

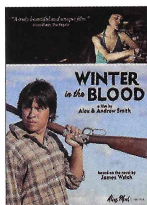
for all tastes. The plot is pure fantasy: a mad collision of gang war, teen runaway tale, revenge movie, star-crossed romance, wrong man nightmare, and movie club dream come true. The characters, who have a cartoonish quality, include the dubiously-talented but enthusiastic film club members who are devoted to making "the movie of a lifetime"; mob boss Muto (Jun Kunimura), who is determined to make his daughter, Michiko (Fumi Nikaido), a movie star; and rival gangster Jun (Shinichi Tsutsumi), who is infatuated with Michiko—a spoiled, reckless girl who takes pity on an innocent guy her father wants to make into an example. All are driven by obsession and emotion, which is why the gang leaders agree to dress their yakuza soldiers as samurais and fight it out with swords while a young director films it all with multiple cameras—giggling with delight as they cut one another to pieces. Writer-director Sion Sono stirs in some hearty dark humor as the blood spurts in geysers and the limbs fly (at one point a Bruce Lee knock-off in a *Game of Death* yellow tracksuit is seen swinging a sword and windmilling his nunchucks). A pure midnight movie celebrating and satirizing the love of film, this over-the-top effort will likely appeal to fans of Quentin Tarantino and Japanese genre movies. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



### Winter in the Blood

★★★★  
Kino Lorber, 98 min., not rated,  
DVD: \$29.95

The opening shots of Alex and Andrew Smith's *Winter in the Blood* offer a pretty credible impression of a Western by Clint Eastwood, with wide-angle wintry stark imagery of a ranch, cutting to a cowboy and his horse, half-draped in shadow. And then the ugly truth kicks in: it's all just a dream in the hung-over brain of Virgil First Raise (Chaske Spencer), who awakens in a ditch. The young Native American anti-hero at the center of this feverish tale, based on a seminal 1974 novel by the late James Welch, is about to embark on another day of boozing, violence, and random visions. The line between reality and hallucination is blurred both for Virgil and the viewer in this audacious, funny, and often tender film. Spencer, best known from the *Twilight* series, delivers a brutally honest performance as the dissolute Virgil, a drunk whose wife (Julia Jones) has run off with his keepsake rifle while he is left to stumble through the days at home and his visits to the seedier side of a small Montana town. The Smith brothers don't distinguish between the real and surreal—or even the past and present. Virgil, carrying lingering grief over family deaths, as well

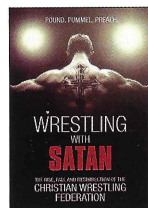


as the pain of an identity crisis, just spins through his memories, fantasies, and bizarre adventures (some featuring a crazy con man, played by David Morse). A fine supporting cast—including Gary Farmer, Dana Wheeler-Nicholson, Saginaw Grant, and Richard Ray Whitman—join Virgil on his jumbled vision quest, a journey to knowledge through the back alleys of a nightmare. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

### Wrestling With Satan

★★★★1/2  
MVD, 78 min., not rated,  
DVD: \$14.95

Can a Christian find salvation with the help of XL-sized men in tights who pummel each other with folding chairs? That is the premise behind the Christian Wrestling Federation, a Texas-based ministry/sports entertainment operation that offers independent professional wrestling bouts punctuated with evangelical Christian sermons by the grapplers in the ring. This fascinating documentary by Paul Aldridge and Tom Borden follows the federation from 2000 through 2006, detailing a number of serene high points (most notably the gathering of an exuberant lineup of wrestlers) and some harrowing low points (including repeated obstacles in financing the endeavor, and personality conflicts that split federation founder Rob Vaughn from several of his most popular athletes). While Vaughn and his team are on somewhat shaky theological ground when it comes to using biblical passages to justify spiritual wrestling, it's hard not to be impressed with the distinctive character and unmistakable sincerity of their proselytizing efforts. And to its credit, this wrestling league has none of the vulgarity that has marred Vince McMahon's WWE extravaganzas for many years. Ultimately, the real power and glory here belongs to the wrestlers, who are some of the most charismatic and talented athletes in the under-the-radar world of independent wrestling. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)



### The Zigzag Kid

★★★★1/2  
Menemsha, 95 min., in  
English, French & Dutch  
w/English subtitles, not rated,  
DVD: \$29.95

Based on the 1994 YA novel by David Grossman, filmmaker Vincent Bal's *The Zigzag Kid* is a fine example of cosmopolitan, magical-realist children's entertainment that avoids condescension. The titular character is Amnon "Nono" Feiberberg (Thomas Simon), the 12-year-old son of a widowed, famously tough Benelux police inspector (amusing pseudo-TV-cop-show imagery is used as a funny stylistic gimmick here). When Nono's active imagination



lands him in trouble one too many times, he is ostensibly sent off to a disciplinarian uncle, but a last-minute note reroutes him to a very different mentor—dad's old nemesis: Riviera jewel thief and international master-of-disguise Felix Glick (Burghart Klausner). Felix trains Nono in techniques of criminal mischief so that he can be a great lawman like his dad, but there is also a secret agenda: namely, to enlighten the boy (on the eve of his Bar Mitzvah) about his late mother and true heritage. Bal's fleet directorial touch and a fine cast (including Isabella Rossellini) make this smart coming-of-age tale a winner. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

### Classic Films

#### 4 Adventures of Reinette and Mirabelle

KimStim, 99 min., in French  
w/English subtitles, not rated,  
DVD: \$29.99



Eric Rohmer's slight but sweet 1987 comedy centers on two young women—self-assured rural lass Reinette (Joëlle Miquel) and sophisticated, easygoing city gal Mirabelle (Jessica Forde)—who meet by chance in the country and become roommates after Mirabelle offers to share her Paris apartment so that aspiring painter Reinette can study art. As the title suggests, the story consists of four separate episodes that play more like a series of sketches than a feature film. Rohmer shot this on 16mm during a break from making *Summer* (one of his greatest films), with the two unknown actresses largely improvising the dialogue around situations (dealing with a rude waiter or panhandlers on the street) in which their different approaches to life are contrasted and debated—especially debated, since Rohmer's films are mainly about talk, although behind the discussions of morality and philosophy lie revelations about character and personality. Compared to the *Comedies and Proverbs* series that Rohmer was filming at the time, this is more of a comic lark with a lighthearted air, but that only helps underscore its carefree unassuming charm. Extras include an interview with Forde. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

#### Adua and Her Friends

★★★★  
Raro, 129 min., in Italian w/  
English subtitles, not rated, Blu-  
ray: \$29.95



Simone Signoret stars as Adua, a veteran prostitute who tries to take charge of her life after her brothel is shut down in the aftermath of Italy's Merlin Law, which ended legalized prostitution in 1958. Adua's friends (Emmanuelle Riva, Sandra Milo, and Gina Rovere) pitch in as partners in a restaurant—meant to be a