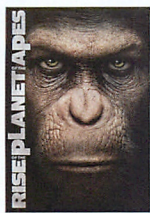


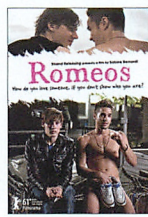
at San Francisco's Gen-Sys laboratory—who is determined to find a cure for Alzheimer's, which afflicts his father (John Lithgow). Will's new drug, ALZ 112, looks incredibly promising, but when the chimp receiving the experimental treatment goes berserk, he's told to abandon the project. After Will discovers that the animal was just protecting her newborn, he scoops the infant up and takes it home. Years pass, during which the DNA-altered offspring—named Caesar (played by Andy Serkis in a nuanced, motion-captured performance)—demonstrates remarkable intelligence and communication skills to Will and his veterinarian girlfriend, Caroline (Freida Pinto). But Will's even stronger, brainpower-increasing serum, ALZ 113, eventually has an adverse effect on Caesar, who resents being treated as a quasi-pet and must be remanded to a primate facility run by John Landon (Brian Cox) and his son, Dodge (Tom Felton). Brutal mistreatment there leads to rebellion, as Caesar shrewdly unites his fellow prisoners for a primate uprising, ultimately battling atop the Golden Gate Bridge. Director Rupert Wyatt effectively delivers action-packed entertainment here with a pinch of social commentary. Recommended. (S. Granger)



Romeos ★★★

Strand, 94 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Jan. 17

A hit on the film festival circuit, writer-director Sabine Bernardi's German romantic comedy stars Rick Okon in an impressive performance as a pre-op, transgender woman-to-man named Lukas (originally Miri). When young Lukas reports for his civilian national service, he finds he's been booked into a women's dormitory, a red-tape complication reflecting one of several ways the world has not caught up with his gender switch. Although he injects himself daily with testosterone, bulks up with free weights, and looks very much the strapping young man, parts of Lukas's anatomy are still female, which he tries to disguise while building a new social life as a guy. But the physical issues are nothing compared to the emotional entanglements. Best friend Ine (Liv Lisa Fries) misses Miri and finds Lukas selfish, while the handsome Fabio (Maximilian Befort) is drawn to Lukas but flips out when he learns the truth. *Romeos* is a fairly light, enjoyable film with little twists and turns that keep the narrative moving along. In the end, this is a story of love triumphing over plumbing. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



tory has been marked by hatred, slaughter, war, and ethnic cleansing. But just because it wants to be taken seriously doesn't mean that it's an easy or even worthwhile watch. Not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

Seven Days in Utopia

★★★
Arc, 100 min., G, DVD: \$28.99

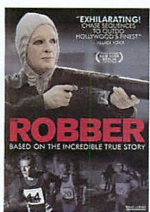
Golf is served up with a hearty helping of corn plus religion in this curious hybrid adapted from David Cook's novel *Golf's Sacred Journey*. Set in Utopia, TX, the story opens with young Luke Chisholm (Lucas Black) choking on the last hole of an important amateur tournament, after which he drives off mad and crashes in a cornfield, where he's rescued by Johnny Crawford (Robert Duvall). Crawford turns out to be a retired pro with an almost Zen-like attitude toward golf, although it turns out that the spirit guiding him is fundamentalist Christianity rather than Eastern meditation. After teaching Luke to patiently "see" and "feel" his shots by engaging in activities such as fly fishing, painting, and piloting, Johnny encourages him to "trust" in the power that will direct his strokes and swings. Luke ultimately puts the see-feel-trust advice to use when he joins his first pro competition, which comes off like the final Death Star assault in *Star Wars*. And what is the "force" that Crawford is selling and Luke is feeling? Given the church scenes and biblical references, it sure appears to be divine providence. Although Duvall is always fun to watch, Matt Russell's heavy-handed and sanctimonious direction makes this an often tedious and disappointing watch. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)



The Robber ★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 101 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

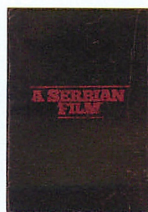
Adapted from the same-titled novel by Martin Prinz (which was based on a real-life story), this German film from director Benjamin Heisenberg stars Andreas Lust as world-class long-distance runner Johann Rettenberger, who can't seem to generate enough excitement in his life by competing in marathons, so when he isn't winning races, he's out robbing banks in Vienna—a treacherous recreational addiction requiring a macabre mask, a gun, and formidable endurance. Rettenberger is also an ex-con and rather obvious sociopath who skulks around like a zombie when he's not indulging in adrenaline-spiking activities. His double life seems foolproof until he meets a social worker named Erika (Franziska Weisz), with whom he forms an awkwardly intimate bond—although getting close to a woman turns out to be his fatal mistake. Unfortunately, *The Robber* fails to truly delineate Rettenberger's obvious psychological complexities, and the absence of at least a few quasi-warm-blooded qualities in this blank-faced automaton of a thief ultimately leaves viewers feeling somewhat indifferent. Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (M. Sandlin)



A Serbian Film ★★★

Invincible, 103 min., in Serbian w/English subtitles, NC-17, DVD or Blu-ray: \$19.95

Already notorious among devotees of extreme cinema, this blandly titled movie from writer-director Srdjan Spasojevic easily lives up—or down—to its reputation as one of the most unsettling pictures ever made. Srdjan Todorovic stars as Milos, a heavy-drinking retired porn star with a loving wife and darling 6-year-old son. In need of funds, Milos accepts an offer to take the lead in a film being shot by a mysterious director named Vukmir (Sergej Trifunovic), who insists that Milos know nothing about the content. The shoot turns out to involve not only graphic sex, but also torture and even killing. At one point, Vukmir devises a bit of grotesquerie involving a doctor and a just-delivered infant—which, in a burst of inspiration, he terms "newborn porn." The scenario moves further into extremes of violence and sexual abuse as Milos is forced into performing even more lurid acts (and hallucinates about worse horrors), and his spouse and child are also drawn into the nightmare. While it's easy to dismiss *A Serbian Film* as nothing more than loathsome torture porn, one has to admit that in its own absolutely perverse way it's well made. And some dialogue indicates that Spasojevic intends it as a scathing commentary on the national character of his country, whose recent his-



The Shaft ★★★

Global Film Initiative, 98 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

A brooding, pessimistic film more laudable for its visual rather than narrative aspects, this atmospheric look into the uphill struggles of the rural underclass in China nevertheless offers a convincing, if uneven, portrayal of a miner's family shaken to its core by the uncertain future of its youngest members. In a western Chinese mining province's beleaguered industrial center—surrounded by majestic mountain peaks—class mobility is nearly nonexistent, and the urban prosperity of Beijing seems as distant as the moon. Family patriarch Baogen (Luo Deyuan), who is set in his workaday ways in an administrative post for the local mining company, is nearing retirement. His wife has left mysteriously; his daughter, Jingshui (Zheng Luoqian), stands accused of an extramarital affair at work; and his

