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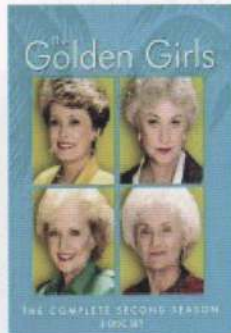
+ FALL TV PREVIEW • Missy Elliott • Yukon, You Can • Shani Mootoo
Elizabeth Birch • 'Happy Endings' • Sinéad and Meshell Hook Up

GIRL GUIDE

FILM AND DVD

DVD

THE GOLDEN GIRLS Season Two (Buena Vista, \$37.49)



Remember this eighties sitcom about four elderly roomies? Every week unrolled a new combination of eighty-something Sophia's wise-cracks, Blanche's proud declarations of sluttiness, and

bird-brained Rose's long-winded-but-hilarious stories about cow-milking or Scandinavians or some other malapropism. Plus, there's no denying that Bea Arthur's sarcastic, deep-voiced Dorothy always did read as quite queer despite the ex-husband with the toupee who showed up from time to time. This second season includes one oldie-but-goodie episode that belongs in the lesbo TV history books; the storyline centers on a lesbian character, Jean, Dorothy's "old college pal," who falls in love with the naïve Rose. Surprisingly, this primetime, post-Reagan era show untangled this particular predicament and, more generally, portrayed lesbianism with dignity, complexity, and humor long before the Queer TV Revolution. A- —Candace Moore

A DIRTY SHAME John Waters (New Line \$27.95)

What's really the dirty shame is that this latest John Waters flick, which harkens back to the potty-mouthed, vomit-coated glee of his campiest classics (*Desperate Living*, *Pink Flamingos*) didn't get more attention when it first came out. This NC-17 sexploitation film lacks *Pecker's* sweetness, but it's pure, undiluted Waters. As Baltimore-suburb



Hartford is beset by nymphos of various perversions (dirt-worshippers, adult babies, etc.), prudish grocery store employee Sylvia Stickles (Tracey Ullman) suffers a head injury and wakes up eager to join their fold. Sylvia latches onto Ray-Ray (Johnny Knoxville), a sexual healer/auto mechanic. Her daughter, Caprice, an exhibitionist with enormous breasts (Selma Blair), is already an apostle in Ray-Ray's horny band of followers. In the DVD's bonus featurette, Waters aptly dubs his latest effort a "Three Stooges Sex Education Movie." B —Candace Moore

THE PRETENDERS GREATEST HITS (Warner Brothers, \$15.99)



As an unabashed admirer of the male musical rebel, singer and guitarist Chrissie Hynde formed The Pretenders in the mid-seventies and—as we all know—became one of the coolest gender-bending ladies in rock history. Most of the twenty-one videos collected here, along with the DVD's stellar forty-five minute bonus feature, the documentary "No Stone Left Unturned," testify to this. They feature Hynde in all of her glorious sexual ambiguity: donning tight men's clothes, swaggering, cursing, and kicking ass (while also shaking it) on rhythm guitar. Some of the narrative videos are, unfortunately, guilty of nearly unbearable cheesiness ("Brass in Pocket," "Sense of Purpose"), but, fortunately, the

captivating performance videos outnumber them and make for a wonderful visual record of the band's strengths and style. A- —Alison Hoffman

FILM

Gay as in 'Happy'

This ensemble sports queers in spades.

by Candace Moore



Happy Endings' suspected sperm-stealers

HAPPY ENDINGS Dir. Don Roos (Lions Gate, 128 mins.)

The title of Don Roos's latest release refers to the loose knot that ties together the movie's three main stories. It's also a wink at the name for an orgasmic finish to a good massage. But it's not the intent of Roos (*The Opposite of Sex*, *Bounce*) to soothe and release; on the contrary, his hand-held cameras and *Capturing the Friedmans*-style framing are focused on baring the awkward, thorny, and bitter details of his characters' lives.

