

more than enough plasma to meet the need but nobody realized the Kaiser was going to attack France, and since then we have had a critical shortage at the old blood bank. In fact, at least three times in the 1980s there were rumors that the blood bank was going to fail and investors mobbed it wanting to get their blood back.

THE MT VOID

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I dunno. I used to really believe in giving blood. I kind of like anything that will make me a pound lighter in half an hour. But they give you these stickers to wear on your shirt that say, "Be nice to me, I gave blood today." And you know they never work. I got one once, got back to my desk, and discovered they were taking away my corporate AmEx card to save a dollar or so a year. I am having my own damn stickers printed that say, "I gave blood today. If you didn't, I get to spit on you." I think that would be more effective anyway.

Mark Leeper
MT 3D-441 908-957-5619
...mtgzy!leeper

What is objectionable, what is dangerous about extremists is not that they are extreme, but that they are intolerant. The evil is not what they say about their cause, but what they say about their opponents.
-- Robert F. Kennedy

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS: THE DISCOVERY

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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Capsule review: The Salkinds know exactly how to market a turkey film to get what profit they can from it. What they did not seem to know is that

their C_h_r_i_s_t_o_p_h_e_r_C_o_l_u_m_b_u_s:_T_h_e
D_i_s_c_o_v_e_r_y is not a turkey, but a reasonably intelligent and enjoyable historical film. It is not a great film but a pleasant surprise. Rating: high +1 (-4 to +4).

One never quite knows what to expect from the Salkind brothers.

Early films one associates with the Salkind name include a ponderous

adaptation of Kafka's T_r_i_a_l and a not very engaging adventure, T_h_e

L_i_g_h_t_a_t_t_h_e_E_n_d_o_f_t_h_e_W_o_r_l_d. The brothers hit pay dirt and made a

name for themselves with a terrific double film adaptation of T_h_e

_ T_ h_ r_ e_ e_ M_ u_ s_ k_ e_ t_ e_ e_ r_ s_ _ S_ u_ p_ e_ r_ m_ a_ n was extremely uneven in style and quality, but it had its moments and was an audience pleaser. Its sequels and spin-offs went rapidly downhill and their image became one of flesh without substance. Their announcement of a film about Santa Claus more than enhanced that opinion. Substance and Santa Claus just do not go together. And then they announced _ C_ h_ r_ i_ s_ t_ o_ p_ h_ e_ r_ _ C_ o_ l_ u_ m_ b_ u_ s and it sounded only marginally better. A film about Captain Cook might be interesting. the Burton and Speke expedition had real dramatic possibilities and the film Bob Rafelson made did realize some of them. But Columbus seems like an elementary school hero and too corny to make into a real hero. This was a film that everybody knew would not be good and then on top of that there were no screenings for critics. This is a sure sign that the Salkinds expected a poor reception from the critics. They were wrong. This is certainly the best film the Salkinds have done since _ T_ h_ e_ T_ h_ r_ e_ e_ _ M_ u_ s_ k_ e_ t_ e_ e_ r_ s and, while flawed, is getting a generally positive critical reception.

While the film rarely rises to the point of excitement (odd, because it is directed by James Bond director John Glen), the film does offer historical spectacle and some adventure. In the late 1480's Colon (yes, they get his name right in the film even if not in the title) is trying to convince the Portuguese court that the great Ocean Sea can be crossed by a mariner, particularly one who knows a secret. The Portuguese have sent explorers who do not know Colon's "secret" and they returned in failure. The theme of the secret is very nicely handled, incidentally. It is a little hard for the audience to realize for itself what Colon's secret could be. When the secret is actually revealed, it turns out to be something non-obvious, something that perhaps a few mariners of Colon's day might have known, and something that certainly could have made the difference between success and failure. Of course, Colon (played by

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George Corraface of _ T_ h_ e_ M_ a_ h_ a_ b_ a_ r_ a_ t_ a) goes to Spain and in spite of his original inclinations asks a laid-back Ferdinand (played by Tom Selleck in a bizarre piece of casting) and pretty perky Isabella (played by Rachel Ward), looking a decade or two under her 41 years. (Is this really the same woman who refused to change her petticoat until her husband drove the Moors from Spain?)

