

Film reviews

The Class is half 'Full'

FULL IT

A New Line Cinema release of an Al: members Entertainment MM/Mark Canton and Relativity Media production. Produced by Cantino, Steven Barnett. Executive producers: Ryan Kavanagh, Lyndon Spinks, Toby Donnerich, Matt Moore, Mark Kaufman, J.P. Spink, Charlie Gagnall. Co-producers: Jeffrey Lampert, Mark Fincher, David Hensler.

Directed by Christian Charles. Screenplay by Lou Lucca, Scott Moore; story, Tony Berkeley, Tony Dreyfus; music, Sam Garrett, Max Pym, Gowers (Dimitra color), Kravitz; cinematography, Justin Smith, Steve Madsen; John Swartz; music supervisor, Steve Hattick; production designer, Kathleen "Katie" Street; costume designer, Stephen Aron; costume designer, Arlene Waterhouse; sound (DTS/5.1/Dolby Digital), Michael Lee, Paul Germain; assistant producers, Sean O'Keefe, Simon Thomas; assistant director, Felix Gray; casting, Maria Lirioff. Reviewed at New Line screening room, Los Angeles. PG-13. Running time: 91 MIN.

Sam Leonardo Ryan Pinkston
Anne Day Kate Mara
Craig Kilborn
Mia Farrow John Carroll Lynch
Mia Farrow Cynthia Stevenson
Vicki Sanders Amanda Walsh
Princess Hagan Derek J. Webb
Kyle Panzer Josh Coon
Mia Farrow Teri Polo
Herself Carmen Electra

By PETER DEBRUGE

oping to fit in, a high school outcast starts telling outlandish lies, only to have them come true in "Full of It." Horizontally charged comedy is bound to make parents uncomfortable, as writers Jon Lucas and Scott Moore add a sexual dimension to the kind of after-school-special premise that might appeal to 10-year-olds (but is here twisted to suit older teens). Director Christian Charles' "Wild Science" style result isn't exactly raunch, but should be diffusing enough to find some life on the slumber-party circuit after being largely ignored during its limited high-screen run.

SATURIN IN OPPOSITION

(SATURNO CONTROL)

(ITALY-FRANCE-TURKEY)

A Media Res (see Italy) of an R&G Production/Fox Film (Italy)/UCMGY (France)/VFS Film (Turkey) production. Information: Lorenzo, 616. Directed by Paolo Sorrentino. Produced by Tilde Corsi, Gianni Romiti.

Directed by Ferzan Ozpetek. Screenplay, Gianni Romiti; music, Enzo Angilerò; costumes, Giuseppe Corbelli; editor, Fabrizio Mancini; music, Giovanni Pelloni (No!No! production); costume designer, Massimiliano Nofenti; costume designer, Alessandro Lac; sound (Dolby digital), Marco Gilardi. Reviewed at Media Res screening room, Roma, Feb. 15, 2007. Run-



Ryan Pinkston gets a date with cheerleader Amanda Walsh in "Full of It."

Judging by the current crop of juvie movies, the greatest challenge facing today's youth is fitting in at a new school. From "Hoot" and "How to Eat Fried Worms" to "Bridge to Terabithia," it seems like every kid these days begins with a slightly awkward student thrust into a new environment where—to echo the central anxiety of "Carrie"—"they're all going to laugh at you."

At first glance more stylish than its peers, "Full of It" ripply slips into the clichés of the genre as Sam Leonardo (Ryan Pinkston) endures the uncomfortable stares and locker-room humiliation of being the new kid at Bridgelyport High. Since Pinkston appears so much shorter and less developed than the other seniors, the casting alone allows helmer Charles to slip over the otherwise obligatory exposition.

After consulting the school's guidance counselor (Craig Kilborn, as perhaps the most irresponsible such authority figure since Matt Dillon in "Wild Things"), Sam spins a few white lies—he drives a Porsche, his dad's a rock star and so on—only to wake up the next morning to find they've all come true. Some of the ideas would be perfectly welcome in a kids' movie (the old "dog ate my

homework" excuse manifies family pet that will stop at no end to do just that), while others decidedly less innocent.

Where Sam was a mopey day before, suddenly bold English teacher Teri Polo (the head cheerleader (Carmen Electra) Walsh) can't seem to keep hands off him. At home, mild-mannered mother (Cynthia Stevenson)—now at a grade artist—has covered walls in sexually explicit tab and Carmen Electra too unannounced to smooch Sam's front of his friends.

It's hard to feel much satisfaction in these transformations, however, since the pic has all introduced Kate Mara as Sam's only well-adjusted her Jennifer Garner good and Julia Roberts smile in early where Sam's attitude should really be focused. She sidelined merely proxy of waiting for Sam to (ize the movie) all-too-obvious careful what you wish for? In Aude will have outgrown a moral away. The film's id credits: Though elegant, K. Morgenstern's artful lensing out of place in a pic like this.

Antonio Sergio Arcopoli
Angiolina Margherita
Devide Pierfrancesco Favio
Neal Serra Yllmas
Sergio Ennio Fantacchioni
Roberta Andrea Angiolini
Lorenzo Luca Argentero
Laura Isabella Ferrari
With: Michelangelo Timpano, Filippo Tini, Luigi Dieneri, Larissa Savino, Milena Velozita, Beunoletta Garavita, Gabriele Pachera

By DEBORAH YOUNG

A sensitive exploration of the theme of friendship in the face of death, Ferzan Ozpetek's ensemble piece "Saturn in Opposition" marks a return to form for the Italo-Turkish director after the bizarre sidestep

Anastasia Hills may not be remembered her real estate in "The Abandoned."

THE ABANDONED

(SPAIN-U.K.-BULGARIA)

A Lionsgate release presented in association with After Dark. Plans of a Films: Entertainment (Spain) presentation of a Castor (Spain) production in co-production with Atlas Films (U.K.) and Inelastica (Bulgaria). Produced by Julia and Carlos Fernandez. Co-producers: Levon Dilovan. Directed by Nacho Cerdá. Screenplay, Carlos Cerdá; director, Nacho Cerdá; producer, Nacho Cerdá; executive producer, Baltasar Gallart; art director, Rosalva Boleva; cost director, Elisavinda Yáñez; costume designer, Zuzana Křiváňová; sound (Dolby Digital), Glenn Freeman; special makeup effects, Crispin Elliott; digital suit effects, Infinitum; art director, Guillermo Escribano; casting, Steve Daly. Los Angeles. Reviewed at AMC Loews Metreon 16, San Francisco, Feb. 23, 2007. (In Toronto Film Festival.) MPAA Rating: R. Running time: 99 MIN.

Julia and Carlos Reina

Anastasia Hills

Karel Roden

Valentin Ganev

Carlos Reina

English dialogue

By DENNIS HARVEY

Spanish director Nacho Cerdá's English-language horror film "The Abandoned" has been rather unceremoniously dumped into U.S. theaters sans previews by Lionsgate, since this is just the kind of offbeat genre piece that might have benefited from stoking buzz among serious genre aficionados. Those looking for formula slasher are may be less appreciative, since the pic's brand of arty, surreal horror is more motivated by cultists than teenage mutants. Minimally plotted but beautifully atmospheric nightmare will just pit-stop in Stateside theaters before moving on to ancillary formats.

After a prologue ("Somewhere in Russia, 1966") that shows a hooded woman in a truck living just long enough to deliver twin infants to rural neighbors, the pic jumps ahead 10 years. Marie (Anastasia Hills) is an American movie producer with a streak of perpetual stress. Raised as an adoptee, she knows she was born in Russia, but has never been able to discover anything about her biological parents. Until now, that is, since a notary (Valentin Ganev) has called her to Russia with surprising news of inherited property.

Uninterested in owning a derelict farm, yet curious to find any clues

her mother was apparently murdered not long after giving birth, she hires a surly driver (Carlos Regis-Piña) to take her to the remote area. It turns out to be a virtual island, one bridge linking it to a mainland otherwise cut off by river and flood waters.

Once they arrive in the middle of the night, the driver promptly disappears. Marie finds a main house in sufficiently poor repair to suggest no one has been near it for decades. Yet there are disturbing noises and elusive human cries before a terrifying apparition sends her fleeing into the forest, where she trips, plunges into the river and nearly drowns.

When she awakens, she discovers she was saved by Nicolai (Karel Roden), who has been here a couple days. He, too, was summoned by the notary, and evidence suggests these two wary strangers might be long-lost siblings. Breaking up this uneasy reunion are dual apparitions who look all too much like the battered, dead-eyed (yet ambulatory) corpses of the living visitors.

"We are haunting ourselves—the house wants us back," Nicolai muses. He eventually deduces that destiny intended the twins to die with their mother in 1966, at the hands of a brutish father. Now time is turning back on itself, re-creating that night's hellish events to belatedly claim the lives of the children who survived.

Weakest point here is not that the script's logic is flimsy, but that the characters (especially Nicolai) have flat-footed moments trying to "explain" it. Like the best works of Mario Bava, Dario Argento or their young U.S. inheritor Dante Tomasselli, "The Abandoned" works best as a macabre fever dream without sheer potency of tightly worked image and sound overcome half-hearted attempts at narrative coherence.

Despite a couple gory interludes and discreet FX (one notable reversionment sequence shows the trashed house pulling itself back into its habitable 1966 condition), eerie frights here are more a matter of sheer dread-soaked atmosphere. Cinematographer Alex Giannini ("The Machine," "Intactus") often layers vivid wilderness images. Josey Macaya's tense editing (which mostly avoids typical jump-cut tricks), Baltasar Gallart's clammy production design and Glenn Freeman's elaborate soundscape all make arctic contributions well above the genre norm.

Bulgarian locations handsomely