

MOVIES

BY THERESA ADAMS



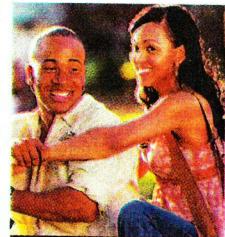
Alpha Dog

★★★

Arrogant, aggressive Johnny (**Emile Hirsch**) spends his days dealing drugs to the privileged teens of his Southern California nabe and his nights partying with his posse (including **Justin Timberlake**, in his big-screen debut). But once Johnny's gang impulsively kidnaps the 15-year-old son of Olivia (**Sharon Stone**) because his brother owes them \$1,200, all goes tragically wrong. Violent, crass and amateurish for its first hour, the drama — based on true events — grows more assured in its suspenseful second half (when a believable and empathetic Timberlake becomes the lead) and crescendos to a heart-wrenching climax.

BRADLEY
JACOBS

Hard-bodied Timberlake worked out five days a week — 90 minutes of weightlifting and 90 minutes of cardio — to prep for the part. He also helped design the fake tattoos.



Short and Good

After his brother's death, troubled L.A. youth DJ (**Columbus Short**, a choreographer once linked to **Britney Spears**) enrolls at fictional Truth University in Atlanta and gets caught up in an intense step-dancing competition between rival frats. Though the drama aims to teach the true meaning of brotherhood — and DJ's flirtations with April (**Meagan Good**) have spark — it's predictable fare that ends with, yes, a dance-off.

KATE FRANK



Murphy

The Dead Girl

★★★

Brittany Murphy plays the title role in this well-acted mystery told in reverse, starting with the corpse's discovery and working back to the crime. Original in its exploration of those touched by the killing — including the woman who found her (**Toni Collette**) — the drama is hobbled by the felony's *Law & Order* ordinariness in which a generic nut job slays a gold-hearted hooker.

DON'T MISS...



Nicole Kidman
narrates
the doc.

GOD GREW TIRED OF US

★★★

Brad Pitt coexecutive-produced this revelatory documentary, which follows three young Sudanese men from a Kenyan refugee camp to America. Once in the U.S., they discover the wonders of potato chips and indoor plumbing but suffer isolation and depression at the loss of their strong communal culture.