



"Neeeeeeil Hamburger!"

AWAY WE GO

"Are we fuck ups?" Maya Rudolph's character Verona asks John Krasinski's Burt while the two huddles to keep warm in the couple's shabby shack. The often saccharine Burt and Verona attempt to answer this question along with a few others when they get the news that Burt's parents are leaving for Belgium. With no other ties to their town and with a baby on the way the couple head out on a road trip with urgency; a road trip to find home.

And away they go through a funnel of the nit witted, the weird and the fragile. Though the formula seems familiar (I know you're thinking this is a *Juno* knock off) the results are organic, touching, heartwarmingly comedic and surprising. Maya Rudolph is refreshingly not funny and John Krasinski is soberingly not Jim Halpert. The soundtrack can be a bit overbearing and occasionally writer Dave Eggers can dive into heaping pools of hokey yet the visceral ache and the small poignancy of the film sound louder than any *Diablo* I know. What's more, *Away We Go* gives audiences an omniscient field of view into the universality of fuck ups and the humanness of doing the best you can. (Focus Features) by Siobhan Mangal

BLACK HOLLYWOOD: BLAXPLOTTATION AND ADVANCING AN INDEPENDENT BLACK CINEMA

While this documentary may have been released recently, it was shot entirely back in 1984. What we get a chance to see are interviews of Alfre Woodard, Jim Brown, Diahne Abbott and many others, with a rare interview of Lorenzo Tucker who was once considered the Black Valentino. The actors discuss the stereotypes, discrimination and the general problems they faced with Hollywood studios back in the early days to its current state. Actors focused on Hollywood's first black film star Stephin Fetchit, *Birth Of A Nation*, a 1915 silent film which achieved its status as the first Hollywood "blockbuster" and provoked great controversy for its positive portrayal of the KKK and of course, the positivity that only a few working actors were able to accomplish in their working careers back in the 50s and 60s. *Black Hollywood* is informative and spliced together perfectly, leaving no stone unturned. Interesting? Hell yeah. After watching this you might want to pick up Randall Kennedy's *Sellout* which gives you a

more in depth look at Black America in general. (Screen Edge/MVD Visual) by Eddie Ugarte

BRÜNO

Sometimes success can be a bad thing – or at least it can inhibit future success. And that seems to be the case with Sacha Baron Cohen's third film featuring his characters from *Da Ali G Show*.

Granted, Cohen's latest piece of biting social commentary masked as over-the-top satire, *Brüno*, has its moments. There's the scene with Paula Abdul extolling the virtues of humanitarian work – while sitting on top of a Hispanic gardener. There's also the hilarity that ensues when Brüno, an uber-flamboyant gay Austrian fashion show host, questions unsuspecting parents about their willingness to have their children appear in seemingly inappropriate photo shoots.

But at the end of the day, Cohen's success with his previous film, *Borat*, seems to have done him in. It appeared that much more of this film was staged with actors than on *Borat*, and it seems directly tied to Cohen's much higher profile this time around.

That's too bad, because as *Brüno* further proved, the real gems are found when Cohen's characters interact with real-life people. It may well have been unavoidable, but the increased amount of staged narrative is what keeps the film from really getting behind the issues in hilarious and mouth-dropping ways. (Everyman Pictures) by Sean Cannon.

NEIL HAMBURGER: WESTERN MUSIC & VARIETY

Having "America's Funnyman," Neil Hamburger front a band of country-western session musicians might not initially seem like a perfect match, but then again, so few things done by Gregg Turkington's anti-comic alter-ego ever really make sense anyway. Dry and tasteless humor delivered with absolutely no sense of timing, you either love Neil Hamburger or you don't. There isn't much room for middle ground.

Living up to it's title, *Western Music & Variety* offers a number of Hamburger's loosely strung-together observations along with a few short sets of songs from last year's *Sings Country Winners*. The humor is equally painful and awful (in the best way possible). Example, "What do you get when you cross a hockey mom with a pit bull? Apparently

a down syndrome baby." Followed up by "How does a cat use a VCR? Well, he hits the 'paws' button." The music is really good too as the band is actually talented and makes you want to listen to the songs more than once.

Aside from the main feature, other DVD add-on's include music videos, a brief stand-up recording and a short film... plus member bios for the "too-good-for-Neil-Hamburger" band and a photograph slide show that there's no reason to ever watch or read unless you're really, really bored. (Drag City) by David C. Obenour

WATCHMEN / THE BLACK FREIGHTER

As the story goes, Terry Gilliam approached Alan Moore in the late 1980s about filming the graphic novel *Watchmen*. At the time, Moore discouraged the idea and went so far as to label his masterpiece as "unfilmable." From that point on, the words "Watchmen film" were widely viewed as an oxymoron. In 2007, 300 director Zack Snyder convinced all the right people (except Alan Moore) to allow him to undertake the impossible. Two years later, the highly publicized *Watchmen* film was released to very positive reviews. Snyder and his team captured most of the stylized grittiness, paranoia, psychosis and terrorism that made the graphic novel so hard hitting during the Cold War. The morally ambiguous story surrounds the murder of the Comedian, an amoral version of Captain America. As his ex-superhero teammates uncover the larger conspiracy behind his death, viewers are reminded that the world we live in today hasn't changed all that much. The movie is no substitute for the book, but it is very good in its own right and lends a great deal of credibility to the superhero film genre, just as the graphic novel did for comics in the 1980s.

It probably goes without saying that there would need to be sacrifices in adapting the 300+ page novel for the screen. The *Black Freighter* comic storyline, *Under the Hood* excerpts and many of the back stories about the original Minutemen were all dropped for time's sake. To Snyder's credit, some of these components weren't entirely discarded. To help promote the upcoming film, *The Black Freighter* was released in late 2008 on DVD as an animated short along with *Under the Hood*, a 1970's era mock news report profiling the fictitious book by the same title. (Warner Bros.) by Andrew Coulon