

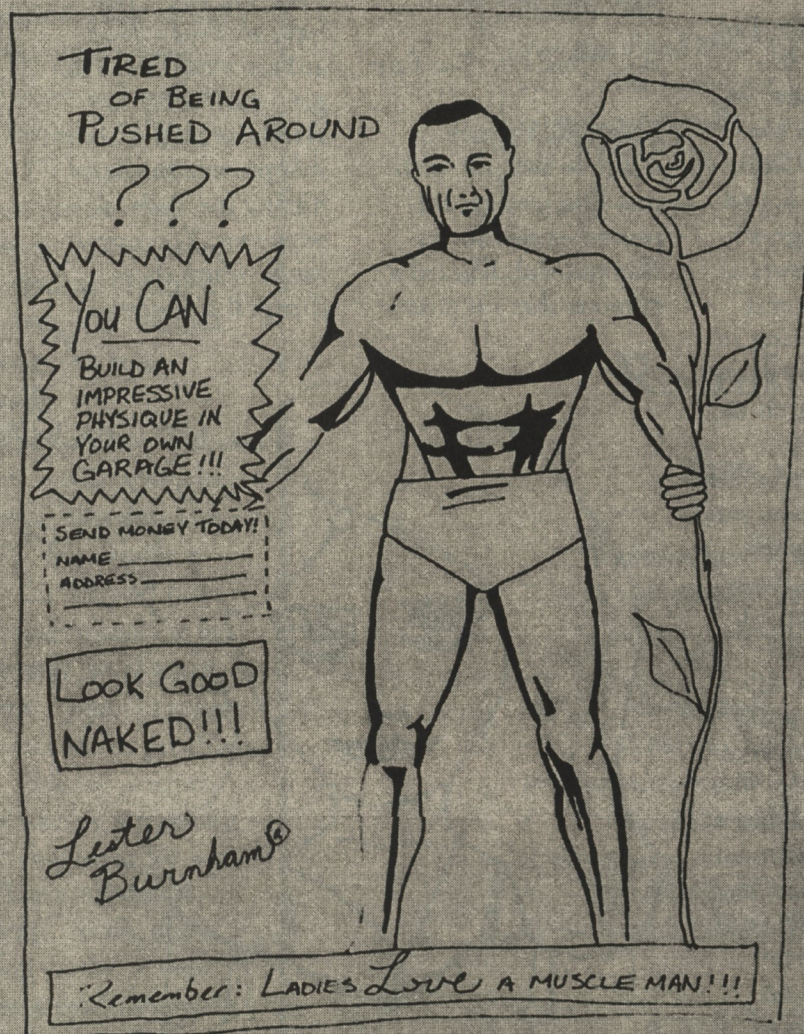
American Beauty

Directed by Sam Mendes

A man (Kevin Spacey) living in seemingly perfect suburban bliss narrates the story of his last days, as he goes through a mid-life crisis. He quits his job, develops a crush on his daughter's best friend, starts smoking pot, and expresses his general discontent with his wife (Annette Benning). Spacey delivers a fantastic performance, along with the rest of the cast. *American Beauty* is a cutting satire about how American society does not allow people to be their real selves. It is also about how people perceive beauty in very different ways. Director Sam Mendes' first film is one of the best of the year. (8)

the cinephile

by jeff coll

**Fight Club**

Directed by David Fincher

A man (Edward Norton) living in an IKEA bubble narrates the story of the dramatic changes in his life. His condo explodes, he moves in with a soap salesman (Brad Pitt) he met on a business trip, and they start an underground boxing club. *Fight Club* is a surreal and atmospheric satire of consumerism. It sometimes goes beyond the boundaries of logic and common sense. It also tries to tackle too many issues which never quite resolve themselves. This is a small matter, however, since it is just so refreshing to watch a Hollywood film that demands sincere thought and interpretation. (7)

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