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Wednesday 30th OCTOBER 2002 (3rd Week)

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CINEMA
To Thurs 31st

Ultimate Picture Palace 245288
LANTANA (15) Wed & Thu: 7.00
MURDER MYSTERY Wed & Thu: 9.15
PULP FICTION (18)
So what is in the briefcase?
Odeon George Street 0870 5050007
POSSESSION (12A) Daily: 12.00, 2.45, 5.30, 8.15
Tale of a 19th century poet & his muse
XXX (12A) Daily: 12.30, 3.15, 6.00, 8.45
007 for adrenalin junkies See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
HIGH CRIMES (12A) Daily: 12.15, 3.00, 5.45, 8.30
Ashley Judd & Morgan Freeman in a case of concealed identity
RED DRAGON (15) Daily: 2.00, 5.00, 8.00 (W/A)
Pregel to Silence of the Lambs. See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING (PG) Daily: 1.45, 4.15, 6.45, 9.15 (not Thu) (W/A)
Marrying the WHOLE family. See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
SIGNS (12A) Daily: 12.45, 3.30, 6.15, 9.00(not Thu)
Are aliens coming? See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
SENIOR SCREEN: THE MAJESTIC (PG) Wed: 10.45
Jim Carrey loses his identity & finds someone else's
ADVANCE PREVIEW: CHANGING LANES (15) Thu: 9.00 (W/A)
Ben Affleck & Samuel L. Jackson in road rage-inspired feud.
ADVANCE PREVIEW: THEY (15) Thu: 9.15 (W/A)
Psychology student is pursued by childhood fears
Odeon Magdalen Street 0870 5050007
LILO AND STITCH (U) Daily: 12.45, 3.15, 5.45
Distant alien authorities capture most dangerous criminals.
XXX (12A) Daily: 1.30, 4.15, 6.30, 8.45 (W/A)
Exchange student in Texas tries to be most popular girl.
See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
ROAD TO PERDITION (15) Wed: 8.15 (W/A)
30s gangster yarn with style to spare. See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
ADVANCE PREVIEW: 28 DAYS LATER (18) Thu: 8.15
Clever British horror as rage-making virus escapes lab
Phoenix Picture House 512526
ALL OR NOTHING (18) Daily: 4.00, 9.00
Dark & surreal British grit
DONNIE DARKO (15) Daily: 2.00, 4.20, 6.40, 9.10
Parallel universe with giant evil rabbit. See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
AKA (18) Wed & Thu: 1.40, 6.45
Young impostor in high society.
HALLOWEEN (18) Thu: 11.30pm
Homicidal maniac escapes from mental institution.
INSOMNIA (15) Thu: 11.30pm
From the director of Memento. See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk

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Some are born mediocre, some achieve mediocrity, and some have it thrust upon them. Take Ashley Judd, for instance. In strict Hollywood terms, there is nothing obviously wrong with her. She's no worse an actress than the more successful Sandra Bullock, she's arguably better than Hollywood's current favourite, Cameron Diaz - and if you squint a little, you can almost believe you're watching Angelina Jolie instead. Yet it seems to be the destiny of the bland, irrepressibly perky Judd to have either unremarkable secondary roles in first-rate films ('Smoke', 'Heat'), or else top-billing roles in truly second-rate films ('Kiss the Girls', 'Double Jeopardy', 'The Passion of Darkly Noon'). If her name appears near the top of a movie poster, you just know it's some kind of a miracle that the film is showing in a cinema at all, instead of going straight to video where it belongs.

And so it is with Judd's new vehicle, 'High Crimes', a military courtroom thriller modelled on just about any John Grisham adaptation you can recall, with 'A Few Good Men' thrown in for good measure. When her husband is seized by the FBI and accused of carrying out a massacre of civilians in El Salvador over a decade ago, attorney Claire Kubik (Judd) must come to terms with his secret past and take on the might of the military establishment to prove his innocence.

