

## Up from the depths

### Effects-laden reboot revives big green guy

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This week, we begin with the big fellow:

**Godzilla** (\*\*\*) Rated PG-13, 123 minutes.

In the latest romp from the monster that devoured Japan, the big green mutant actually plays the good guy.

Sort of.

Gareth Edwards directed from a script by Max Borenstein, and together they have created some flashy new monsters while also paying attention to the film's real people.

Heading an impressive international cast, Aaron Taylor-Johnson stars as Ford Brody, an explosives expert drawn into the coming melee between the recently re-emerged Godzilla and some nasty-looking giant mutants, known by their acronym, MUTOs.

Ford's father, Joe Brody (Brian Cranston), worked on the team in 1999 that tracked Godzilla — a disaster that doomed Ford's mother, Sandra Brody (Juliette Binoche). Jump ahead to today and Ford joins a Japanese scientist, Dr. Ishiro Serizawa (Ken Watanabe), his aide, Vivienne Graham (Sally Hawkins), and an elite Navy squadron headed by Adm. William Stenz (David Strathairn).

The film sports a deft mix of well-rendered special effects along with an attention to the human element.

**DVD extras:** two "making of" featurettes that break up into seven separate segments. The three-part "MONARCH: Declassified" examines the so-called cover-up of Godzilla's existence, and clocks in at about 15 minutes. The comprehensive, four-part "The Legendary Godzilla" offers more "behind-the-scenes" footage and looks at the special effects. The feature clocks in at about 40 minutes.

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**Willow Creek** (\*\*1/2) Actor-comedian-director Bobcat Goldthwait explores new territory by writing and directing this passable adventure-horror opus.

A young couple (Bryce Johnson and Alexie Gilmore) goes camping in the mountains around Willow Creek, California, in an attempt to capture footage of the elusive Bigfoot, once seen in the area. Before long, and as expected in films of this genre, they become lost and find themselves the hunted. Competent genre rendering by the versatile Goldthwait.

Not rated, 80 minutes.

**DVD extras:** commentary, deleted scenes and a "making of" featurette.

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**God's Pocket** (\*\*1/2) *Mad Men* cast regular John Slattery co-wrote and directed this promising drama that mixes in surprising lumps of black humor and off-the-wall surprises.

But the story and Slattery's direction often change directions without warning or purpose. In the quality cast assembled by Slattery, Philip Seymour Hoffman stars as Mickey Scarpato, a downbeat resident of the titular Philadelphia neighborhood. His mentally unbalanced stepson dies when someone intentionally brains him at a construction site.

A cover-up follows, sending Mickey on a charge to uncover the true story, a quest that brings in local journalist Richard Shellburn (Richard Jenkins). For his part, Shellburn responds by interviewing and then clumsily seducing Mickey's wife, the not-so-grieving Jeanie (Christina Hendricks).

Meanwhile, various other dramas play out involving Mickey's buddy Bird (John Turturro) and his conflict with a local gangster. The strange movie changes tone frequently, a shifting of moods not aided by Lance Acord's hazy cinematography that resides in the dark gloom of ambient lighting.

Rated R, 89 minutes.

**DVD extras:** commentary with Slattery, and four deleted scenes.

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**The Hunted** (\*\*1/2) Josh Stewart executes a triple-play by writing, directing and then starring in this action-adventure saga about two buddies, Jake (Stewart) and Stevie (Ronnie Gene Blevins), who go on an ill-fated deer hunt in the West Virginia backwoods. They take their equipment — including a camera, of course — but before long, in the good tradition of this genre (see: *Willow Creek* above), they find themselves becoming the hunted and not the hunters.

Rated PG-13, 88 minutes.

**DVD extras:** commentary and the “making of” featurette “The True Story.”

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**That Girl in Yellow Boots** (\*\*1/2) The sprawling humanity of Mumbai serves as the setting for this story of Ruth (Kalki Koechlin) and her often-frightening mission.

She travels through the city in search of her missing father, becoming involved with drug dealers, a sleazy massage parlor and various other representatives and outcasts of Mumbai’s lowest. Anurag Kashyap wrote and directed.

Not rated, 103 minutes.

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Three films with spiritual messages arrive this week.

**The Perfect Wave** In this fact-based film, Scott Eastwood (son of Clint) stars as surfing minister Ian McCormack as he travels to exotic locales in his existential surfing odyssey. But while on Mauritius, he suffers an accident — one that brings his life clarity.

With Rachel Hendrix, Patrick Lyster and Cheryl Ladd (stepdaughter of Alan).

Not rated, 91 minutes.

**DVD extras:** an interview with the director; a music video and four other related featurettes.

**Born to Race: Fast Track** features plenty of race car footage to bolster its story of friends and racing rivals Danny (Brett Davern) and Jake (Beau Mirchoff).

Danny lands a scholarship at a racing school only to discover he must team up with Jake, not only on the track but for the school’s exceptional student, Michelle (Tiffany Dupont).

Rated PG, 98 minutes.

The sole extra is a “behind-the-scenes” featurette.

**Rise Up Black Man** In writer-director Kendall Irvin’s movie, filmed in and around Oklahoma City, two friends take different paths in this exploration of race and other issues. Photographed by Jenna McKee. With Victor Muse, Prince Duren and Dustin Morby.

Not rated, 146 minutes.

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**Also available Tuesday on DVD:** *Burning Bush*, *Casting By*, *The Fault in Our Stars* and *The German Doctor*.

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