

Senator Obama Goes To Africa

First Run Features

Barack Obama was born in Hawaii to Ann Dunham of Wichita, Kansas, and Barack Obama, Sr., a college student from Kenya. When Junior was only two years old, his parents separated, and his dad returned to Africa where he subsequently remarried and had more kids. Consequently, Barack grew up having only sketchy knowledge about his father's side of his family.

This endearing documentary chronicles Obama's overdue journey in 2006 to his African roots as a US Senator. Accompanied by his wife, Michelle, this emotional bio-pic takes the man who would be President all across the continent, including memorable visits to the infamous prison on South Africa's Robben Island where Nelson Mandela was jailed for 21 years, and to a Darfur refugee camp in Chad.

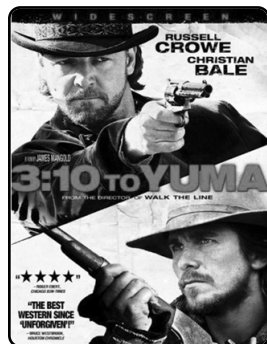
But the film is most moving during Obama's triumphant return to Kisumu, Kenya, the land of his father. There, he is welcomed with open arms by his half-sister Auma, and the rest of his extended family of relatives. En route, we see streets lined with thousands of well-wishers hoping to catch a glimpse of America's rising political rock star.

Part personal odyssey, part diplomatic mission, the picture reveals a sensitive side of the Illinois Senator while simultaneously establishing him as an international figure sincerely concerned about the host of woes presently plaguing the continent: AIDS, drought, poverty and so forth. Narrated by Barack himself, this flick couldn't have benefited from a more timely release on DVD, given his recent success on the primary campaign trail, the ongoing genocide in Darfur and the specter of ethnic cleansing in Kenya in the wake of that country's recent election irregularities.

A promising presidential candidate whose stock seemed predestined to rise, judging from the perspective of this impassioned production.

Excellent.

DVD Extras: A visit to the Masai Mara Game Preserve with the Obama family, an African Journey



in Pictures, biographies and other resources.

—by Kam Williams

3:10 To Yuma

Lions Gate

Dan Evans (Christian Bale) is a down-and-out rancher struggling to save his cattle during a drought. After losing a leg in the Civil War, the proud veteran had moved to Arizona with his family, expecting to be able to settle there in peace. But with his property standing in the path of a proposed railroad, he now finds himself facing the prospect of foreclosure.

With his failings as a provider taking a toll on his personal life, Dan is also close to losing both his wife's (Gretchen Mol) affection and the respect of his 14-year-old son (Logan Lerman). As luck would have it, an opportunity for both redemption and cash conveniently arrives when ruthless Ben Wade (Russell Crowe), the most wanted man in the West, is collared and needs to be transported across the desert.

The infamous outlaw heads the murderous gang behind a string of stagecoach robberies around the region. Wade's confederates are still at-large and lying in wait, so bringing him to justice will be no easy matter. Nonetheless, Dan jumps at the chance to earn \$200 as a member of the hastily deputized posse being led by a bounty hunter (Peter Fonda).

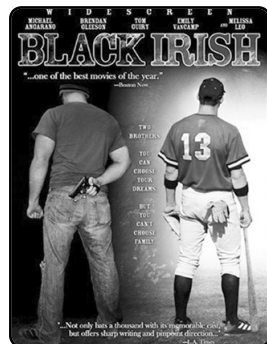
What could be better than a character-driven Western in which Christian Bale and Russell Crowe spend more time matching wits and swapping philosophies than firing pistols or punching each other? This is precisely what we have in this relatively cerebral remake of the 1957 classic starring Glenn Ford.

Though this intriguing psychological drama does unfold against the genre's familiar staples such as sweeping big sky panoramas, 10-gallon hats, a honky-tonk saloon and bloodthirsty Injuns, it has much more to offer than your typical Western.

A complicated cowboy flick where you don't know whether to root for the guys in the white or the black hats.

Very good.

DVD Extras: Deleted scenes, director's commentary, a



documentary entitled "Destination Yuma," plus two featurettes.

—by Kam Williams

Black Irish

Echo Bridge

Sixteen-year-old Cole McKay (Michael Angarano) is a kid with a lot of promise. Not only is he an academic standout at his Catholic prep school in Boston, but he's also planning for the priesthood. Plus, he's a star pitcher on the baseball team headed for the state championships.

But all of the above is about to be derailed due to the deteriorating state of the dysfunctional family he was born into, for his folks are Black Irish, the designation commonly applied to those of his lineage with lower-class roots and generally associated with drinking, fighting and underachieving.

Cole's siblings could easily serve as the poster children for white trash, given that his teenage sister, Kathleen (Emily VanCamp) is knocked-up and clueless, while his big brother, Terry (Tom Guiry) is a ne'er-do-well with a drug habit and a rap sheet yay-long.

And Cole's parents aren't any better. His sickly father, Desmond (Brendan Gleeson), is an emotionally unavailable alcoholic stuck in a loveless marriage to his disciplinarian mother (Melissa Leo), pressuring Kathleen to disappear to a convent before she shows so as not to bring any further dishonor upon the McKay name.

Sadistic Terry is the type of sibling who beats up his little brother in public for borrowing a pair of pants without asking. In fact, he's not above making Cole take them off on the spot. Talk about embarrassing the family!

Such cringe-inducing antics are par for the course during *Black Irish*, a drismal drama rather reminiscent of *Angela's Ashes*, especially in terms of maintaining a relentlessly pessimistic and morose tone. The big difference is that this story stays put compared to that grand saga which ventured across the ocean to the Emerald Isle. And, more importantly, this relatively optimistic coming-of-age tale does ultimately offer a glimmer of hope.

