



## VOLUME 198

### SPUD RATING LEGEND

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*TWO XL SPUDS* — Absolute Must See  
*TWO SPUDS* — Worth Checking Out  
*ONE SPUD* — Take It Or Leave It  
*NO SPUD 4U* — Just Plain Sucks

### SEEN & NOTED THIS WEEK

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*A GUY THING (VIDEO) ONE SPUD AND A CHIP*  
*25<sup>TH</sup> HOUR (VIDEO) TWO XL SPUDS*  
*THE ITALIAN JOB (BEEG SCREEN) TWO SPUDS*

**THE FORECAST: SUNNY WITH CLOUDY PERIODS,  
AND IF YOU BELIEVE THAT, I STILL HAVE A FEW JUNK BONDS  
LEFT IN THE CLOSET THAT I'LL SELL YOU REAL CHEAP.**

*The Big Valley has been severely fogged in this week. The indecisive weather in this part of the country really sucks. And our depression is only exacerbated by the high priced talent at the Weather Network and the so called experts on the various networks and radio stations who continue to keep telling me that it's cloudy with sunny breaks. I haven't seen the sun in days. None of us have. I've checked this out by tilting my head skyward regularly, which is what you do when you don't have your head up your arse and are relying totally on Doppler radar. Cloudy with sunny breaks! Christ On A Cracker, they just don't get it, do they? When you try to bullshit people into believing that the good weather is just around the corner and the good weather doesn't come, it's all the more depressing.*

*The older I get the more I'm convinced that it's all just a huge conspiracy to keep us in a state of uncertainty. Nobody knows how to predict the weather. So why the hell don't they just stop trying? I could deal with a bit more sports in the newscast instead of the continuing web of deception these so called weather experts are weaving.*

## A GUY THING (ONE SPUD AND A CHIP)

*This movie is a kind of strange romantic comedy that, with one more re-write, could have been a two spud flick. As it is it's a pretty funny, albeit absurd Jason Lee vehicle about a guy who is getting married to the perfect girl, (a very cute Selma Blair) but falls for one who is slightly less than perfect (Julia Styles) but really right for him, yadda yadda. This movie has some good moments of humour and nice relationship touches between Lee and the two babes, but overall it suffers from the same malaise that most mainline comedies suffer from, which is a failure to deliver a complete believable story from stem to stern. What do they think, that we're all laughing too hard from all the high grade humour to notice that the story all of a sudden gets really dumb?*

*Anyway, it was an OK timewaster. I stayed awake all the way through and had a few good chuckles. And the wife liked it too.*

## 25TH HOUR (2 XL SPUDS)

*I am a big Spike Lee fan. Spike is an amazing filmmaker. And he just keeps getting better and better at it too. 25th Hour is the latest gem in the Spike Lee jewelry box and while some people might find it a bit depressing, 'cause basically it's about a heroin dealer who is spending his last day of freedom before he has to report to prison to serve a seven year stretch for trafficking, I thought it was pure poetry. This is, for the most part, a very quiet movie, which just boils over from time to time into intellectual or physical violence, but mostly manages to be a beautifully rendered portrait of street life in The Big Apple, which almost all of Spike's movies tend to be. Edward Norton stars as the dealer whose 'good life' basically goes down the drain when he is busted by the DEA. Barry Pepper and Phillip Seymour Hoffman are featured as his friends since childhood, Brian Cox as his dad, and Rosario Dawson as his Puerto Rican girlfriend. The big mystery in this movie has to do with who ratted him out and why.*

*Like most Spike Lee movies this one has a lot to say about New York and all the people who make up the various facets of its personality. In fact, it very effectively reduces them all to stereotypes in a strange confrontational scene in the middle of the movie. If you are a brain dead idiot, this would cause you a world of puzzlement. But if you dig that Spike is one of the few North American directors who can turn a whole city into a symbol for one man's frustration and sorrow, then you can't help but be terribly moved by the artistry at work here, in Spike's direction in the script by David Benioff (based on his novel), in the exquisitely controlled performances by everyone involved, even Edward Norton's dog, who also serves as a powerful symbol in the film, in the rhapsodic Terrance Blanchard score, in the dark moody monochromatic Redrigo Prieto cinematography, and in the city of New York, which always manages to be the uncredited star of every Spike Lee Joint.*

*This movie is not for everybody. It's the kind of movie that most so called art-house directors would sell their souls to be able to create and so requires fairly intense concentration to really appreciate. But I appreciated it all to hell.*

