulsive, and he's given to very witty dialogue that belies the character's overall stupidity.

But the movie can also be tedious. At almost two hours, it violates the sacrosanct rule of short comedy. It mixes in a romantic plotline involving free-spirited hotel clerk Rachel (Mila Kunis) that is far too serious for this film.

(Seriously, once you've seen a full-frontal shot of Peter crying like a child, who wants to see him do actual soul searching?) —Alan Abbott

Shorties

RECENTLY REVIEWED IN LEO

**SNOW ANGELS** (Starring Kate Beckinsale, Sam Rockwell, Amy Sedaris and Michael Angarano. Directed by David Gordon Green.) David Gordon Green's film sadly lacks credibility. Maybe it's because he chose to adapt somebody else's work (Stewart O'Nan's novel); maybe it's just that the source material is somewhat hackneyed; or maybe it's just hard to picture smoking-hot British starlet Kate Beckinsale

as a girl-next-door single mother and waitress. (Reviewed 4/9; C+) —Alan Abbott

**LEATHERHEADS** (Starring George Clooney, Renee Zellweger, John Krasinski and Jonathan Pryce. Directed by George Clooney.) When it comes to witty banter, modern Hollywood movies are at a loss for words. George Clooney's "Leatherheads" fashions itself after one of those Golden Age comedies, but it doesn't reach the giddy high of the films it so overtly admires. (Reviewed 4/9; B-) —Jamie Peters

**4 MONTHS, 3 WEEKS AND 2 DAYS** (Starring Anamaria Marinca, Vlad Ivanov, Laura Vasiliu and Luminita Gheorghiu. Directed by Cristian Mungiu.) Set in the dark days of Romanian Communism, the film is simultaneously bleak and kindhearted, intelligent and artful, plodding and restless. Yes, it is about abortion. But it's also just a good film. (Reviewed 4/2; A) —Alan Abbott

**STOP-LOSS** (Starring Ryan Phillippe, Abbie Cornish, Channing Tatum and Timothy Olyphant. Directed by Kimberly Peirce.) Like many recent war movies, "Stop-Loss" leans too heavily on polemic and tired genre beats in its quest for high-impact drama. Director Peirce follows up 1999's "Boys Don't Cry" with a sophomore effort whose earnestness is undercut by its rusty story machinations. (Reviewed 4/2; B-) —Jamie Peters

**FUNNY GAMES** (Starring Naomi Watts, Tim Roth, Brady Corbet, Devon Gearhart and Michael Pitt. Directed by Michael Haneke.) Writer and director Michael Haneke's remake of his own 1998 film stretches the patience and tolerance of anyone without a dark sense of humor. The violence is both plentiful and stylized, face-front yet often, paradoxically, occurring off camera and thus out of reach. (Reviewed 3/19; B) —Paul Kopasz

**DOOMSDAY** (Starring Rhona Mitra, Bob Hoskins, Alexander Siddig, Adrian Lester and Sean Pertwee. Directed by Neil Marshall.) Director Neil Marshall strives for instant cult-classic status with his trash epic. The plot involves the government quarantining the entire Glasgow population because of a flesh-eating virus, but the story swerves into absurd set pieces that have the logic of a Troma movie. (Reviewed 3/19; B) —Jamie Peters