

## SEEN & NOTED THIS WEEK

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DAREDEVIL (VIDEO) NO SPUD 4U  
HEAVEN (PARADISE) (VIDEO) TWO SPUDS  
SEA BISCUIT (BIG SCREEN) 2 XL SPUDS

### 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 205

*Somewhere in the world the weather is perfect. Every day is warm and sunny and breezy. Every night is cool and breezy and dry. You can wake up thinking whoa, what a great planet this is, at least in my little sliver, and at night you can lay in your bed and watch the curtains blow gently, revealing flashes of the big silver summer moon. For those of us in the Centre of the Universe, this has been out weather for more days this summer than it's been otherwise. Something to credit the higher power for, if you feel so inclined.*

*(Of course, the day after I wrote the above paragraph, the weather turned muggy and dark and wet. I'm sorry.)*

### **DAREDEVIL (NO SPUD 4U)**

*OK, this was really the first of the big time comic book movies to hit the big screen this year. Fortunately most people were spared it, because it only lasted a few weeks there, praying for revenue. I could kind of tell from the previews that this was going to be a clunker, but you know me, I'll watch anything, even if only to have some sadistic fun reviewing it for you with a very strong warning to avoid it like the plague.*

*DareDevil is based on a Marvel Comics character, and it's kind of living proof that there is no guarantee that looking cool on a comic book page will translate to the big screen. Now the most recent Mr J-Lo, Ben Affleck plays DareDevil and Ben's a pretty good all round actor, but there not a hell of a lot he can do here. Jennifer Garner (Alias), who is thought of as a second rate bimbo by the women of Spud Central, plays his love interest, Electra. The everpresent Colin Farrell, gets to be an Irishman (finally) as the principal baddie, Bullseye. There are a few other well knowns in this film too, and they're all trying their high priced asses off, but the entire premise of this movie is as thin as dollar store toilet paper and the hero's back story is equally hard to take. So what happens is that your disbelief is suspended so high that it just up and dies from reality deprivation. And if that wasn't bad enough, there aren't even a whole lot of worthwhile action scenes. But you watch the whole damn thing*

*because the Boy is over for dinner and needs to be sure he doesn't want to add it to his DVD collection. Towards the end, I had to start making jokes because this film wasn't even bad enough to be an accidental comedy and even though I am no Firesign Theatre 2000, the family had to agree that my lame jokes were, far and away the best this about watching this movie. Now how sad it that?*

Bottom Line: *I want my money back.*

### **HEAVEN (2 SPUDS)**

*The story behind this movie is kind of interesting in that the team who wrote it, a couple of Polish guys, Krzysztof Kieslowski & Krzysztof Piesiewicz, (the two Krzysztofs) were ready to produce this film in 1996 when one of the Krzysztofs kicked the bucket. So the film hung around and finally this German director (Tom Tykwer) came along and did it. Tom Tykwer is a very famous director because he directed one of the coolest Euroflicks of all time, Run Lola Run. So Heaven is, of course, a pretty stylish little film.*

*It's essentially the story of an American schoolteacher who tries to kill the chief of police in Venice, because the guy is a badass drug dealer. I don't want to tell you any more about it, because this is a two spud film and you really should see it. What's really interesting about the film, apart from the political statement that it's making are the scene compositions. They are, for the most part all quite symmetrical. It's almost like the director is making a statement that he is somehow trying to stay neutral. At least that's what it says to me. These European directors -- go figure.*

*Heaven (or Paradis) stars Kate Blanchett and Giovanni Rabisi as the accused killer and a young policeman in the Carbonare (police force) respectively. Both Kate and Giovanni are a long way from Hollyweird, but appear to speak really good Italian, and also appear extremely comfortable in a foreign language film, which I thought was a little weird. But then what do I know.*

*Heaven is a movie about crime and passion. It has a kind hypnotic quietness about it, and though it doesn't really move very quickly, it's still quite riveting. Of course, it's beautiful to look at and David Stortini, who was over for dinner that night remarked that even though it was shot in Venice, it could have been anywhere. To which I replied that with all the Poles and Germans involved it probably migrated down from Warsaw to accommodate the talent, since Italian is arguably a lot easier language for Americans to learn to learn than Polish.*

Bottom Line: *Kind of artsy but a good story with outstanding production values.*

### **SEABISCUIT (TWO XL SPUDS)**

*This year we have been blessed with two masterpieces of film-making. Pirates Of The Carribean and now Seabiscuit. I fell in love with this movie within the first 5 seconds of the trailer. I could tell it was going to be a Great American Film and it was so fulfilling to see that I was right. We took Grandpa Pete to see it in Burlington where he lives. He had read the book upon which this movie was based a couple of times, and he was a teenager and already interested in horses at the time the events in the movie actually took place. After the movie, I asked him if they did the legend*

