

## SEEN & NOTED THIS WEEK

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HULK (THEATRICAL) TWO SPUDS  
ONE WAY OUT (VIDEO) ONE SPUD+  
LEGALLY BLONDE II (THEATRICAL) ONE SPUD

## 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



## VOLUME 201

**WELL HERE WE ARE AT COLUMN 200. AND YOU KNOW WHAT? THE GOOD MOVIES ARE STILL GOOD, THE BAD ONES ARE STILL BAD AND FRANK CARUSO'S AND MINE IS COMING ALONG NICELY.**

Well it's the long long weekend that everybody said they are going to work the Monday of but nobody actually did. I did, sort of, if you can call making revisions to a film script working. Mostly I just pattered around Spud Central, while the Wife was dealing with some book keeping issues of her own. The Princess of Pain moved her stuff out on Friday and so I went down into the basement and stared at it for a while. I'm not getting too excited about having the basement empty, because the Pof P doesn't exactly have the world best track record for staying out in the world on her own. First was Thunder Bay. (Can't blame her for that), second was Montreal (she just wasn't French enough for those yahoos) and now it's well, Cabbagetown. Oh well maybe third time will be the charm.

### THE HULK (TWO SPUDS)

I have a great deal of respect for Stan Lee and all his cronies over at Marvel Comics. Over the decades they have created some of the most memorable action adventure characters and stories the world has ever known. And thanks in part, to the fact that Stan Lee is still alive and kicking, he is around to make sure that nobody screws up when it comes to putting any or all of his superhero creations on the big screen.

I also have a great deal of respect for Ang Lee. Ang is a Korean director who seems to defy stereotyping when it comes to his film making. Each project he takes on is completely unlike anything he has ever done and there are very few, if any, other directors in the world who can say that.

So this time out of the gate Ang has decided to put The Hulk on the big screen. Now I always look forward to Ang Lee movies, for the very simple reason that he always seems to somehow re-define the genre he is working in at the time. In other words,

he is a true innovator. This coupled with the fact that he openly embraced Stan Lee's (no relation) brain and made it a key element of this project.

Unless you grew up in some Muslim hellhole where they gouge out your eyes for reading comics or watching TV, you probably know the back story of the Hulk. His dad, a former big time scientific brain, injected himself with some weird DNA juggling elixir back in the day before his son was born. Hulk has the stuff in him, passed down from Pa, who accidentally killed his mom when he was like 4. Twenty years later, Pa (Nick Nolte) shows up all weird and wanting to trigger some Hulk type behaviour in his son, which, of course happens and all these really cool CGI/live action effects take over.

When he's not Hulking it up, trashing everything in sight. Hulk works in a genetics lab with Jennifer Connelly (ya could do worse), whose dad (Sam Elliot) is the General who tossed Hulk's dad into the slammer and threw away the key lo those many years ago. So we've got a lot of father son/father daughter issues going on here. And believe it or not, that's what this movie is really all about, or at least that's what takes up the majority of the screen time.

The Hulk is not the wham bam action adventure hit of the summer. It's more like the thoughtful superhero flick of the decade. Because there's a really strong story happening here, which is seldom the case with comic book style movies. I attribute that to the aforementioned respect which Mr Lee shows to the other Mr. Lee. Stan Lee's comic book heroes are textbook studies in isolation. I can only imagine the lonely childhood Stan Lee must have had in order to have so much of that particular angst with which to colour almost all of his characters. In a weird way, however, it kind of all makes sense. The super powers or freakish behaviour these characters exhibit makes them unique and does tend to isolate them in society, especially the extremely status quo oriented cultures like America.

Though the movie has a great many state-of-the-art CGI effects, The Hulk really wants to carve out some sort of higher philosophical ground here, especially through the Nick Nolte character who is obsessed with creating something which is easily seen as a powerful military weapon and then refusing to let the military have it. Toward the end of the movie, this rage bubbles over into one of those great moments where Nick's character, all bitter and twisted from his decades in the slammer, gets to point out just how America's quest for power and domination has, in spite of their best efforts to avoid it, become seen as one of the purest forms of evil in the world.

I guess Nick is a Democrat.

Bottom line. The Hulk is worth seeing for a number of reasons. Ang Lee's direction. The dogfight. Nick Nolte's great character turn. The CGI effects. And the fact that this movie really is trying to be a lot more than just a comic book.

POST IT NOTE: Now the Hulk really isn't the kind of movie you want to bring a rugrat to. It's very dark and violent. It's also very graphic in the use of the human body as a pin cushion. Yet thanks to The New Stupidity, the theatre was literally crawling with these little munchkins and their idiot parental units, faithfully not bothering to check this movie out in any way shape or form beforehand. I digress. But it does have an impact on your viewing pleasure, when every four year old in the place is asking their dumb-ass unanswerable four year old questions because they figure it's

their god given right to fill up the non-eye candy scenes with rugrat noise and their brain dead idiot parents do nothing but encourage this behaviour. Oh my, that's pretty nasty. Forget the fact that it's true. We really have to stop going to movies on the weekend.

### ONE WAY OUT (ONE POINT SIX SPUDS)

I watch a lot of these kinds of movies for a couple of reasons. 1. These are the kinds of movies and Frank Caruso and I will ultimately be making and 2. Every once in a while you find a gem and that's a big part of what being a Spud means to me.

This movie appears to have been made in Montreal. It stars Jim Belushi and a lot of no name Canadian actors. In it Jim plays this hot shot police inspector who has a bad gambling problem. This problem gets him jammed up with the casino owners who in return for wiping out his markers, want Jimbo to show somebody how to kill his wife and their business rival, then make the case go away. In other words commit a perfect crime. It's an interesting proposition, which unfolds pretty nicely in a well written screenplay. Like all Canadian made movies, One Way Out, is missing a very important element. I like to call it visual flair. It's well enough written, well acted. It jumps around in time a bit (not that there's anything wrong with that), and it gives you a bit of feeling for the police procedures involved. Plus you get to see Jim (A Blues Brother), practice his harmonica, (He's not half bad), and get himself laid in the back of a vintage Rolls Royce, But the cinematography and general overall look of this movie are a bit of a letdown. If only the people producing these films would just invest in a good Director of Photography, they'd be a hell of a lot better off. The darkish nature of the photography tends to make the movie look a lot more low rent than it actually is. But then if everybody could make it look like Stanley Kubrick, yadda yadda.

Bottom line is that it's not a bad little film. Not a two spudder, but not quite a one either.

### LEGALLY BLONDE II (ONE SPUD)

As part of the laissez faire that keeps married couples together for the entire course of their lives, I consent to attending these movies with The Wife. What she doesn't know is that I secretly think Reese Witherspoon who stars in this movie, is one of the most beautiful creatures ever to wander cluelessly on this planet. I will put up with a great deal of nonsense to sit in a dark room and watch Reese 18 feet high. And it's not just her looks, although she is cute as a button, Reese Witherspoon is one of the most talented young actresses to come along in quite a while. Though she has managed to play a number of ditzy types very convincingly, this is something which takes a great deal of intelligence and discipline to pull off. But Reese has all that and a whole lot more. With this film and its predecessor, Legally Blonde, which was much more believable (I can't believe I am even using that word), Reese has become something of a franchise player, which is not that easy to do in Hollywood.

Legally Blonde II picks up right where Legally Blonde Left off. Reese is getting married to her College professor fiancé. She's working at a big law firm, that apparently allows her to wear as much pink as she wants. During the course of planning her wedding, she becomes fixated on the notion of having the mother of

her Pet Chihuahua, Bruiser, attend the wedding. A private detective she hires finds out that Bruiser's mother is being used for cosmetics testing, which kind of shatters her world, as you can well imagine. Her quest to free Bruiser's mother brings about her firing, moving to Washington to work for one of her (much older) sorority sisters and congresswoman (Sally Field), to create a bill and get it through congress. Which she, of course does (completely her way—the empowerment here is astonishing!) All so that a dog, whom she has never even met, can attend her wedding. Now that's storytelling! I'm telling you all this because this movie is so weird from a story perspective that it really forces you to concentrate pretty much on looking at Reese in all her different cute outfits and chuckling at the naive wisdom that keeps spewing from her oh so carefully glossed lips.

Legally Blonde II is nowhere near the innovative comedy that the original Legally Blonde was. But I'll be honest with you, the only way you can get through either of these films without an internal struggle of the highest magnitude is if you're secretly in love with Reese Witherspoon, or you just can't get enough fluff at the theatre. But what the hell. It had been a fairly long short week and the last thing I needed was a terminator 3 type flick.

That's all she wrote for this week. See you anon.