Claire enlists the help of military lawyer Charlie Grems, played by Morgan Freeman - but Freeman's avuncular gravitas cannot save Judd from the sheer averageness of this film any more than he was able to save her in 'Kiss the Girls'. She also turns to her low-rent sister Jackie, played by Amanda Peet - only to find the lusty Peet stealing every scene from her (as she did to Bruce Willis and Matthew Perry in 'The Whole Nine Yards').

While 'High Crimes' does, to its credit, manage to sneak in some timely commentary on the US military machine's overreadiness both to brand any perceived enemy a terrorist, and to employ terrorist tactics of its own, in the end this is little more than a by-the-book genre pic. Expect cover-ups, expect political conspiracies, expect twists - just don't expect any of it to take you by surprise.

Anton Bitel, 28.10.02

THEATRE
To Thurs 31st

Oxford Playhouse 305305
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BJORN AGAIN Thu 31 : 8pm
Ozzie ABBA tribute show. £15.50
Old Fire Station Theatre 297170
CLOUD NINE Tue 29 - Sat 2
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OPERA REVIEW



If you like thrills, spills and melodrama, then Tosca, the Dynasty of operas, a three-act tragedy of love and betrayal, is for you. The plot, if you don't know it, runs as follows: The famous opera singer Tosca is in love with the painter Cavaradossi, but jealous, and her suspicions seem confirmed when he starts acting suspiciously. However, Cavaradossi is actually doing something far more dangerous; he's trying to help a political prisoner. When brutal police chief Scarpia finds out, he tries to use the situation to manoeuvre Tosca into his bed, but things go terribly wrong. Welsh National Opera's production recalls the history of Tosca, with sets which make Rome a solid, almost aggressively tangible presence and Pre-Raphaelite notes in the clothes and paintings. The solidity of the sets is undermined by a multiplicity of doors; secret doors, doors which shut out love and let in danger, doors behind which police and torture and death are waiting. Over all the grim faces of uncaring gods stare out; an invisible Madonna and a tottering Pope for the trembling uncertainty of the first act, the face of Pan leering approvingly over the violent passions of the second, and a fearsome Angel of Death looming over the final. In this vast stage populated by angels and gods, the singers (with the exception of Daniel Sumegi's disgustingly nasty Scarpia) seem strangely diminished, the lovers more chummily domestic than passionate, and any hope of escape or revolution pathetically impotent in the face of Scarpia's police state. But, when it all comes crashing down, the tragedy is made all the more poignant because the heroes are, well, a bit ordinary, and the singing is exquisite, and the music excellent, and when Tosca sings "Vissi d'arte" your heart breaks, just a little, just as it should.

Jeremy Dennis, 26.10.02

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OXFORD CIVIC SOCIETY: TREES OF HEADINGTON HILL PARK! / Walk with Andrew Daffurn (late of OCC Parks Dept.). E3. / 2pm. Tel: 310488 / Headington

DEMOGRAPHY AND THE ISRAELI PALESTINE CONFLICT: CHALLENGES AND OPTIONS! / Prof. Sergio DellaPergola, David Patterson Seminar. All welcome. / 8pm. Light buffet from 7pm / Yarrin Manor, Yarrin, Oxford OX5 1PY; Tel: 377946, Fax: 375079, Email: graham.laer@chchs.ac.uk

LE MECENAT ROYAL EN FRANCE SOUS L'ANCIEN REGIME! / With Gérard Sabatier. / 5.15pm / Maison Francaise, Norham Rd, Oxford, OX2 6SE; Tel: 274220, Fax: 274225, Email: maison@herald.ox.ac.uk

ASK, SEEK, KNOCK! OXFORD GNOSTIC ASSOCIATION! / Trinity: the Backbone of Theology. Sharing Gospel: 'A man from the East (Punjab) renders expositions unknown to the West'. Open lecture - all welcome. / 7.30pm. Further details: Mr R Nijhar, M.Sc.: 0118 962 3200 / Town Hall, Oxford, St Aldates

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