

Reviews of recent and upcoming DVD releases

By Billy O'Keefe

**McClatchy-Tribune News Service
(MCT)**

"Knocked Up: Extended & Unrated" (NR, 2007, Universal)

She (Katherine Heigl) is successful, pretty and semi-famous. He (Seth Rogen) is jobless, not very pretty, and living with four roommates (Jonah Hill, Jay Baruchel, Jason Segel and Martin Starr) who are different versions of him. But alcohol is a funny thing, and you know where this one is going just by the title on the box. Fortunately, "Knocked Up" isn't pushing unpredictability as its main asset, and it barely matters that you largely can guess what happens in act three just as easily as you can predict act one. What matters is that the movie is funny _ sometimes broadly, sometimes brilliantly, sometimes through a simple throwaway line that makes you laugh a full 30 seconds after someone says it. Best of all, the only bodily function joke comes in the form of a grumbling stomach. "Knocked Up" does comedy the nice, hard way, and it manages to be that extremely rare guy film that the women will cherish just as much as the men. This is as feel-good as feel-good comedy gets.

Extras: Cast/crew commentary, deleted/extended/alternate scenes, bloopers, 10 behind-the-scenes features, video diaries, live music, two "best lines" compilations.

"Tekkonkinkreet" (R, 2006, Sony Pictures)

Numerous camps are fighting for ownership of Treasure Town, a once-proud metropolis that is rotting away at an alarming rate. Interested parties include a cracking Yakuza and a posse of impossibly powerful aliens, but it's the smallest party of all _ a boy named Black and his little brother, White _ that elevate "Tekkonkinkreet" from an exquisite anime to an absolutely enchanting one. The no-nonsense premise allows "Tekkonkinkreet" to run wild in areas of higher concern, and the result is a fascinating cast of characters, a city with real history and a dense, arguably epic story that practically tells itself. The attention to detail in "Tekkonkinkreet's" art is stunning, but it's merely keeping up with the rest of the film's appetite for nuance. You need not love anime to love this. Were "Tekkonkinkreet" a live-action film with the same storyline, people would lose their minds en masse.

Extras: Filmmaker commentary, making-of feature, interviews.

"Severance" (R, 2006, Magnolia)

A handful of employees from Palisade Defence 1/8sic3/8 are headed, whether they like it or not, to a cabin in the woods for a team-building retreat. That alone is enough to strike fear in the hearts of many, but "Severance" ups the ante by unleashing a crazed killer who is hiding in the woods and has nothing to do with any planned workplace activities. Aside from the workplace twist, "Severance" arranges itself in a fashion similar to so many cabin-in-the-woods horror films. But it's that little twist that pushes the movie ahead of the pack, and "Severance" takes uses that nudge to balance gore, comedy and some genuine "oh no" moments in a way few horror films are equipped to do. (Wait, for instance, until you see how the paintball team-building exercise ends. Not pretty, and yet strangely relatable.)

Also nice: A second twist near the beginning of the film's climax that throws a wrench into the story,

modernizes it on a wholly different level, and ensures it won't run out of steam before the credits roll.

Extras: Cast/crew commentary, eight behind-the-scenes features, deleted scenes, outtakes, alternate ending storyboard, Palisade corporate video.

"Bug" (R, 2006, Lions Gate)

It's a little too easy to make assumptions about "Bug" on first glance. We've all seen enough horror films to practically bet farms on "Bug" being about some onslaught or another of bugs. Guess what? That, technically, is what it is. But calling "Bug" a film about bugs is like calling "The Wizard of Oz" a film about a road trip. There's a point A and there's a point B, but what happens between those points lies one of the wildest mishmashes of contemporary foil-hat paranoia and classic horror hat-tipping ever crammed into a single space. Details will not be spilled here, because sitting in cold disbelief as the film descends into madness is what seeing "Bug" is all about. Just know that it's completely insane, totally fun and powered by some of the most fantastic acting that the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences won't touch with a 10-foot pole. Ashley Judd, Michael Shannon, Harry Connick, Jr. and Lynn Collins star.