*of Seabiscuit any justice and it was his opinion that they did. He also said that if Seabiscuit had been a Kentucky bred horse instead of a California bred, he probably would have been a hell of a lot more famous than he was.*

*Seabiscuit is the story of three men, a rich car dealer named Charles Howard (Jeff Bridges), an ex-cowboy and holistic horse trainer named Tom Smith (the amazing Chris Cooper) and a jockey with a chip on his shoulder the size of Alberta by the name of Red Pollard (Tobey Maguire). Together, these three men took an under-sized thoroughbred who was sired by the very famous Man 'O War, and built him into a larger-than-life racing legend and Yankee icon for picking yourself up and dusting yourself off, like so many Americans had to do during the era of The Great Depression.*

*Writer/Director Gary Ross pushes all the right buttons here, making this a movie about how much gumption there is across the length and breadth of America while allowing the three principal actors the opportunity to get nominated for just about every acting award the film industry has going, and hopefully, winning them all.*

*This is a movie that is impossible to criticize in any way that would not sound like I was indulging in trivial pursuit. It is magnificent from one end to the other. It takes the time to tell the stories of each of the individual characters before bringing them together. It takes the time to put the events which transpire in the film into historical context. And it puts on film some of the most exciting and exquisite horse racing footage every shot. This movie is flawlessly structured and extremely respectful of the material upon which it is based, namely a book by Laura Hillenbrand.*

*In short it's one of the best movies about the stamina of the human spirit that I have seen since I don't know when. And what blows me away most about Seabiscuit is that it's really only the second film that Gary Ross (an ex-White House speechwriter) has directed. This dude has some serious talent.*

*Bottom Line: This movie is an absolute masterpiece I hope it makes zillions at the box office and makes movies with strong characters and great stories popular again. Seabiscuit is exactly why we love going to the movies.*

**SPUDITORIAL -- REALITY R.I.P.**

*A few issues back, when my contempt for reality shows had reached its pinnacle, I predicted that many of these shows would fail in the long run – that the great unwashed would eventually tire of them, because they were essentially all one-trick ponies of one kind or another and that those tricks would grow old on even the most brain dead of the brain dead. Couple with the fact that they were mostly non-recyclable and you can predict a very short half life.*

*Well the crows have come home to roost, so to speak, because this week, much to my unbridled joy, I began to read about how this type of programming is very quickly falling out of favour with audiences and subsequently, the powers that be in television. I'm sure that the falling out of favour part has probably been going on for quite some time, but nobody wanted to move too quickly to judgement what with all the reputations on the line and contracts in place, yadda yadda.*

*There are a couple of sure signs of this deterioration. 1. Some of these series, like The Restaurant, have morphed into documentaries with a limited number of episodes. And 2. These shows are now moving beyond the regulation issue good looking egomaniacs desperate for their 15 minutes of fame, to celebrities on the comeback trail, like Rosanne Barr, whose new 'reality/documentary' series starts this week.*

*I am as happy and a pig in slop to hear that we are near the end of this wave of programming. And so should all my friends in advertising. Because once it dies, and it will die quickly, the commercials you work so hard to produce for the clients you work so hard to keep happy, will no longer have to be associated with the kind of sleaziness, cruelty and greed that most of the reality shows represented. My friends in the production industry can get back to work on dramas and comedies. And everybody can stop harboring a deep-seated resentment for the television industry.*

*Oh sure, there will still be crappy shows showing up here and there. But nothing like the proliferation of intelligence-pummeling drivel that we have been offered over the past few seasons.*

*Reality Shows R.I.P. And let's just hope the next big wave that sweeps across the TV world is based something more substantial than man's inhumanity to man.*

#### **KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED**

*Keen Eddie apologies. This show is listed in the TV Guide but last week it didn't seem to show up when it was supposed to. Typical of the programming assholes who work at TV stations not to give a great show a decent time slot. They did the same damn thing with Everwood last season.*

*Rosanne Rams Reality. I love Rosanne Barr. She's nuts and proud of it. She's the ultimate TV Bitch Queen and this week she is back with a so called Documentary-Marketed-as-Reality Show that's scheduled for Wednesday @ 9:00 PM on ABC. This could be a hoot or a complete waste of time. You decide.*

*Bringing Down The House. I'll watch anything with Steve Martin in it. This week his latest comedy also starring the mighty Queen Latifah hits the videos store. I'm not sure how good this will be. But it's August and the pickings are slim. Norm Wilner (The Star's Video Guy) doesn't think much of it. But like I said, Steve Martin is always worth parting with a few clams for.*

*2 Spud Movies Worth Taping: Midnight In The Garden of Good and Evil, Tuesday on CITY-TV • Medicine Man, Tuesday on TBS • My Man Godfrey, Thursday on VisionTV • Conan The Barberian, Friday on CITY-TV • Spawn, Friday (late) on TBS.*

*That's all she wrote for this week. Keep your flintlock dry and keep on having a great summer.*