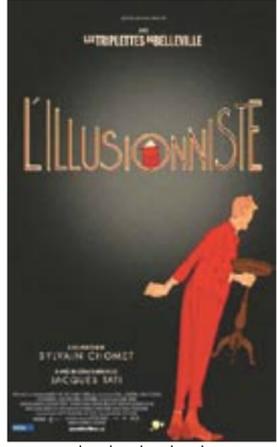


MOVIESHORTS

THE ILLUSIONIST



★★★★★

The classically animated movie with little dialogue is an art coming to terms with the era of computer animation. Sylvain Chomet's animated film "The Illusionist" tells a similar story about a struggling French magician finding his place in a 1950s Britain which has been seduced by rock 'n' roll.

The movie subtly sets the stage at the beginning for the illusionist's downtrodden career by showing him following a rock 'n' roll band's sold-out concert with his act, only to be met by an old woman and a child in the crowd.

"The Illusionist" thrives in its ability to set a tragically nostalgic tone without significant dialogue. A recurring image of a ventriloquist dummy in a pawn shop and the price gradually decreasing throughout the movie sends the message that the world has no more use for classic entertainers.

The side characters of a clown, a ventriloquist and a band of acrobats, who share a boarding house with the illusionist, smoothly show the arduous adjustment of classic performers to the new age.

These characters, like a fraternity of the forgotten, tell the tale of defeat through images of suicide contemplation, depressive drunkenness and homelessness.

The movie's perpetually breaking heart lies in the relationship between the illusionist and his young admirer, Alice, a girl convinced his tricks are actual magic.

At the beginning, the illusionist is able to conjure tricks to Alice's delight, but eventually the prospect of his situation settles in and odd jobs at a garage and a department store turn him cynical.

"The Illusionist" shows how simplicity in imagery and character interactions, something often forgotten in this age, can be the most effective ways to tell even the saddest of stories.

-Lyle Kendrick

THE EAGLE

★★★★☆

The Eagle isn't so much bad as it is disappointing. The potential for a good, maybe even great, film is here: a capable director (Kevin Macdonald), gorgeous cinematography and an epic Roman backdrop. But ultimately, the film can't fulfil its own promise.

Shamed for his father's loss of a city relic known as the Eagle, Marcus Aquila (Channing Tatum) takes on the role of a soldier in hopes of restoring his family's honor through his service to Rome.

When Marcus hears rumors concerning the potential whereabouts of the Eagle, he enlists the help of his slave Esca (Jamie Bell) to help guide him past the famed Hadrian Wall and through the uncharted territory of northern Britain.

A good portion of the film relies heavily on the chemistry between Tatum and Bell, and unfortunately, their connection is not at all enduring.

In his usual emotionless facial expressions, Tatum never gives any reason as to why he bothers to save Esca's life. Likewise, Bell's character has little incentive to continue serving his master once they enter the unwatched lands of Caledonia.

As a result, the several scenes in which the pair moves from Point A to Point B drag at a snail's pace.

There are some redeeming aspects to the film, like well-choreographed action sequences and a moving musical score. Yet, what ultimately could have been a sweeping epic in the vein of Gladiator falls short. The Eagle has wings, but with a slow, trotting plot and lack of compelling protagonists, it can never quite get off the ground.

-Lam Chau

JUST GO WITH IT

★★★★★

When Michelangelo finished his masterpiece in the Sistine Chapel, Pope Julius remarked, "It really ought to be retouched with gold."

If he were alive today, Julius wouldn't have a single thing to say about "Just Go With It."

Between the poop humor and overdependence on celebrity cam-

eos, this ingenious blend of stupid set-ups and stupider jokes amounts to one big, steaming pile of wit.

The plot is nothing short of brilliant. When a plastic surgeon named Danny (Adam Sandler) ropes his secretary Katherine (Jennifer Aniston) into convincing a blonde bombshell that she's his ex-wife, Katherine's 8-year-old son blackmails Danny into a trip to Hawaii. So they go. All of them, for some reason. I ask you, was "brilliant" too strong a word?

In Hawaii, the tables turn. Katherine runs into a high school nemesis (Nicole Kidman) and her husband (Dave Matthews). To hide her empty life, she makes Danny return the favor.

This is Adam Sandler's best performance since "Grown Ups." The scene in which he injures his testicles epitomizes his one-dimensionally foolish charm. And when it happens twice more, you just want to cry (in laughter, of course).