Each of the protagonists is, as one character understates it, a "little fucked up." Their disorder of choice is compulsive lying, and with such a weave of con artists, one begins to wonder who's really duping whom here. In the end, it turns

out everyone's performing the *worst* cons on themselves.

There's Mamie (Lisa Kudrow), who's helping her young blackmailer Nicky (Jesse Bradford, who's often in his underwear) make an AFI-worthy documentary about her Mexican immigrant boyfriend's sex work in exchange for information on the son she gave up for adoption as a teen. There's Jude (Maggie Gyllenhaal), the sultry sprite who deflowers virginal gay boy Otis (Jason Ritter), a twenty-something drummer who's not out to his loaded dad Frank (Tom Arnold). Otis's brief roll in the sheets with Jude gives Otis enough straight cred with Pops to earn him a Lexus.

Arnold shines as a cuddly, goofy, if initially slightly-homophobic guy, who makes breakfast for his lady friend and showers her with gifts, purposefully ignoring the gold-digging obvious.

Happy Endings also features gay

male couple Charley and Gil (Steve Coogan and David Sutcliffe) and their lesbian best friends Pam and Diane (Laura Dern and Sarah Clarke). When Charley begins to suspect that Pam and Diane's toddler may have come from Gil's sperm (which the girls froze, but claimed couldn't swim), he concocts a fib he hopes will get them to admit their son's true parentage: he tells Pam that Gil has a highly-debilitating hereditary disease. Lawsuits and dirty laundry ensue. Pam and Diane, in their conservative-casual outfits and sunglasses identically perched on top both of their heads, may unsettlingly remind audiences of *Queer as Folk*'s domesticated dykes. But Laura Dern still deserves our hearts.

Roos, who is openly gay, includes a whopping *five* homos in his film, which has the production values, complexity, and celebrity-power to be a hit. But *Happy Endings*' plethora of fully-developed queer characters (flaws and all)

might have contributed to this script's initial difficulty getting funded, even in seemingly gay-happy Hollywood. At Sundance, where the film premiered in the prestigious opening night slot, Roos explained that "there's gay stuff in it and that never is [the big studios'] favorite thing, unless it's a gay best friend who comes in and is witty and is quickly set to the side ... [Also, *Happy Endings*] is not a very high concept movie."

Granted, *Happy Endings* has more of a Robert Altmanesque (circa *Short Cuts*) feel; it's character-driven to the extreme, and allows for exquisite performances by all of the actors involved. Added bonus: Gyllenhaal's bluesy renderings (she does her own vocals) are absolutely haunting. You've already downloaded images from *Secretary* to drool over? Next you'll want to fill up your iPod with Maggie's slow, deliriously clumsy, sex-imbued, punk rock contributions to the soundtrack. A- **gf**

Filthy Pretty Thing

In a wicked new satire, a girl will do anything for fame.

PRETTY PERSUASION

Dir. Marcos Siega

(Samuel Goldwyn Films, 104 min.)

Imagine one of the least PC films ever produced; picture racist and homophobic bestiality jokes, and fifteen-year-old girls who vomit after consuming Twinkies, cigars, and pornos featuring double penetration. Now you've got part of director Marcos Siega's warped vision. Amazingly, Siega's film is so snarky and the performances are so spot-on, you'll *have to* admit you enjoy his twisted humor.

