

Bolger), who seemingly can't wait another minute to upgrade their relationship status. The new girl in school, Bess (Crystal Reed), is a mousy Goth who barely registers on the Richter scale. A semi-creepy teammate is always lurking in the background during workouts and his super-sexy English teacher, Mrs. Brown (Camille Guaty), appears to be giving Scott more attention than is usually accorded the jocks in her classes. In addition to those crushes, Scott's father appears to have one on a young woman working at his restaurant, where Bess also works and Jules and Mrs. Brown frequent. Cracks in Scott's idyllic life begin to show when he breaks a leg and it threatens his scholarship. Anxious to get back in shape, he hits the weight room and the running paths, only to be caught in harm's way when his invisible nemesis decides to strike again. Harmful "accidents" also begin to strike people in his orbit. Only one candidate stands out from the crowd as "Crush" draws closer to its end, and naturally it's the obsessive, Bess. There's no good reason to spoil the suspense, here, except to advise viewers to reserve judgment. There are holes in the narrative large enough to accommodate a parade of elephants, but teens are likely to forgive them, if only because of the attractiveness of the actors. — *Gary Dretzka*

### **The Kitchen** **Sexy Evil Genius**

Is there anything worse than listening to drunken yuppies whine about their problems at a birthday party? In real life, yes; in the movies, probably not. In the ensemble dramedy "**The Kitchen**," Laura Prepon plays the birthday girl on her 30<sup>th</sup> go-round on Earth. Jennifer isn't exactly in the right mood for a hoedown, however, as she's just discovered that her live-in boyfriend is schtupping everyone in town, including several of her closest friends. She's also embarking on a commercial enterprise that's almost certain to fail. Her sister, Penny (Dreama Walker), has broadcast her plans to have an abortion in the next week, a fact that doesn't seem to dampen the festivities one bit. Nearly a dozen other characters pop in and out of their home's kitchen — the main stage, here — offering their opinions on one thing or another and generally making Jennifer's party even more of a downer for the hostess. Now, it's entirely possible that guests in other rooms of the house are having a blast, but director Ishai Setton has wisely decided to limit the dramedy to a single location. And, of course, the kitchen at any party tends to be at the crossroads of all activity. The more drunken the guests are, however, the less valuable are their contributions to the overlying drama. I suspect, though, that most people under 18 and over 30 won't find much in "**The Kitchen**" to hold their attention for long. Some of the gags work OK, and the cast is full of attractive people, but being attractive doesn't make them interesting.

Most of what happens in "**Sexy Evil Genius**" takes place in a single room, as well, and likewise is populated with yuppies who think they're more fascinating than they actually are. In his first feature, director Shawn Piller borrows a trope that's at least as old as Agatha Christie's "And Then There Were None." Here, an ex-con named Nikki (Katee Sackhoff) invites several ex-lovers to a bar in downtown L.A. for a reason none of them can guess. Nikki had been convicted of murdering her last boyfriend, so it seems odd that these seemingly intelligent young people would agree to accept her invitation. (Michelle Trachtenberg, Seth Green, Anthony Michael Hall, Harold Perrineau, Nora Kirkpatrick and William Baldwin fill out the cast.) The first part of the movie is taken up with the invited guests discussing their relationship with Nikki and guessing why they've been called together. In the second half, Nikki arrives with her new, older boyfriend and she's able to plant all sorts of wicked seeds in their minds. Finally, "**Sexy Evil Genius**" feels more like an exercise at acting school than a plot-driven movie. — *Gary Dretzka*

### **Craig Shoemaker: Daditude**

I find it interesting that Craig Shoemaker's comedy special, "**Daditude**," would follow by 11 years the comic's one-man show, "Who's Your Daddy?," which was about growing up without a father. Shoemaker's a funny guy and has no problem finding things about parenthood that resonate with his audience, most of whom stopped sowing their wild oats when the first baby arrived. He clearly loves being a dad and participating in his kids activities, but they also have provided him with a wealth of material. In fact, it probably would fill a season's worth of episodes on a network sitcom, if anyone gave him another opportunity. My sense of the evening's performance tells me that most people in the audience weren't nearly as interested in hearing about the comic's kids as they were to learn what Shoemaker's trademark character, the Lovemaster, has been up to since the last tour. And, he doesn't disappoint. Stopping on a dime, he becomes the Lovemaster in all of his raunchy glory and ballsy braggadocio. The audience couldn't be happier. — *Gary Dretzka*

