

# Movies

Kiefer Sutherland cooks up business for his band.



## A DOC THAT ROCKS

Kiefer Sutherland plays roadie for Rocco DeLuca and the Burden in *I Trust You to Kill Me* ★★★

If you think Kiefer Sutherland busts his hump trying to save the world from terrorists on 24 – after five pulse-pounding seasons, he and the show finally won well-deserved Emmys last month – wait till you see him try to sell the world on Rocco DeLuca and the Burden, a new band he's hot on, in *I Trust You to Kill Me*, a documentary that is also the title of the group's first CD.

Are you smelling a hustle here? I thought so at first, since the band is signed to Ironworks Music, the indie label run by Sutherland and his friend, musician-producer Jude Cole. But Manu Boyer's film is hunting bigger game. The band, with DeLuca on guitar and vocals, Dave Beste on bass, Ryan Caman on drums and Greg Velasquez on percussion, is front and center. The echoes of Neil Young, Robert Plant, Jeff Buckley and Pearl Jam blend into something unique, especially when performed live. Using the Dobro steel guitar to cut deep on tracks such as "Soul," "Dope" and the title song, the group packs the heat and rocks aggression to work its way into your head and stay there.

What gives this spellbinder a similar raw power is the way Boyer reveals the parallels between DeLuca and Sutherland. Both are sons of big guns – Kiefer's father is actor Donald Sutherland, Rocco's dad was Bo Diddley's touring guitarist – who were rarely home. Both are guitar freaks. Both are given to mood swings. At first, it's funny watching Sutherland play road manager as the band tours small clubs in London, Dublin, Berlin and Reykjavik, Iceland. He lacks the discipline for the job, at one point taking out his anger by dive-bombing a hotel Christmas tree. Where he excels is in the sell. He'll do interviews, pose for photos, even hawk tickets on the streets to put the band in people's faces.

At its core, *I Trust You to Kill Me* is an agonizing look at the exhilaration of making good music and the killing frustration of finding and not finding audiences who will hear it, get it and take it to heart. DeLuca sings, "I want your soul/Give it to me now" in a voice that's meant to bruise. That it does. Ditto the movie.

## MEMO TO THE ACADEMY



Catherine O'Hara goes for the gold.

**Off your asses, Academy voters.** An Oscar nomination is in order for Catherine O'Hara, who gives a career-best performance in Christopher Guest's *For Your Consideration*. I know the movie doesn't open until November, but I've seen a rough cut, and without giving too much away about this potentially funny poison-pen letter to Hollywood, I am here to tell you that O'Hara is dynamite. She plays Marilyn Hack, a B-level actress who finds her life changed by the Oscar buzz around her performance as a dying Jewish mother from the Deep South in *Home for Purim*. The hype really screws with Marilyn's head. But trust me, O'Hara can handle it. Which leads me to another point: Stop taking O'Hara for granted. Since her days on *SCTV*, in films from *Beetlejuice* to *Home Alone*, and her classic trio for *Guest* (*Waiting for Guffman*, *Best in Show*, *A Mighty Wind*), O'Hara has set a gold standard for comic acting that is as humane as it is hilarious. And what do we hear from Oscar? Nothing. Not even a nomination. Get busy.

## The Amateurs

★★★

Jeff Bridges, Ted Danson

Written and directed by Michael Traeger  
Small-town guys make a porno

IT WOULD BE EASY AS HELL TO TELL you what a comic shambles *The Amateurs* is, but I had too good a time to let it bother me. Writer-director Michael Traeger sets his freaky fable in Butterface Fields, a small American town (pop. 3,149) that could pass for Mayberry if the menfolk there decided to pass the time by making a porn flick. For Andy Sargentee (Jeff Bridges), who has lost a series of jobs and his wife (Jeanne Tripplehorn), amateur porn is a growth industry and a chance to pursue a better destiny.

