



Movies & Life

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Section E

A Fantastic outlet for director's gory Bigfoot

By Chris Garcia
AMERICAN-STATESMAN FILM WRITER

Landing his dream cast, a six-time Oscar-nominated composer, the cinematographer of "The Blair Witch Project" and a monster suit rivaling Chewbacca's feral pelt, Ryan Schifrin was better prepared than most first-time directors when he embarked on his horror homage "Abominable."

The gory thriller, showing today and Saturday at the Alamo South during Fantastic Fest, depicts the legendary, woods-stomping Bigfoot as a blood-thirsty hunter who likes human



'Abominable' draws inspiration from '80s horror films.

meat just fine. Inspired by the giant-animal/creature pictures churned out in the '70s after "Jaws" — from "Grizzly" to "Food of the Gods" — Schifrin copied the classic formula, adding a key element from Hitchcock's "Rear Window."

The film's bona fides are

impressive. Along with a cast of genre veterans, Schifrin shot the movie on 35mm film and persuaded his famous movie-composer father, Lalo Schifrin, to score the movie. The elder Schifrin wrote the memorable scores for "Mission: Impossible," "Cool Hand Luke," "Bullitt" and, apropos of this story, "Day of the Animals," one of those killer-creature movies.

Schifrin, 33, and co-star Haley Joel will present "Abominable," for which the filmmaker is currently outlining sequels.

See **FANTASTIC**, E3

SCREEN SHOTS

OPENING TODAY

★★★★

'The Science of Sleep,' **this page**

'This Film Is Not Yet Rated,' **this page**

'The War Tapes,' **back page**

★★★

'Jet Li's Fearless,' **back page**

'Time to Leave,' **back page**

★★

'All the King's Men,' **this page**

'Confetti,' **back page**

'Flyboys,' **back page**

★

'Jackass: Number Two,' **back page**



You'd have to be a you-know-what to try this.

ALSO PLAYING

Other noteworthy films now in theaters:

'Half Nelson'

★★★★

'The Last Kiss'

★★★



Zach Braff and Jacinda Barrett pucker up.

LOCAL EVENTS



Still too warm to break out that white suit?

Top pick from the Austin film scene:

AT&T's Music and Movies series presents 'Saturday Night Fever' with a dance contest. The event is Saturday night (of course) at 7:30 p.m. at Republic Square, Fourth and Guadalupe streets.



Watch him and love him and call him George.

DVDs

Best of the new releases

'Curious George'

'The Lake House'

FINALLY...

It's not too soon to think ahead to the South by Southwest Film Festival. Get an early look at panels and speakers, including 'Super Size Me' filmmaker Morgan Spurlock, at www.sxsw.com/film.

★★★★ 'This Film Is Not Yet Rated'



IFC Documentarian Kirby Dick hired investigators (Lindsey Howell, left, and Becky Altringer) to identify Ratings Board members.

Documentary rates the board

By John DeFore
SPECIAL TO THE AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Most parents recognize the arbitrariness and inconsistency of movie ratings for youth-oriented films. It's a stone in the shoe for those engaged in the (thankless, nigh impossible) job of policing their children's cultural diet and an annoyance for parents who are offended that mass destruction often gets a free pass but a few naughty words earn an instant R rating.

That topic deserves a documentary of its own. Until then, MPAA-bashers will relish a film looking at the adult end of the spectrum, where problems go from annoyance ("I don't want my kids to hear that word") to outright repression ("If my movie gets an NC-17, it can't be shown in most of this country"). "This Film Is Not Yet Rated," by limit-testing documentarian Kirby Dick (his most famous film, "Sick," took a graphic look at sadomasochism), is more interested in the Ratings Board as part of America's ongoing definition of pornography and what is and isn't tolerated in mainstream discourse.

Best that sound dry: Dick is also a prankster here, happily torturing the men and women who decide what can play at your local multiplex. The board is designed to be both anonymous and made up of "average parents." In order to disprove that second claim, Dick hires private detectives to uncover the identity of board members.

In scenes that are frequently funny and sometimes unfair, Dick exposes identities, flouts the holes in MPAA policies and flusters normally smooth spokespeople.

When not pulling Michael Moore-like stunts, Dick interviews filmmakers who have been on the wrong side of the ratings debate. As we roam from the usual suspects (Matt Stone of "South Park," John Waters) to indie filmmakers such as Atom Egoyan and Kimberly Peirce, disturbing questions arise: Are independent productions subject to stricter standards? Do homosexual themes put a movie at risk for the dreaded NC-17, even when there's nothing explicit onscreen? Those questions, and the MPAA's cavalier attitude to them, add up to a blood-boiling experience for film lovers who believe that adult themes have a place in the movies and that artists should be able to push boundaries without risking bankruptcy. Concerned parents won't find answers here about why some vulgarity makes it into a G movie while other blameless films are PG — and folks who worry about such things should be warned that "Not Yet Rated" includes things they might not want to view — but others will find it essential and entertaining.

MPAA rating: Not rated. **Running time:** 1 hour, 37 minutes. **Theater:** Arbor



Gael García Bernal plays artist and inventor Stéphane, who prefers his dreams to reality.

Wake your senses

Michel Gondry's lush 'Science of Sleep' is a feast for the eyes and the heart

★★★★ 'The Science of Sleep'



Stéphane's romance with pragmatic Stéphanie (Charlotte Gainsbourg) challenges his fantasy life.

Etienne George photos
WARNER INDEPENDENT PICTURES

See **SLEEP**, E3

'King's Men' director can't put it all together again



Kerry Hayes SEAN PENN PICTURES ENTERTAINMENT
Sean Penn plays Willie Stark, a Louisiana governor who's a man of the people. The character is modeled after Huey Long.

By John DeFore
SPECIAL TO THE AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Sean Penn plays an establishment-damning, everyman-loving public servant who slides into big-league politics only out of disgust with corrupt kingpins? And then, after winning office, becomes the thing he hated? And it's all drawn from a celebrated novel — itself a fictionalized account of charismatic Louisiana politician Huey P. Long — that conquered the big screen as an Oscar winner almost 60 years ago?

Now that sounds like a movie to cure the simpatitis of late summer.

It is also, sad to say, a cure for insomnia. And for the common

★★ 'All the King's Men'

belief that British actors are so inherently classy and sophisticated they can play any role they're given.

Set in a vaguely Depression-era Louisiana, the story follows Penn's Willie Stark, whose tendency to object to graft and governmental incompetence isn't going over too well in podunk Mason City. He's so politically unsavvy that, when some kingmakers recruit him to run for governor, Stark doesn't realize he's only there to split "the hick vote" and allow a fat cat incumbent to keep his seat. When he puts two and two together, Stark's indignation lights up the sky —

inspiring a streak of inflammatory eat-the-rich oratory (employing Penn's most flamboyant streak) that carries him easily into office.

That plot by itself could make for a gripping film, or for the first half of a rise-and-fall epic. Here, though, writer/director Steven Zaillian hustles through it on the way to a less dramatic conflict. After taking office and serving for an unclear tenure (the film shows us practically nothing of his reign), powerful lawmakers begin to call for Willie's impeachment — allowing Zaillian to pay even more attention to Jude Law's Jack Burden, the uncharismatic and less-than-convincing

See **MEN**, E3