Extras: Director interview and commentary, introduction.

"A Dog's Breakfast" (PG-13, 2006, MGM)

Patrick (David Hewlett) is a bit unbalanced. And when he hears what he believes is his sister's (Kate Hewlett) would-be husband (Paul McGillion) plotting her murder, he does what any unbalanced good brother would do and tries to off him first. Unfortunately, as with everything else in Patrick's life, murder isn't easy. Comedy isn't much easier, but "A Dog's Breakfast" hits more often than it misses. The comedy is awfully broad for the most part, and while "Breakfast" manages its share of great lines, the domino of resulting hijinks is more amusing than laugh-out-loud hilarious. Still, amusing is miles better than bad, and that's something "Breakfast" never is. The story is fun, the characters are likeable in spite of themselves, and a big twist down line is satisfying regardless of whether you see it coming or not. It's riddled with logic holes, but the film is so beyond ridiculous at that point that it hardly matters.

Extras: Filmmakers commentary, deleted scenes, four behind-the-scenes features.

"Next" (PG-13, 2007, Paramount)

Illusionist Cris 'Frank Cadillac' Johnson (Nicolas Cage) isn't your typical magician, because your typical magician can't see into the future like he can. The catch is, he can see only his future, and he can only see two minutes ahead of present time. At least that's mostly the catch, but the caveats are hard to explain unless you see the movie yourself. That's part of the problem with "Next." The hook is pretty clever, but when you pad the film with a story about terrorists, a kidnapping and a nuclear weapon set to detonate in Los Angeles, something is bound to break at some point. Sure enough, "Next" gets careless with its rules, and the film gets sloppy before delivering an ending that, while interesting, will strike some as a cop-out. It doesn't help matters that, even with the original initial setup, "Next" generally feels pretty stock, touting a predictable love interest (Jessica Biel), a threat that never feels like a real threat, and an gaggle of FBI agents who resemble actors playing FBI agents more than actual agents. Julianne Moore also stars.

Extras: Four behind-the-scenes features.

"Broken" (NR, 2006, Dimension Extreme)

When Hope (Nadja Brand) awakes, she finds herself inside a reinforced pine box. Upon being let out by her captor (Eric Colvin) _ and after discovering she's already been badly injured _ she's given a choice: Do something terrible to stay alive and see her kid again, or give up and die. In other words, this is, at least at first, a lost episode of "Saw." But rather than continue down that road, "Broken" slows it down, and the film becomes a tug-of-war between Hope's emerging Stockholm Syndrome and her desire to punish her captor and escape. Unfortunately, that simply leads to more punishment and precious little else. Like far too many contemporary horror films, "Broken" seems more concerned with getting off on torturing its cast than explaining why he's a predator and she's the prey. It also gives you nothing to truly root for _ a small problem that unexpectedly blossoms into a soul-sucking deal-breaker during the film's last scene.

Extras: Filmmakers commentary, making-of feature, Brand interview, photo gallery.

"Zoo" (NR, 2007, ThinkFilm)

No sense dancing around it: "Zoo" is a documentary about bestiality. Specifically, it's about Kenneth Pinyan, a Seattle man who died after attempting to have sex with a horse. No sense dancing around this either: It's terrible. Presumably to avoid the shock film tag, "Zoo" tries to tell Pinyan's story with delicate strokes. Footage of the encounter exists, but it's not here, and the film largely consists of actors reenacting the various accounts that provide the film's narrative track. Many who see "Zoo" will interpret the soft approach as a means of sympathizing for Pinyan rather than condemning him or abstaining from editorializing at all. But even if you can look past whatever your gut tells you, it's hard to overcome the complete feeling of emptiness all that dancing leaves behind. The acting often is silly and overdone, the soundtrack is relentlessly heavy, and the film's climax is so absurdly pretentious that it makes you forget what little insight into Pinyan's behavior the preceding hour-plus might have offered. Whatever "Zoo" set out to accomplish, mission failed.

Extras: Filmmaker commentary.

(Billy O'Keefe writes video game and DVD reviews for McClatchy-Tribune News Service.)

© 2007, McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.