

DVD Select: Costner is chillingly perfect as serial killer 'Mr. Brooks'

by *Robert_J_Hawkins*

"Finding someone you think would be fun to kill is a bit like, well it's a bit like falling in love. You meet a lot of candidates, and you like some of them, and they're nice. But they're not right. And that special one comes along, and your heart beats faster, and you know that's the one."

'MR. BROOKS' - Kevin Costner plays a man who can't control his murderous ego in the thriller 'Mr. Brooks.' CNS Photo courtesy of Ben Glass. DVD RATINGS

4 stars: Don't miss: rent it/buy it

3 stars: Worth the risk: rent it

2 stars: On the tipping point: if nothing else is available

1 star: Don't bother: wait until it's in the \$1 bin You got to really appreciate a guy who puts his everything into his work.

That quote is from Earl Brooks, Portland Chamber of Commerce Man of the Year. Family man. Loving father. Business man. Neighbor. Nice guy.

Did I mention serial killer?

Earl is the title character in the disturbingly satisfying psychological thriller "Mr. Brooks" (MGM, 3 1/2 stars) and when it comes to casting, who ever thought of Kevin Costner was right on. Costner, as an actor, has a limited range in the same way that Gary Cooper and Henry Fonda were limited.

His Mr. Brooks is coldly calculating, frighteningly methodical and unlikely to trip up on his own.

As Earl explains, "I don't do this because I enjoy it. I do this because I'm addicted to it."

Thing is, stone-cold icy-veined Earl has an exuberant side. And his name is Marshall (William Hurt). As Hurt explains Marshall on the DVD, he is "a pure concoction of Brook's psyche." Marshall experiences the elevated endorphin rush, or whatever it is that a serial killer experiences.

Earl would like to quit. He really would. Marshall won't let me, see. And then, along comes the voyeuristic photographer Mr. Smith (Dane Cook) who has captured Earl doing some of his best work and now wants a piece of the exhilaration. Kind of like a ride-along participant on a police night patrol.

There's also Earl's lovely daughter Jane (Danielle Panabaker) who wants to drop out of college for reasons that lend credence to the old adage that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

Compound it with the tenacious investigation by homicide cop Tracy Atwood (Demi Moore) and Earl's tightly trimmed box is starting to separate at the seams.

Such a strange and twisted path that Earl Brooks has walked down. If he'd only taken up fishing when he was younger.

ALSO THIS WEEK

"Nearing Grace" (Vivendi/First Independent, 1 1/2 stars) It is the 1970s and even more depressing, it is New Jersey, and young Henry Nearing (Gregory Smith) is searching for something through the smoky blue haze that surrounds his consciousness. He's pretty sure what he's looking for is secreted on the super-hot bod of bad girl Grace (Jordana Brewster), who dates the top football jock. Just his luck.

"Meet the Robinsons" (Buena Vista, 3 stars) Pre-teen orphan/genius inventor Lewis is tired of being turned down by baby-hunting couples and determined to find his birth mother. So he invents a brain-scan machine that gets him noticed by the evil "Bowler Hat" guy and by Wilbur, a kid from the future, 2037 to be precise. Lewis, Wilbur and Wilbur's family join forces to battle evil. Perfect setup for a fun family 3-D animated feature and a respectable issue from Disney's own legendary animation stable. The DVD contains a feature on inventions, a music video, a game and director's audio commentary.

"Home of the Brave" (MGM, 2 1/2 stars) Samuel Jackson, Jessica Biel and Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson tackle the current war in Iraq as American soldiers surviving a chaotic war and struggling to fit back home. DVD includes commentary from director Irwin Winkler, writer Mark Friedman and producer Rob Cowan; as well as two deleted scenes.

"10 Questions for the Dalai Lama" (Monterey Video, 2 1/2 stars) Filmmaker Rick Ray snagged a one-hour audience with the spiritual head of Tibet the old-fashioned way. He e-mailed his holiness. With several months until the appointed meeting, Ray traveled up and down India and other nations seeking the Dalai's roots and pondering the 10 questions he wants to ask. It is most pleasant and enlightening journey, touching on the ruination of Tibet by China and the child-holy man's rapid ascent to spiritual leader. Last week, the Dalai Lama received the Congressional Gold Medal, much to the chagrin of China's leaders.

"Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?" (Monterey/New York, 2 1/2 stars) Your Zen moment continues: In a remote Korean Buddhist monastery, an elderly monk, a young seeker of enlightenment and an orphan who is to become a monk-in-training begin a lovely journey down the gently meditative the spiritual path.

Cool box of the week: "Warner Home Video Director's Series: Stanley Kubrick" Six of the director's films are found in this 10-disc set, including "2001: A Space Odyssey," "A Clockwork Orange," "Eyes Wide Shut," "The Shining" and "Full Metal Jacket." The set also includes the full-length documentary "A Life in Pictures." Priced under \$80.

And now, your weekly unmitigated moments of horror: more gore, he shouted for "Saw III: Director's Cut"; still more gore, he shouted for "Hostel: Director's Cut"; fresh gore checks into "Hostel Part II"; killeth the raven, evermore in "Kaw"; zombies as domestics and service industry slaves in satiric "Fido"; Tobin Bell jumps from Jigsaw in "Saw" to sadistic ghost tale "Buried Alive."

IT CAME FROM TV

"The Adventures of Young Indiana Jones" (LucasFilm/Paramount) Calling all explorer-adventurers. The first of three sets that will encompass the whole globe-trotting teen-Indy adventure series debuts from the shop of George Lucas. This is a 12-disc set containing seven feature-length episodes as well as 38 companion documentaries which complement the dramatic tales. Volume 2 debuts Dec. 18, followed by the final volume in spring 2008.

That rare event, the multi-part television movie, proved to be the right format for director Mikael ("Band of Brothers") Salomon's epic "The Company," a look at the Cold War-era CIA through the eyes of idealistic Yalie recruit Jack McCauliffe (Chris O'Donnell). Alfred Molina stars as a veteran agent and Jack's mentor and Michael Keaton as counterintelligence chief James Angleton. Based on the novel by Robert Littell. So, good for television ... but consider first the similarly focused but enormously better movie "The Good Shepherd."

Jennifer Beals, Leisha Hailey, Mia Kirshner, Pam Grier and other "lesbians in Los Angeles" are back for season four's 12 episodes of the dramatic series "The L Word" from Showtime and Paramount.

Stanley "Tookie" Williams founded the Crips gang, "Freeway" Ricky Ross was the crack king of Los Angeles, the Chambers Brothers employed 400 in their drug business - these and other true stories make up the first season of "American Gangster" from BET and Paramount.

Yale grad Tod Stiles (Martin Milner) and street-tough Buz Murdock (George Maharis) tooled up and down fabled Route 66 in a 1960 sky-blue Corvette, righting wrongs and scraping to get by. That was the TV show "Route 66" and it put many a kid on the highways and byways, discovering life, love and America on the open road. The first 15 hour-long episodes from 1960 are available on DVD for the first time from Roxbury Entertainment and Infinity Entertainment.

The third and final season of the critically adored "Veronica Mars" (if only TV viewers felt the same way); the second half of season six of "The Sopranos" also know as the last nine episodes; the uncensored season three "Mind of Mencia," seventh season of the spooky tales of "Tales from the Crypt."

FROM THE VAULTS

It is Malcolm McDowell's week, as Warner Brothers debuts the surreal 1973 musical "O Lucky Man!" in which McDowell is a coffee salesman headed down the road to wealth and status - almost - and the classic future-shocker from Stanley Kubrick "A Clockwork Orange" (1971) in which McDowell is the bowler-hatted hooligan Alex.

"Burt Lancaster Signature Series" (Warner, 1950-70) Five films form the aloof Hollywood tough guy: "The Flame and Arrow" "His Majesty O'Keefe," "South Sea Woman," "Jim Thorpe - All American" and "Executive Action."

"I Am Cuba" (New Yorker Video, 1964) From Russian director Mikhail Kalatozov four beautiful vignettes from pre-Castro Cuba that all point toward the inevitability of revolution during the corruption-thick Batista reign. The three-DVD set's extras include an interview with Martin Scorsese, a 2005 documentary "The Siberian Mammoth" on the making of the film, an interview with original script writer Yevgeni Yevtushenko and a new documentary about the filmmaker Kalatozov.

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