Aniston is perhaps the film's only blemish. She's the one shred of substance in a movie which hinges on airy nonsense. But she does find her stride in her bikini scene. She finally lets her body do the talking, like any actress should.

Enough cannot be said about how wonderfully dull this script is. When Danny and Katherine's two masquerades collide, they always find a way out of it with PG-13 profanities and physical assault.

That is, until the cheap denouement in which they all realize the importance of being earnest. And dare I say that Oscar Wilde himself would weep at the sight of it.

You cannot "retouch" what is perfect. And if you think this commercial rom-com is anything but, refer to the title, philistine.

-Rocco Giamatteo

MUSICSHORTS

VARIOUS ARTISTS



CASSINGLES VOL. 1
ROCK

★★★★★

With acts like The Love Language and Megafauna, the area's music scene has been breaching the national spotlight as of late, and it does not seem to be slowing.

"Cassingles Vol. 1" compiles the best of what's next out of the state, featuring Embarrassing Fruits, Birds of Avalon, Yardwork, Lonnie Walker, Gross Ghost, Whatever Brains and more.

Despite most bands not being signed to compilation sponsor DiggUp Tapes, local artists put their collective skills together to create a local medley with a consistent sound, on cassette and digital formats only.

DiggUp Tapes is a relatively new record label based out of Durham where founder and Lonnie Walker member Brian Corum began to release his band's material.

"Cassingles Vol. 1" isn't thrown together: Each song could create a buzz as a single for any band's upcoming album.

With all-exclusive tracks, this compilation is a chance for local bands to have their names heard outside of the Triangle, and each brings its A+ game.

From Fat Camp's comical

"Banana Hammock" to the care-free jangle of Gross Ghost's "You Tell Me," the album showcases the spectrum of the local rock scene. NAPS and Veelee add sentient tones with emotional rock that bends your mood and Birds of Avalon completes the circle with scathing guitars that Jimmy Page would be proud of.

Lonnie Walker takes a chill pill on "Heartbreakin' Ball," but stay true to form as the band waltzes over its humbling acoustic rock like Bob Dylan in his prime.

The uber-funky "Snail Trail" by Snails, which includes members of Future Islands and Lower Dens, adds a lively diversion with deep vocals, ghostly whirs and a humorous tale.

The album is an invitation to the nation to indulge in the vibrant and dense musical climate of the Triangle and the state.

As far as locally grown produce goes, "Cassingles Vol. 1" is a luscious, hand-picked harvest ready for wholesale that ought to leave out-of-staters and locals alike foaming at the mouth for more.

-Joe Faile

TORO Y MOI



UNDERNEATH THE PINE
CHILLWAVE

★★★★★

Chaz Bundick released his freshman debut *Causers of This* as Toro y Moi last year, a few steps behind artists like Neon Indian and Washed Out.

Bundick differentiated himself from his fellow participants in the aptly titled "chillwave" genre by focusing on blending R&B grooves with vintage-sounding beats to make slicker, multi-layered songs. With *Underneath the Pine*, Toro y Moi isn't so much taking a step forward as it is taking a step sideways.

Perhaps the most telling about the album is the second, well-named song "New Beat."

It's something you'd almost expect to hear while dancing underneath a disco ball, your hair in a frizzy perm. Peppered with beeps and blips, it seems like Bundick is channeling some *Space Oddity*-era Bowie.

While the rest of the album doesn't sound exactly like this, the focus on more upbeat songs and a more overt 80s influence is the new name of the game for Bundick.

Combined with several dreamier songs that evoke *Causers of This*, the overall effect makes for a much more engaging album than the South Carolinian's past efforts.

The album contains a multitude of double-take moments. One of these is the wholly unexpected guitar intro that transitions into the backbeat of "Before I'm Done," managing for a minute to sidestep the album's totally electronic sound.

"Got Blinded" gets slightly

spooky with a clanging, eerie piano and wordless wailing from Bundick.

Yet songs like the slower, shimmering "Divina" shows that Toro y Moi hasn't lost its penchant for the textured synth-and-effects slow-burners that made *Causers* so striking.

With *Underneath the Pine*, Bundick has chosen not to step completely out of his stylistic box, but rather to expand the amount of what that box can hold.

Fans from the artist's first album will find that what drew them to Toro y Moi is still there, and newcomers will bask in the glow of Toro y Moi's mesmerizing, poppy groove.

-Anna Norris

STARSYSTEM

- ★ POOR
- ★★ FAIR
- ★★★ GOOD
- ★★★★ EXCELLENT
- ★★★★★ CLASSIC

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