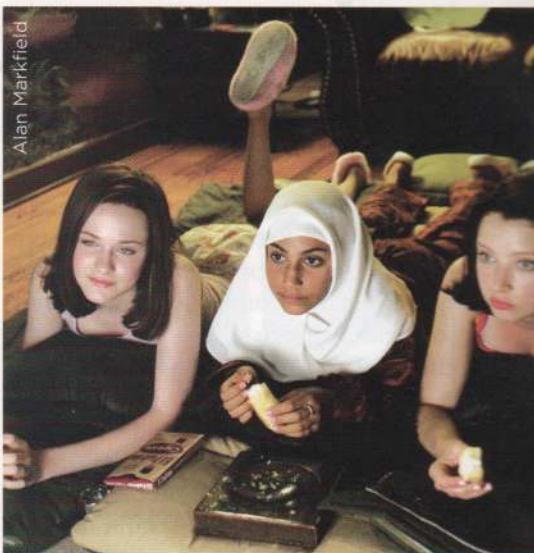
The tart at the center of *Pretty Persuasion*'s is played by an under-twenty actress who will no doubt give Meryl Streep a run for her Oscar money one day: the diabolically-subtle, Zen-master-controlled Evan Rachel Wood. In a role funnier and just as edgy as her manic-

depressive, adolescent druggie in Catherine Hardwicke's *thirteen*, Wood plays Kimberly Joyce, a Beverly Hills brat who aspires to be a Hollywood star at anyone's expense. Although Kimberly's razor-sharp noggin nearly breaks IQ tests, she'd rather be known for her slim bod.

Kimberly soon masterminds a string of molestation accusations against her thirty-something drama and English teacher, Mr. Anderson (Ron Livingston), and spins the ensuing sexual abuse trial into a media PR blitz for her face. Meanwhile, she beds any necessary peripheral characters, including bouncy femme news reporter, Emily Klein (*Ally McBeal*'s Jane Krakowski). Kimberly comes up for air after performing oral sex on a blissed-out Emily, who exclaims, "betcha never seen one of those before!" "I have one, silly," Kimberly purrs assuredly. "It's cute."

Screenwriter Skander Halim says he wrote this surly black comedy—which out-sneers *Heathers* and would make Lenny Bruce blush—knowing it was The-Script-That-Could-Never-Get-Made. This film only gets in poorer taste

as the plot progresses, yet methinks there is a bigger cause, a thinly veiled point, which perhaps has something to do with



Evan Rachel Wood, Adi Schnall, and Elisabeth Harries in *Pretty Persuasion*.

the words scrawled on Mr. Anderson's chalkboard—"The Use of Irony." Frankly, this is a sparkler. A

—Candace Moore

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INSIDE GIRLFRIENDS



Dallas voters were friendly to Sheriff Lupe Valdez (left), whom I met at the NCLR gala.

In light of the political backlash so prevalent since last November, it was especially gratifying to focus this issue on corporate America, where instead of an icy shoulder, lesbians are receiving more and more a hearty handclasp. As this year's "Seven Lesbian-Friendliest Employers" shows, the White House may be hell-bent on keeping us out of the mainstream, but America's office parks are welcoming us—if not actively recruiting us—by offering protection against discrimination, health insurance for our loved ones, even (as in the case of number-four-ranked Lucent) "Trans 101" seminars to our coworkers.

Working with the PR and HR departments of our winning companies in this year's story was a treat. Many of them await our annual ranking with anticipation and use our awards in their recruitment materials. Kudos to assistant editor Stefani Barber and copy chief Laurie Koh for their hard work on this story, and congrats to American Express for coming out on top.

Of course, to enjoy this unusual feeling of being *wanted* by the powers that be, one has to get that job in the first place. So this issue is packed with helpful stories aimed at enhancing your hire-ability (see "How to Ace an Interview," page 23), and, once you've joined the queer-friendly ranks of the employed, how to enjoy your hours from nine to five (see "The Brown Bagging It" on page 20 or "Dress for Less Stress," 36).

My vote for "employee of the month" goes to Lupe Valdez, with whom I was photographed at this year's National Center for Lesbian Rights' gala. Valdez grew up in the south picking cotton by the side of her migrant farmworker parents; once she was old enough, she decided she needed more money and clout, so she went into law enforcement. Now she's the first Democrat in twenty years to hold the elected position of sheriff in Dallas, Texas—not to mention being the first female and first openly gay sheriff there, ever. Work it, girl.

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