

ENTERTAINMENT

Mrs. Doubtfire

Directed by Chris Columbus
Starring: Robin Williams, Sally Field, and Pierce Brosnan

BY SEAN MCQUAID

CROSS-DRESSING COMIC CONQUERS box office; it sounds like a tabloid headline, but truth is often stranger than fiction-- and Robin Williams has indeed scored a huge success with *Mrs. Doubtfire*, wherein he plays a zany actor (not much of a stretch) named Daniel Hillard who is divorced and kicked out by his uptight wife, Miranda (played by Sally Field). He loses custody of his kids, with whom he has such a mutually loving relationship that they make the Brady Bunch look dysfunctional. Desperate, out-of-work, and denied access to his kids by his bitter ex-spouse, Williams concocts a bizarre scheme to visit his kids by disguising himself as an elderly woman and seeking employment as his wife's housekeeper under the name of "Mrs. Doubtfire".

It's non-stop hilarity from there on in, as the kids bond with their "new" babysitter and Miranda grows to like her new employee much better than she ever liked her husband. Daniel struggles to contain himself for the sake of continued access to his kids, though his efforts are complicated by the scrutiny of his unsympathetic supervisor (played with admirable deadpan by Anne Haney), who is appointed by the court to monitor his financial and personal progress before considering what visitation or custodial rights he may be granted in the future. Another fly in the ointment is Miranda's new suitor: Stu (played with his usual smoothness by Pierce Brosnan), a wealthy, handsome charmer who sets his sights on Amanda and won't take no for an answer.

To put it simply, this is an incredibly funny film. As either Daniel or Doubtfire, Williams displays a remarkable comic spontaneity, with bits ranging from jokes, to physical comedy, to vocal tricks and musical outbursts. He's a nonstop whirlwind of comic energy. Even more impressively, he's not just a comedian; as Daniel, Williams again proves his versatility and power as an actor, going from adolescent hi-jinks to pained vulnerability in the wink of an eye, as happens in the various moments where he is brought painfully down to earth by some sobering situation. There is remarkable tenderness and pathos in the character's

affection for his children, and also some painfully funny episodes regarding his understandable bitterness toward his wife and her new boyfriend, upon whom he secretly revenges himself at every opportunity (ranging from vandalizing Stu's car to beaming him on the back of the head with a piece of fruit, claiming that it was the work of some irate, undertipped kitchen staff-- "a drive-by fruiting", as he puts it). It's a very powerful, multi-textured performance, a plum role for an exceptional performer.

Field is convincing albeit unremarkable as Miranda, though it's hard to tell where the heck her character is coming from most of the time. She comes across as stressed and



Robin Williams in the megahit, *Mrs. Doubtfire*

distressed most of the time, which she's supposed to be, but the film often fails to move beyond that and show us why the character reacts as extremely or harshly as she sometimes does. At some points, she is merely a two-dimensional antagonist. Brosnan, as disgustingly charming as ever, is a worthy object of Daniel's jealous loathing; and the Hillard kids are played capably and endearingly by Matthew Lawrence, Lisa Jakub, and Mara Wilson (the youngest of the trio, and one of the most spine-tinglingly cutesy-pie talents to come down the pike since Shirley Temple).

Mrs. Doubtfire is definitely worth the price of admission. It's a non-stop laugh-fest with a lot of heart, and as the old cliché says, it's fun for the whole family. (4.5)

Buhloone Mind State

De La Soul
(Polygram)

Light, mellow, comforting... how often would you use these terms to describe the sounds of one of the more successful hip-hop groups around? The labels would suggest something that your parents would listen to, not the newest rap album from De La Soul, *Buhloone Mind State*. De La Soul continues to be one of the essential groups who give a light sound to rap, and still remain very prosperous. They prefer to let their style be personified by actual music, and not just a heavy bass line with profanity-filled lyrics. The album has a diverse scope of sounds ranging from the best cut, "Breakadawn", which has a PM Dawnish sound to it, to the soulful sounds of "I Be Blowin" which is totally instrumental horns and is the smoothest cut they have. "Patti Dooke" is a song about the wrongfulness of racism, in addition to being one of the best dance cuts. (4)

Get in Where You Fit In

Too Short
(BMG)

What is the appeal of gangsta rap? After listening to this CD, I realize that it was a

sound salvation

by scott macdonald

trend that began and ended with anything produced by NWA. Too Short is one of the original gangsta rappers, but he hasn't evolved as an artist (to use the term loosely) at all during his career. He unfortunately fits all of the negative stereotypes that are unjustly thrown on rap artists, as his album is nothing more than a self-description of how many women he's had, and how he's the biggest player around. Buy this album only if you want to have another album in your collection that contains the famous "Parental Advisory-Explicit Lyrics" label on it. (2)

Represent

Fat Joe Da Gangsta
(BMG)

See the above review. Fat Joe is just an imitation trying to live off the success of the other large brothers of rap (Fat boys, Chubb Rock, and Heavy D), and he comes up many pounds short. One of the worst albums I have ever heard, don't even look at this album on the shelf, it only entices you to start spelling words incorrectly. (0.5)

The Sign

Ace of Base
(BMG)

"All That She Wants" is a great song, but all that I want is one more song on this album that comes close to measuring up to that song. It has a lot of computerized melodies which sort-of all blend together. Thank goodness for the spaces between the songs-- if it wasn't for them I could barely tell where one cut ends and another begins. It's a mindless album, stating

nothing of consequence, but just music for the sake of music, nothing more. Ace of Base is often compared to ABBA because of their sound and place of origin. I can think of another comparison: in four months they will have about as much future as ABBA does. (2.5)

Midnight Marauders Tribe Called Quest (BMG)

One of the premier groups of hip-hop, their newest CD's title means that their sounds will overwhelm you when you listen to this album at night. This is a lot like their last album, *Low-end Scenario*, but that's alright because that was a very good album. The song "Sucka Niggaz" is about how the term "nigger" has evolved from an insult by whites to become a term of endearment for black youth, showing how they embrace adversity and become stronger. More than just music, Quest tries to educate as well. (4)

Sneke Muthafuckaz Hoodratz

(?) They sound a lot like ONYX, and "Bootlegga" isn't a bad song but once again, the sounds are very similar from one track to the next. (2)

Haddaway Haddaway (BMG)

Better than I expected-- the dance-floor smash, "What Is Love?", is excellent, but the album has more to it than just that. Haddaway also does a good remake of Bob Marley's reggae classic "Stir it Up", which has more life than the original version. More than a one-track album. (3)