Before you can say, "What the fuck," Andy has recruited his pal Some (Joe Pantoliano, in sweet mode) as the writer-director. Some, short for Some Idiot, has taken film courses at a junior college. Emmett (Patrick Fugit), the kid from the video store, will do the camerawork. Barney (Tim Blake Nelson) will handle press. Moose (Ted Danson), who denies he's gay, offers to provide stud service. And Otis (William Fichtner), who calls Moose what he is ("assmaster"), just wants to hang out and escort the "porno peach-erinos" to their next hump. He is named executive producer.

You'll notice that the actors are way overqualified for this nonsense. But the kick they get out of one another is what pulls you in. Traeger's script does more than strain credibility, it administers multiple fractures. Still, it's hard not to laugh when the boys decide their film needs "carpet munching, black men with elephant dicks and a half-dozen guys unloading on a gal until she looks like a melted candle." You won't be surprised to learn that they fall far short of their goals.

Though *The Amateurs* talks a kinky game about "the big porno weenie," it's no more shocking than *The Full Monty* or other pop entertainments your Aunt Bee can see



Danson, Bridges, Nelson and Pantoliano (from left) vote for porn.



Bernal takes a hands-on approach to love.

without a blindfold. As Andy re-arranges his film into something to make the town and his son (Alex D. Linz) proud, visions of a spin on *It's a Wonderful Life* with babes who, in the words of *Some Idiot*, "get boned and give head," go out the window. You may expect group sex, but what you get is a group hug.

## The Science of Sleep

★★★  
Gael García Bernal, Charlotte Gainsbourg

Written and directed by Michel Gondry  
Romance enhanced by Gondry's ravishing visual imagination

FRANCE'S MICHEL GONDRY – BEST known for directing music videos for Björk and Beck, commercials for Smirnoff and the Gap, and movies for audiences willing to take the meandering (*Human Nature*) along with the mesmerizing (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, *Dave Chappelle's Block Party*) – doesn't see the world the way the rest of us do. This is all to the good, especially in the wildly inventive *Science of Sleep*, which takes place mostly among the cascading dreams in Gondry's head. Using the ardent and appealing Mexican actor Gael García Bernal (*Y Tu Mamá También*, *The Motorcycle Diaries*) as his stand-in, Gondry visits the real

world only as a takeoff point. Bernal plays Stéphane, a shy artist who returns to Paris to live with his mother (Miou-Miou) after his father's death. Mom gets him a dull job setting type, which only inspires him to greater flights of romantic fancy, involving a neighbor named Stephanie (Charlotte Gainsbourg) and a series of fantastical visions that jump off the screen as they obliterate all traces of the mundane. Fusing animation and live action with a series of outrageous props, Gondry veers dangerously close to being precious. But make no mistake: Gondry's hallucinatory brilliance holds you in thrall.

## Sherrybaby

★★★  
Maggie Gyllenhaal

Written and directed by Laurie Collyer  
Movie, no – Maggie, yes, yes, yes

"SHERRYBABY" IS THE KIND OF PRETEND-arty Sundance thing that gives indie cinema a bad name. Sherry Swanson, played by Maggie Gyllenhaal, is an ex-junkie just out of jail on a robbery rap. Wired on nervous energy, she looks primed to explode. No matter how much grit writer-director Laurie Collyer sprinkles on the surface, the innards of this baby are pure formula. Have three years in lockup prepped Sherry to re-enter society and reclaim her baby girl (Ryan Simpkins) from her brother (Brad William Henke) and his Sherry-hating wife (Bridget Barkan)? Or do her hooker wardrobe, jones for a drink and willingness to suck her parole officer's dick for the right job suggest that reform is a long way off?

If you don't see where the story is heading, this must be your first movie. If so, you will at least have the pleasure of seeing the gifted Gyllenhaal, a powerhouse actress who almost lifts *Sherrybaby* out of the valley of clichés where it makes its home. Even in the synthetic bubble of a movie that traps her, Gyllenhaal is the real, riveting deal.

LOREY SEBASTIAN/COURTESY OF BAUER MARTINEZ ENTERTAINMENT; "THE AMATEURS"; ETEANNE GEORGE; "THE SCIENCE OF SLEEP"; SUZANNE TENNER/SHANGHAI ENTERTAINMENT; "FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION"