

# WEEKEND JOURNAL

## REVIEW / Film

**Our Top 10: 'Bedroom' No Sleeper, 'Lord' Runs Rings Around 'Harry'**

In a Tough Year for the Country, Cunning Cartoons Beat Reality; Who Can Forget 'Memento'?

— By JOE MORGENSTERN —

THOSE OF US who love movies, as opposed to thrill rides, demolition derbies or gross-out guignols, should thank our lucky stars, and writers and directors, that every year comes equipped with 12 months. Back in the slough of despond that was last summer at the multiplex, the movie business seemed to have been almost totally trashed by the entertainment conglomerates, and the prospect of finding enough worthy candidates for a 10-best list struck me as wishful at best. Since then, though, the mad ritual of film distribution—holding back all of the supposedly good stuff until the holiday-and-award season—has yielded plenty to fill out my list and buoy up my hopes: With all these exceptions to the rule of mediocrity, maybe the rule itself is starting to bend.



Tom Wilkinson

### 'In the Bedroom'

#### "IN THE BEDROOM"

Is the best American film of 2001, and, for my money, the best film period. Narrative drive, visual and musical power, flawless performances (by Sissy Spacek, Tom Wilkinson, Marisa Tomei and William Mapother)—everything comes together, quite slowly at first, then with devastating force, in a drama of parental loss, grief and wrath. I still find it remarkable that "In the Bedroom" is the feature debut of the director, Todd Field, rather than the work of a calmly confident master. Mr. Field also wrote the script, with Rob Festinger, from a short story by the late André Dubus. Short stories, according to conventional wisdom, don't make good movies because they lack density of detail, but conventional wisdom doesn't cover inventive, deeply felt adaptations like this one.

### 'Gosford Park'

POPULATION DENSITY is one of the many distinctions of "Gosford Park," Robert Altman's unexpectedly elegant comedy of manners, set in England in 1932, that's coupled with a murder mystery. (At the age of 76, Mr. Altman is still reinventing himself.) The gilded rooms in the country estate of the title are chockablock with fancy guests—members, in good or bad standing, of England's aristocracy—while the mansion itself is fully staffed by fascinating servants. "These people look like Alan Mowbray," says one of two Americans in the group, a philistine producer of Charlie Chan movies. What they look like to me is a vast cast of superb performers at the top of their form.

### 'Monsters, Inc.'

THIS IS THE FIRST YEAR in which an Oscar will go to the best animated feature. The new award couldn't be more timely, because feature animation has become a repository of wit and imagination for grown-ups as well as kids; this genre can be as sophisticated, in its way, as the best movie comedies used to be before raunchy 16-year-olds became the target audience. The award is also timely because 2001 was graced with two fine full-length cartoons. The most recently released one is "Monsters, Inc." from

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## Gizmos by the Carload

MP3 players on the dash. Gadgets that 'read' you the paper. With Americans taking more road trips, sales of high-tech car gear are up 70%. With kids and DVDs in tow, Gregory L. White takes a test drive.

CARLOS MORA commutes three hours a day, then spends even more time on road trips with his teenagers. So when he wants to relax, where does he go? Right back to his SUV, which has a navigation system, Sony PlayStation and a built-in PC—plus a DVD player with surround sound.

"We go out to the truck to watch movies now," says the computer specialist from Holden, Mass. On the road with his kids, he says, a movie "makes the trip go by very quick."

So much for staring out the windows. After years in the slow lane, the world of auto entertainment is shifting into high gear. Among the new products: gizmos that promise to help you skirt traffic jams or even "read" you the morning paper. Within just the last two months, drivers nationwide got two new ways to hear music—in-dash MP3 players and satellite systems that offer 100 stations nationwide. And DVD players, until recently a high-cost novelty, are one of the fastest-growing car toys, both for new-car buyers and for folks

installing them. In all, sales of high-tech auto gear were up nearly 70% at big electronics stores in 2001, says market researcher NPD Intellect, making it the hottest sector of the \$2 billion car-stereo market.

The new wave of car technology is receiving an especially warm welcome this winter. Not only are Americans spending more time on their commutes by the year, but cheaper gas and the recent drop in air travel have more people turning to long-haul road trips. Plus, as the interest in everything from cellphones to navigation systems shows, drivers are already looking for ways to make their car time more constructive—or shorter. The result: Alpine Electronics, a big DVD and audio maker, says it ran short of some systems over the holidays. "We are frankly quite surprised," says its vice president, Steve Witt.

So how does the stuff work? To sort the nifty from the needless, we hauled a truckload of new gear along on our own family road trips. Our goal: To see what would keep the kids entertained, (Please Turn to Page W10)

### PLUS

From satellite radio to backseat DVDs, we rate new gadgets.

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ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN UELAND

## ART JOURNAL / By Alexandra Peers

### Goodbye, Dolly!

Old Barbies Join Beanie Babies In Collectibles Market Bust; Half-Off on 'Pink Splendor'

SORRY, KEN. It's looking like Barbie, like many of us, peaked at 40. The world's best-selling doll turns 43 this year, and middle age isn't being too kind to her legions of collectors. Barbie's copper-wire legs don't bend as easily as they used to, her earlobes are turning a sickly green, and a generation of fans are switching allegiances to Game Boy, Rescue Heroes and Harry Potter.

The result: a bust in old Barbies, part of a broader drop in the whole \$10-billion collectibles market that's happening as the economy sours and the Internet makes once hard-to-get objects a click away. Name a must-have tchotchke, from Beanie Babies to Hummel figurines, and demand is drying up fast. And unplug those Christmas villages. It's over, with sales down 30% in some cases from the late 1990s.

But it's Barbie who's the real heart-breaker. At a recent much-ballyhooed auction in New York, bidding for a vintage mint, in-box 1959 Barbie doll stopped at \$4,400, a third of the record for the prized collectible. It gets worse for fans of, say, the "Scarlett O'Hara" Barbies. Once a \$75 prize, they're half-off on eBay, which has an astounding 18,800 Barbie-related items floating around in cyberspace.

"There's just too many damn Barbies," says Terry Kovel, co-author of Kovel's Antiques and Collectibles Price List, which tracks the boom-



and-bust cycles for everything from key-chain trolls to Venetian glass. Helaine Fendelman, past president of the Appraisers Association of America, agrees: "It's still a huge market but the heat is gone." It wasn't always this way. There's long been

a saying that there are three certainties of toy collecting: death, taxes and Barbie. To be sure, world-wide sales of the doll peaked in 1999 (when she was 40), as tech toys, Game Boy and Britney Spears became more popular. But the Barbie

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### Home Front



A cineplex in the basement: With **home theater** prices down, a screening room isn't just for the rich anymore. **W8**

### Catalog Critic



Fast, flashy and fully loaded: With snow arriving, we try out the latest crop of **daredevil sleds** that hit new speeds. **W9C**

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## House Of the Week



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