Good.

DVD Extras: "Behind the



Scenes" featurette.

—by Kam Williams

September Dawn

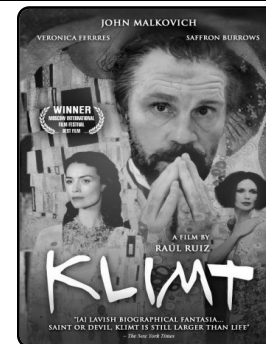
Sony

On September 11, 1857, a wagon train led by Captain Alexander Fancher (Shaun Johnston) was headed for gold-rich California when it was ambushed by Mormons as it was passing through Utah. One hundred and twenty men, women and children perished in the little-known incident slaughter now referred to as the Mountain Meadows Massacre. The faith-based slaughter was reportedly ordered by the territory's Governor, Brigham Young (Terrence Stamp), who had declared martial law after hearing rumors that President Buchanan might be sending the US Cavalry to depose him.

Fearing that the strangers might get some fancy ideas about settling there permanently, Young dispatched Deacon John D. Lee (Jon Gries) to discourage Fancher from stopping. When the weary wayfarers asked only for enough time to rest and recharge their batteries, Bishop Jacob Samuelson (Jon Voight) intervened on their behalf and they were initially granted permission to remain in the valley for a fortnight.

During this interlude, Samuelson's son, Jonathan (Trent Ford), locked eyes with Emily (Tamara Hope), the cutest female among the newcomers, and the two fell madly in love. This development didn't sit well with Jonathan's dad, especially when he got his marching orders from above to slay all the strangers as revenge for the Mormon lives lost back in Missouri.

Released on DVD at probably the worst time for presidential candidate Mitt Romney, *September Dawn* is a graphic Western which sheds light on a shameful stain on the legacy of the controversial sect that later became the Church of Latter Day Saints. Luckily, Mitt can breathe a sigh of relief, since the low budget film is marked by such dubious dialogue, shoddy special f/x and sloppy editing that it doesn't even measure up, cinematically, to an episode of your typical, cowboy tv show from the '50s, like "The Lone Ranger." Get my drift,



Kimosabe?

Fair.

DVD Two featurettes: "True Events: A Historical Perspective" and "Descendants: Remembering the Tragedy."

—by Kam Williams

Klimt/Koch

A fanciful biopic of the later years of Gustav Klimt's life, *Klimt* examines the mindset of the artist around a few specific events in his life, starting with his reception at the 1900 World Exhibition in Paris, and running through until his death, as elegantly framed by his deathbed hysterics in the throes of syphilis and mercury poisoning.

It is more elegant than it reads. Centering mostly on his obsession with a dancer, Lea de Castro (Saffron Burrows), that appears in a short Georges Melies film created in his honor, Klimt (John Malkovich) idolizes her ethic, strangely, but is drawn away from her by those very same forces. In his fascination with her emerges an entirely new perspective on his work, which translates into the new bourgeois fashion of the day, but he is never quite able to reconcile himself with this muse.

Simultaneously, Klimt is dealing with various troubles brought on by his worsening syphilis, including visions which drive him towards seemingly unprovoked desires, and as the film progresses, into the viewer's perspective. Much of the story is driven by a Secretary Of Culture that is a figment of Klimt's imagination—not so much a ghost, but a self-antagonistic device.

Beautifully shot and directed, and with the title role being singularly consumed by Malkovich, *Klimt* is very dense, possibly to a fault. Even upon extraordinarily close viewing, there are strange inconsistencies, time shifts, and many open-ended questions. The murky structure and seemingly circular plot makes for a tenacious viewing, yet for those willing to put the time in, writer/director Raul Ruiz reveals an interesting side one of art nouveau's most enduring icons.

This DVD edition is the director's cut, and special features include a making-of feature as well as the theatrical trailer. Recommended.

—by Patrick Slevin

101 DALMATIANS/Walt Disney

FAMILY GUY:
BLUE HARVEST
SPECIAL EDITION/Fox

THE LOVE BOAT:
SEASON ONE, VOL. 1
Paramount

PERFECT STRANGERS:
THE COMPLETE FIRST
AND SECOND SEASONS
Warner

PERSUASION/
BBC Warner

jan 22nd

ANDREA BOCELLI
VIVERE LIVE IN TUSCANY
Decca

BARNEY MILLER:
THE COMPLETE SECOND
SEASON/Sony

BECOMING JANE
Miramax

GROUNDHOG DAY:
15TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION
Sony

JUSTICE LEAGUE: THE NEW
FRONTIER/Warner

LIVING LANDSCAPES HD
THE WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL
PLACES/HD Environments

STARGATE:
THE ARK OF TRUTH
MGM

jan 29th

BECOMING JANE
Miramax

COACH: THIRD SEASON
Universal

ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE
Universal

THE EQUALIZER:
SEASON ONE
Universal

JUSTICE LEAGUE:
THE NEW FRONTIER/Warner

MONTY PYTHON'S
LIFE OF BRIAN/Sony

WE OWN THE NIGHT
Sony

feb 5th

THE BEATLES: UP CLOSE &
PERSONAL/KOCH Vision

BEST OF COMEDY CENTRAL
PRESENTS/Paramount

DEEP PURPLE:
STORMBRINGERS
KOCH Vision

DRESDEN
KOCH Vision

GANGSTA RAP:
GLOCKUMENTARY
ThinkFilm

JERRY SPRINGER
VOLUMES 1, 2 & 3
Lionshead

THE WHITEST KIDS
U KNOW
Genius Products, Inc.

VAN HALEN: LIVE RARITIES
KOCH Vision