

Movies & Life

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Section F

For Halloween, some costume jewels on DVD

Don the wigs of 'Kids in the Hall,' 'Rocky Horror Picture Show'

A few days from now, kids and kids-at-heart will spend a few hours as someone else — Batman, Borat or biker chick — and reap candy or spiked punch for their troubles. With that in mind, here are a few DVDs where playing dress-up is the main attraction:

In the new "Kids in the Hall Megaset" (which simply compiles the individually available season boxes into a discounted



John DeFore
On DVDs

bundle), Canada's favorite quintet do a lot of what they clearly enjoy: dressing like women. Unlike some earlier dragsters, though, they don't expect you to be impressed just because they're wearing wigs — each man creates a real persona when in drag, from Scott

Thompson's long-suffering housewives to Dave Foley's disturbingly appealing Russian streetwalker. The Kids blazed plenty of trails in the five brilliant years gathered here, much of it in pantyhose.

Drag also features heavily in the seasonally appropriate cult classic "The Rocky Horror Picture Show." Though Tim Curry's fishnet adventure has already been released in numerous DVD incarnations, Fox has only now gotten around to pairing it with its obscure follow-up,

See **DEFORE**, F4

SCREEN SHOTS

OPENING TODAY



You might appreciate Andrew Bujalski's effort.

★★★★

'The Queen,' **this page**

'Mutual Appreciation,' **F5**

'A Guide to Recognizing Your Saints,' **back page**

★★★

'Catch a Fire,' **this page**

★★

'Death of a President,' **this page**

'Running With Scissors,' **back page**

'Renaissance,' **back page**

★

'Conversations With God,' **back page**

NOT REVIEWED

'Saw III,' **back page**

ALSO PLAYING



'Flag of Our Fathers' flutters with brilliance.

Other noteworthy films now in theaters:

★★★★

'Flags of Our Fathers'

LOCAL EVENTS

Top picks from the Austin film scene:

'Tideland,' the latest from Terry Gilliam ('Twelve Monkeys,' 'Brazil'), gets a limited run this week at the Alamo Downtown, 409 Colorado St. The film is about a traumatized young girl who slips into a world of make-believe. 'Tideland' plays Saturday-Monday and Wednesday. Visit originalalamo.com for showtimes and ticket information.



DVDs

Best of the new releases

'Sesame Street — Old School, Vol. 1 (1969-1974)'
'Monster House'
'Mission: Impossible III'



FINALLY...

Former Austinites Jay and Mark Duplass, who won quite a few fans with their low-budget movie 'The Puffy Chair,' will be shooting a scene at the Arbor theater (9828 Great Hills Trail) on Sunday. Approximate time frame: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

TEXAS BOOK FESTIVAL



Blockbuster beauties

Critic calls attention to Hollywood hits you might've missed

By Chris Garcia

AMERICAN-STATESMAN FILM CRITIC

Kenneth Turan actually likes "Mr. and Mrs. Smith."

Turan, a film critic at the Los Angeles Times since 1991, happily defends the wanly reviewed action blockbuster starring Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. It's a worthwhile big-studio effort, he says, and you should see it.



Kenneth Turan

What: Reading

When: 3:30 p.m. Saturday

Where: Capitol Extension Room, E2.014

Info: texasbookfestival.org

"Starship Troopers" as good films that art-house habitués might have missed in their fervid quest for the latest Jim Jarmusch picture.

Turan has been a staff writer at The Washington Post and TV Guide, and has written film reviews for numerous magazines. He's the film critic for NPR's Morning Edition and author of the books "Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made" and "Never Coming To A Theater Near You: A Celebration of a Certain Kind of Movie," which touted art and foreign films easily missed by the mainstream.

A sequel to the latter title, "Now in Theaters Everywhere" allows Turan to accentuate the positive, something critics can't always do.

"I want the book to be useful," Turan says. "I want it to help people find films they can enjoy. People love films. They're just frustrated they can't find the ones they like."

Turan talked to us by phone about being a film critic, the state of criticism and the new book.

See **TURAN**, F3

'Catch a Fire' traces man's journey from apolitical to radical in apartheid-era South Africa

★★★ 'Catch a Fire'

By Robert W. Butler
KANSAS CITY STAR

In "Catch a Fire," a young black man in apartheid-era South Africa is unjustly accused of terrorism.

He's imprisoned, interrogated, tortured and finally freed without so much as a "Sorry about that."

He's so angry upon his release that he becomes a terrorist in earnest.

Whether the makers of this film saw the story as a commentary on today's war on terror (which has been accused of creating even more terrorists), I cannot say.

But under the direction of Phillip Noyce ("Rabbit Proof Fence"), "Catch a Fire" becomes a suspenseful tale of one

See **CATCH**, F3



Tim Robbins, top right, plays an investigator who questions Derek Luke's Patrick Chamusso, below.

FOCUS FEATURES



Fictional 'Death' takes liberties with reality

By John DeFore

SPECIAL TO THE AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Although red-faced media personalities might be happy to turn it into a left-versus-right cause to rally their ditto-chanting troops, "Death of a President" is not the work of some America-hating liberals who want to fantasize about President George Bush's assassination. It comes with its share of problems, both moral and aesthetic, but bloodlust isn't one of them.

If anything, the film at times seems to play into the Bush administration's hands rather than call for the current president's murder. In envisioning a fictional 2007 assassination in Chicago (for reasons to be discussed below), the



Some of 'Death of a President' feels very real. After the assassination, the Justice Department holds a news conference.

filmmakers make angry but non-violent protesters look like a real threat to the president. Caught up in this fiction, you might sympathize with those who would strip

protesters of their rights or harass them into silence.

That's not what the filmmakers have in mind, of course. What they want is to address the aftermath of the

★★ 'Death of a President'

Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks from a distance, by imagining a new national catastrophe in which the easy answers are the wrong ones, in which innocent people get imprisoned indefinitely, in which horrible deeds are cynically used to justify unrelated wars and unnecessarily intrusive laws. Rather than go the much-trod investigative journalism route, they draw up a tidy fiction that makes their points more clearly than the real world can.

If there's a worthwhile aim behind the sensationalistic premise, though, it doesn't

See **PRESIDENT**, F5

On her majesty's secret struggle

By John DeFore

SPECIAL TO THE AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Hearing that Stephen Frears has made a movie (one widely described as a comedy) about the early interactions of Prime Minister Tony Blair and the queen of England, avid moviegoers might expect a trenchant satire, or at least a few deliciously low blows at a monarchy that has sat on the shelf long past its sell-by date.

Frears is a class-conscious filmmaker, after all, who has shown such skepticism toward governmental pomp (with "Hero") and delved so avidly into aristocratic nastiness (in "Dangerous Liaisons"), that one is surprised when it turns out that he not only respects the dignity of the crown but also displays quite a bit of empathy for the mortal upon

★★★★★ 'The Queen'

whose head it rests. Chalk part of this up to Helen Mirren, in the title role, but attribute the rest to a filmmaker (and his screenwriter) who, after infiltrating the palace, decides to break out some tea and sympathy rather than the guillotine.

Its title notwithstanding, the film is as interested in its elected head-of-state as in his ceremonial counterpart: Blair's evolving attitude toward the monarchy, his growing appreciation of Elizabeth's predicament and his difficulties in navigating a particularly sticky public-relations problem.

After beginning in 1997 with a stiff post-election meeting between the two, the film jumps a few

See **QUEEN**, F3



Helen Mirren helps elevate 'The Queen' out of the made-for-TV realm.

Laurie Sparham
MIRAMAX FILMS