## THE ITALIAN JOB (TWO SPUDS)

*Friday, we dropped of The Princess of Pain at some house where she was bringing the deposit for her new apartment, (which she will move into in a couple of weeks, and we will get back the basement yet again), and headed off to Eglinton Town Centre to see The Italian Job, which is something that we had been looking forward to, since we both like caper movies and the all star cast is kind of irresistible, (Mark Wahlberg, Donald Sutherland, Seth Green, Jason Statham, Charlese Theron and the amazing Edward Norton).*

*Now you should not confuse this version of The Italian Job with the original which was made in 1969 and starred Michael Kane. But that won't be easy to do since pretty much all these two movies (both of which are very good), have in common is the basic heist object and the title.*

*The Italian Job is a big time Hollyweird action/caper film and as such it plays pretty well. There's enough technology to grab the propellerheads, even though it's not all that complex. There's enough intricacy in the plotting to make it interesting. And there's enough Charlese Theron looking cute and being tough to make her more than just the token chick on the crew. I'm not gonna tell you much about the plot, because the plotting is actually fairly ingenious, (suspended disbelief not withstanding). But one of the things I was struck with, after having seen Edward Norton in quite a few movies now, is his amazing versatility. He can play virtually any kind of bad guy and any kind of good guy with incredible deft. He can also play good bad guys and bad good guys too. In this movie he has to play a bad guy, who is really not very creative and he nails it. Watching Edward Norton work gives you the same feeling as watching guys like Robert DeNiro, Christopher Walkin, Marlon Brando and Jack Nicholson, who are very very good with the characters they played but also managed to put a lot of themselves into their roles, unlike say a Harrison Ford or Robert Redford who are merely movie stars who can actually act.*

*In addition to being pretty decent caper films, This Italian Job, like The Bourne Identity remake, which hit video a few months ago, is also the most blatant display of (Austin Mini Cooper) product placement I have ever seen. While I didn't really mind it because I wasn't taking this movie at all seriously, it did cross my mind that it has cracked the door open for more obscene forms of product placement in other movies, which might piss me off a some point in the future.*

## SCI FI CONTROVERSY

*My pal, Dan Floyd sent my review of the Matrix ReLoaded and Star Trek Nemesis to a devotee he knows in London, Ontario. I am only to happy to publish his response in the spirit of different strokes for different folks. His name is Kraeg (brother of Neo? Who can say?)*

*“ Hey Dan,*

*Interesting review. I am a fan of the Matrix. I loved it for what it was. An absolutely incredible background story. A pretty good plot line. Keanu's (and I use this term loosely) 'acting' and some brilliant and very ground breaking special effects. I wanted no less from the sequel but expected it to not live up to the first one.*

*What I got was, an absolutely incredible background story (with some updates for a few more whoa! moments). A really good plot line. Keanu's (much improved) 'acting' and some brilliant, though not groundbreaking special effects.*

*Anyone expecting more from this film was bound to be disappointed. It is following the new trend of splitting a movie into multiple parts, so that a great story doesn't need to be compromised by telling it all in under 3 hours. This I encourage other filmmakers to aspire to.*

*Dan, you know my tastes in movies, and you know I have a certain standard with films I watch. I would be the first to say this movie didn't live up to it's hype. I have many times in the past expected (and really wanted) a film to be better than what it turned out to be. Your buddy is out in left field, and as someone who really didn't care for the original Matrix, couldn't possibly give an unbiased critique of this film. I read also, Spud's critique of Star Trek Nemesis. To say this film is a slight step up the food chain is abominable. I am a huge Star Trek fan. I also loved the Next Generation and think it's a pretty darn good series. This movie was the worst thing I have seen on screen in a very long time. I can't even begin to describe how bad it was. It had the potential for a good story. The effects were really nice and slick. It had nothing else going for it. Nothing.*

*So I agree with his assessment of Nemesis, and then am perplexed at his critique of the Matrix. I can only assume that he either despises SF films, or is such a non-fan of Keanu, as other critics have been, that it has overshadowed the whole experience for him.*

*Kraeg.”*

*I'm not exactly sure what Kraeg was getting at. It actually sounded like he was kind of agreeing with me about a lot of what I thought was lacking re Matrix ReLoaded. And I didn't have a problem with Keanu Reeves' acting He's no Edward Norton, but he's not terrible. Anyway there it is...an enigma cloaked in a mystery, smothered by a riddle. If you can figure it out let me know. See you next week.*

*PS: The reason the column now looks like this and will continue to do so, is that I am just becoming way too busy these days don't have the time to execute the Couch Potato Chronicles in two different formats. As much as I hate Word, it takes about a quarter of the time to build and send as the fancy-ass Quark version. And I like to think what keeps my thousands of loyal readers reading is the writing not the art direction. So there you go. Constantly evolving to serve you better, my beloved spuds.*