### **Hallmark: Goodnight for Justice: Queen of Hearts**

Despite all evidence to the contrary, new Westerns are still being made and shown, primarily on channels most people have yet to discover. Hallmark, a network with a large and loyal following, has built a franchise around Circuit Judge John Goodnight. In the hands of Luke Perry, Goodnight is the unlikeliest of legal arbiters. Usually, he's more unkempt than the crooks who stand before him and the banging of his gavel often proves too overwhelming for his chronic hangover to bear. His personality combines the more rakish elements of Judge Roy Bean and Brett Maverick. In "**Goodnight for Justice: Queen of Hearts**," he falls prey to the attentions of a beautiful con-woman, Lucy (Katherine Isabelle), who's wanted in three states for cleaning out perspective lovers and other saps. Her skills at poker are second-to-none, as well. Goodnight comes across Lucy as her stagecoach is being attacked by a gang led by a jilted suitor (Rick Schroder) and his trusted Indian companion. The judge has no way of knowing that there's a price on her head and chases away the desperadoes he doesn't shoot. Lucy convinces him that she's a good girl, just passing through the Wild West on her way to her daddy's mine. It takes a while for the judge to figure out why Lucy is being pursued so vigorously, but, when he does, it's too late because he's already smitten. Unless one is expecting a signature Clint Eastwood or John Ford Western, "**Queen of Hearts**" is a perfectly acceptable alternative. The Canadian locations are gorgeous and Perry keeps things light. — *Gary Dretzka*

### **JJ Grey: Brighter Days**

Before watching the concert DVD, "JJ Grey: Brighter Days," I was unaware of the popularity of singer/songwriter JJ Grey or the existence of his band, Mofro. It's not that I don't get around much, anymore, just that the band probably has been hovering just below the level of stardom for a long time, waiting to become a household name. Grey is raspy-voiced singer, who once upon a time might have been labeled a blue-eyed soul singer. Like Joe Cocker, in his Mad Dogs & Englishmen phase, Grey positions his microphone several feet in front of Mofro, as if to say, "I'm the star of the show and, although I love these musicians dearly, it's my songs you've come to hear." As a unit, though, the ensemble delivers a powerful punch. When he isn't delivering sultry love songs or stretched-to-the-breaking-point R&B jams, Grey sings a lot about his Southern roots and good-of-boy attitude toward life. It's nothing we haven't heard before from Lynyrd Skynyrd or Hank Jr., but the addition of a band that includes drums, saxophones, an organ, trumpet, bass and guitar adds another dimension to the swamp-rock foundation. Grey's music also borrows from gospel, old-school R&B, Dave Matthews Band, Memphis funk and country-rock. The concert material on the DVD is supplemented with interviews and a tour of the north Florida swamps around which Grey was raised. — *Gary Dretzka*

### **Sexcula**

Buried in a crypt for some 40 years, somewhere in the wilds of British Columbia, the rarely, if ever projected Canadian sexploitation flick, "**Sexcula**," has been resurrected by the grave diggers at Impulse Pictures. Apparently, the movie was intended to be a sexy parody of the classic Universal horror titles, but "Deep Throat" had just opened the door to harder stuff. By comparison to "**Sexcula**," though, Gerard Damiano's landmark movie looks like "Romeo and Juliet." In it, a modern couple moves into a rundown family estate, which, according to a diary found on the property, once served as a laboratory for Grandma Fallatingstein, a mad scientist interested in creating a sex-monster to service her needs ... down there. Sadly, Frank the Monster can't perform as intended, so Doctor Fallatingstein creates a female sex-monster to help him find the proper orifice to fill. When that fails, as well, the scientist enlists a local working girl, Countess Sexcula, to do everything in her power to wind Frank's clock. There's more, but why spoil the fun? While "**Sexcula**" bears a resemblance to Italian *giallo* and Hammer horror — far more than any Universal title — what it reminded me of most was the "SCTV" parody, "Monster Chiller Horror Theater," starring Count Floyd (Joe Flaherty), Bruno (Eugene Levy) and Doctor Tongue (John Candy). One of the movies shown was "Dr. Tongue's 3D House of Stewardesses," which also holds up well next to "**Sexcula**." In her only appearance on film, Marilyn Chambers look-alike Debbie Collins played both Countess Sexcula and the female half of the modern couple. It's difficult to find talent like that, anymore. — *Gary Dretzka*