While much of the story is familiar there is a fascination in seeing Spain in its most momentous--albeit regrettable--year. There is some reference made to the expulsion of Jews, including a moving scene of Jews leaving Spain at the same time Colon is, though there is little reference to how much of Colon's crew was Jewish or to the belief at the Spanish court that Colon was himself a Jew. Colon is called before Torquemada (played by Marlon Brando in this film) not on a question of his religion, but rather Colon's contradiction of the teachings of St. Augustine, who said there are no lands before the great Ocean Sea and for whom a city was named in Florida. Colon proves himself to be a man who knows his audience and what sort of argument will work. When he argues his case to the Church he uses scripture; when arguing to tough businessmen he uses clever analogies and the visual aid of a watermelon and a sharp blade.

Eventually Colon does get to sea in what by rights should have been the most exciting chapter but which is, in fact, the least original segment. Ships at sea looking for land, having to avoid sabotage, mutiny, trying to find wind--all are fairly familiar plot elements of sea films. There is even a sequence involving a bet that seems very unlikely to have had any basis in fact. Eventually landfall is made--I hope this is not a spoiler. Then comes a most interesting dilemma in filmmaking: should the film portray Colon as a hero or be politically correct and make him a tyrant? The solution is to make Colon a man of his time--a time that called for gold, glory, gospel, and slaves as the indicators of success. Colon's ambitions are those of a man from the 15th instead of the 20th Century.

This is a film of great earnestness with humor only in its ironies, including a very interesting comment by Torquemada toward the end of the film. It does generate interest in a very daring expedition that most of us take for granted. In spite of some distortion of history, it does give the viewer some unconventional insights into the great historical event. Not great but easily a high +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

HONEYMOON IN VEGAS
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: The writer of TheInLaws and TheFreshman tells the story of a love triangle of a neurotic New York private detective trying to marry his girlfriend while a big-time gambler tries to win her away. Much of the story takes place in a Las Vegas infested with Elvis lookalikes. Lots of little pieces that only sometimes hang together well.
Rating: +1 (-4 to +4).

Andrew Bergman has been around making comedies for a long time, but in HoneymooninVegas he seems more like a new and talented amateur than a seasoned professional. Bergman wrote and directed SoFine and TheFreshman, both of which jabbed at bad taste in American popular culture. With HoneymooninVegas he has stopped his little jabs and pulled out a meat slicer to go after the cult of Elvis worshippers. Not that his basic plot has anything at all to do with Elvis: he uses Elvis just to create a comic background for his real story.

Jack Singer (played by likably goofy Nicholas Cage) has been a diffident lover to Betsy (played by Sarah Jessica Parker) due to a deathbed promise to his mother (played by Anne Bancroft in cameo) that he would never marry. Finally Betsy overcomes the promise and the two head for Las Vegas for a quick marriage. That is where Betsy is seen by tough gambler Tommy Korman (played by James Caan). Betsy has a very strong resemblance to the wife Korman lost to skin cancer, and Korman decides to snare Betsy for himself. He lures Jack into a high-stakes poker game, takes him to the tune of \$65,000, and then makes a deal with Jack: Jack's debt will be forgiven if Betsy will be Korman's platonic companion for the weekend. Korman wants to use charm and his rather comfortable lifestyle to win Betsy. Meanwhile, Jack is becoming increasingly frantic to break up the pair as Korman spirits Betsy off to Maui.

What does all this have to do with Elvis? Nothing really. But the background of the story is a Las Vegas having a convention of Elvis impersonators. Bergman constantly comments on the story with carefully chosen Elvis songs and shows us an army of gaudy Elvis lookalikes, Elvises of many races and sizes. The film is just two

Elvises short of pushing the gag too far.

The usually reserved James Caan and the never reserved Nicholas Cage each seem to have a field day chewing up the scenery. It is very rare to see Caan putting this much expression in a role and clearly enjoying himself. Smaller roles go to the always enjoyable

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Pat Morita and Peter Boyle as an unnatural naturalized Hawaiian.

The photography is surprisingly spotty. At least two scenes appeared totally washed out in the print we saw. Some scenes of natural beauty in Maui and natural beauty (?) in Vegas owe more to William Fraker's camerawork. The cartoon credits were amusing and usually made sense. Overall this is an amiable but unexceptional comedy. I rate it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

