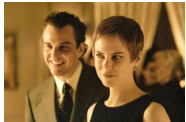


This Fall, It's All Good!: "Birth," "Ray," and "The Incredibles"

Written by Mike Schulz

Tuesday, 09 November 2004 18:00

- [Buy Autodesk AutoCAD Electrical 2014 \(32-bit\) \(de,en,es,fr,it,ko\)](#)
- [9.95\\$ Adobe Photoshop CS6 Classroom in a Book cheap oem](#)
- [Download Nik Software Viveza 2](#)
- [Buy Autodesk AutoCAD Plant 3D 2014 \(64-bit\) \(en,de,fr,ja\)](#)
- [Download Word 2007 For Dummies](#)
- [Download Xilisoft Video To Audio Converter 5.1](#)
- [Buy OEM Microsoft Digital Image Suite 2006](#)
- [Buy OEM Roxio Creator 2012 Pro](#)
- [Buy Adobe After Effects CS5.5 MAC \(en,de,es,it,fr,ja\)](#)
- [Buy Access 2010 All-in-One For Dummies \(en\)](#)
- [Buy Autodesk Entertainment Creation Suite 2014 Ultimate \(64-bit\) \(en,ja\)](#)
- [Buy Autodesk Inventor Professional 2009 \(en\)](#)
- [19.95\\$ iExpert Registry Clean Expert 4.58 cheap oem](#)



BIRTH

It's pretty easy to see why audiences hate Jonathan Glazer's *Birth*, which features Nicole Kidman as Anna, a grieving widow who believes that the soul of her late husband, Sean, is alive in the body of a 10-year-old boy with the same name.

The film, set amidst wintry Manhattan locales, is a cold and moody piece, it raises more questions than it can ever hope to answer, and with the exception of a few dry line readings by Lauren Bacall – playing Kidman's impossibly rich, pragmatic mother – it's completely devoid of humor. And let's face it: The film is about Nicole Kidman falling in love with *a 10-year-old*, for God's sake, which is about as disturbing a plotline as you could imagine. As a movie experience,

Birth

should have fallen apart in any number of ways; the setup itself all but encourages audience members to race for the exits (and several viewers at the screening I attended did indeed leave before the end credits), and the unremitting seriousness of the presentation could easily have triggered uncomfortable, embarrassed giggles throughout. Yet Glazer, working from a script he co-wrote with Milo Addica and Jean-Claude Carriere, sustains the film's air of mystery and dread so exquisitely that the results are neither repellant nor laughable;

Birth

is devastatingly magnetic from first shot to last, and it's easily the most misunderstood great movie of the year.

This Fall, It's All Good!: "Birth," "Ray," and "The Incredibles"

Written by Mike Schulz

Tuesday, 09 November 2004 18:00

Trailers for the film indicated that *Birth* would be a ghoulish suspense yarn, with Kidman in red-eyed, *The Others* mode and a host of downbeat supporting characters looking fearful for her sanity. (And matters probably weren't helped by images of young Cameron Bright as Kidman's "husband," considering he recently played the murderous, back-from-the-dead tyke in this spring's thriller

Godsend

.) The film

isn't

any kind of conventional chiller, but the misleading ads are at least understandable: How do you sell a movie that's taking this reincarnation mumbo-jumbo

seriously

? But that's actually the key to the movie's greatness. Kidman's character

does

take it seriously, as, eventually, do several others, and the inherent sadness of this willingness-to-believe makes

Birth

positively wrenching; the movie is about characters so emotionally annihilated by a surprise death – even 10 years after the fact – that they're prepared to accept the impossible if it means, if only slightly, assuaging their grief.

When Bright's Sean first arrives on the scene, the film's characters view him with a kind of comical apprehension, yet watch as the film progresses – the actors' focus, even their body language, begins to suggest that this child might, in fact, be telling the truth, and that their beloved Sean has returned to them. With Glazer mounting the tension in every scene, you begin to believe as the characters believe, even though you know in your gut – just as *they* do – how ridiculous this idea actually is. Kidman's Anna, of course, is especially agonized – one unbroken, three-minute shot of Kidman's face while Anna sorts out her feelings is a miraculous bit of acting – but the other characters become nearly as affected by young Sean's appearance: Anna's fiancé (Danny Huston), appalled by the new "competition"; Anna's closest friends (Peter Stormare and Anne Heche), with their own reasons for wanting Sean to return; and the child's parents (Ted Levine and Cara Seymour), who can't fathom Sean's determination that he is Anna's husband. ("I'm not your stupid son anymore," Sean tells his uncomprehending mother.)

As

irth

nears its conclusion – and there's not a dull scene in its 95 minutes – these characters dovetail and their true natures become startlingly clear; by the end, the film has attained the tragic, horrific inevitability of a Joyce Carol Oates story. With Glazer directing his actors to perfection and the expressive cinematography seeing everything with empathetic clarity,

Birth

achieves a true hypnotic grace.

B

This Fall, It's All Good!: "Birth," "Ray," and "The Incredibles"

Written by Mike Schulz

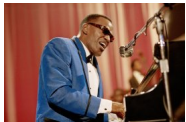
Tuesday, 09 November 2004 18:00

I always hate writing phrases such as "It's not a movie for everybody" because, really, what movie *is*? (Maybe the Pixar flicks.) Yet it's a fitting comment for this multiplex endeavor; you have to bring a lot to it yourself – the film's "answers," though there, aren't easily gleaned – and a lot of viewers won't be able to get past the discomfiting nature of the material, especially when Anna and Sean discuss their hypothetical sex life or, in a too-widely-discussed sequence, Sean climbs into Anna's bath. (Due to the way it's staged and the unbreakable concentration of Kidman and Bright, the scene isn't exploitative; dramatically, in fact, it's very *necessary*.) While the movie will certainly exhilarate some of us, others will find it nauseating, others dull, others a joke. That's all right, though.

Birth

is worth fighting over. But first it must be *seen*

.



RAY

After leaving the theater upon viewing *Ray*, all you want to talk about is lead Jamie Foxx, and that seems fair. Portraying legendary R&B performer Ray Charles from his late teens to his artistic peak in the mid-'60s, Foxx is nothing less than astonishing. He gets the physicality of Charles down to a tee, yet what's more amazing is the way he gets his *spirit*

; Foxx lets you see that Charles' musical drive was inseparable from his lust for life, and he shows us that whether it was respect or women or drugs, Ray Charles always wanted More – that ache both fueled his music and nearly destroyed him. Though he's surrounded by one of the year's best casts – among them Kerry Washington, Terrence Dashon Howard, Thomas Jefferson Byrd, Curtis Armstrong, and the intoxicating Regina King –

Ray

might as well be a one-man-show; Foxx delivers a startlingly fine performance. (Director Taylor Hackford undercuts his work only once, in a dream sequence in which Charles opens his eyes and can finally see, and for a few brief moments, it's Jamie Foxx, not Ray Charles, onscreen.) The film follows the rags-to-riches format of the biopic a bit too slavishly, and the last couple of reels feel unnecessarily protracted, but Hackford was wise to play with the chronology in interesting ways, and the movie is beautifully-designed – as a biopic,

Ray

is good, but as a performance piece, it's not to be missed.



THE INCREDIBLES

Whenever the phrase “critic proof” is applied to a movie, it always refers to a work that audiences will line up for regardless of quality: a sequel to some generic Hollywood smash-'em-up, or a new Tom Hanks/Meg Ryan collaboration, or some other piece of crap you're better off avoiding. But after seeing *The Incredibles*, I think the phrase must now be amended to include the collective output of Pixar. Seriously, do you need me, or any critic, to tell you that the studio's latest movie is more than just gorgeously animated – it's

uniquely

animated? (

The Incredibles

, which is set in the '60s, employs a hilariously “mod” send-up of the Rat Pack style.) Do you need to be told that, as in all of Pixar's feature-length outings, the film's mixture of verbal and visual wit is fiercely clever and bracingly smart? Do you need to know that the vocal contributions of the cast – including Craig T. Nelson, Holly Hunter, Samuel L. Jackson, and numerous Pixar regulars – serve the material brilliantly without (take note, Dreamworks) overpowering it? Do you need to know that

The Incredibles

is laugh-out-loud funny

and

moving enough to make you shed a tear or two? Of course not. Chances are, you've already seen it. As well you should have.

The Incredibles

is critic-proof in the best way imaginable.