



Sexy Beast: Best Heist Film

tions perfectly, but still inspire some sort of romantic hope in the audience; another important factor, of course, is that the film has to be funny. Bridget Jones's Diary accomplishes all of these things and blows all other romantic comedies from last year out of the water, including two mediocre efforts starring John Cusack (*America's Sweethearts* and *Serendipity*)—an actor who typically chooses to be in solid films. Let's hope there will be fewer cookie-cutter romantic comedies, and more fun and different romantic comedies like *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

Best Foreign Film: *Amelie*

The opening sequence of Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *Amelie* is one of the most energetic and hilarious film prologues since *Magnolia*. If the entire film had been that good, *Amelie* would have been one of the best films in years—based purely on its ability to entertain. As it is, *Amelie* is a delight to watch, even though it sags under the weight of the main plot. Audrey Tautou is mesmerising as the title character who tries to ignore her own problems by doing good for others: she is one of those actors who can speak volumes with a mere look. Even more wonderful are the visual tricks that represent *Amelie's* overactive imagination. Amazing special effects, which might be the centrepiece to lesser Hollywood films, get only a few seconds' screen time. Alas, one deterrent for potential viewers will be that it is a French film

and is subtitled. To those people who don't like to read their films, I can only say that they are missing out on a great experience. To those people who don't mind the language barrier, I say catch it while you still can.

Best Film with Wizards: *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*

From start to finish, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* feels like a film that is not nearly as great as it wants to be. The big mistake that the Studio Gods made was giving the project to Chris Columbus, whose best work in film was his first: the screenplay for *Gremlins*. As a director, Columbus does not have the standards or the attention to detail that is required for a movie as large in scope as an adaptation of J.K. Rowling's first *Harry Potter* book. The resulting film is cinematographically stiff, has shoddy digital effects (despite what most people claimed, the Quidditch match looks unconvincing) and has the most distracting and overbearing scores that I can remember. *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, on the other hand visualises J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth beautifully. Every frame of the film immerses the viewer into a beautiful new world full of humans, elves, goblins, dwarves, cave trolls and, of course, hobbits. Peter Jackson, who has never done a film of any grandness before, directs the film perfectly with a cast of actors that is both predictable and surprising. Ian McKellan as Gandalf the

Grey is a no-brainer, but who would have thought that Sean Astin (whose first film was *The Goonies*, scripted by Columbus) would have made the perfect Sam Gamgee? Although the film is effects-intensive, Jackson never lets the effects run away from his fine cast and uses many close-up shots to keep the attention focussed on the characters. No film of *The Lord of the Rings* could ever do Tolkien's encyclopaedic novel justice, but Jackson's film is nevertheless a delight to watch.

Best Film with a Non-Linear Narrative: *Memento*

Quentin Tarantino wasn't the first person to make a non-linear film, but he certainly got a lot of praise for *Pulp Fiction*—which is great, not because of its narrative structure, but because of its characters and dialogue. With *Memento*, Christopher Nolan has actually employed a non-linear narrative for a better reason than "Wouldn't it be cool if we shuffled the chronology around?" *Memento* is about a man who suffers short-term memory loss (Guy Pearce), and in order to make the audience understand how disorienting such a condition must be, every sequence is placed in a reverse chronological order. The effect is close to that of reading a children's book, beginning at the last page and ending at the first. The audience already knows how the plot turns out, but there are plenty of surprises to learn about along the way, which makes *Memento* one of the best plot-driven films to come out in many years. It doesn't hurt to have Guy Pearce as the star—an Australian actor who hasn't been in nearly enough films since his outstanding performance as the straight-arrow cop in *L.A. Confidential*.

Best Canadian Film: *The Left Side of the Fridge*

There is a special place in my heart for the mockumentary and I'm glad that Quebec's Philippe Falardeau has added another film to this small genre. *The Left Side of the Fridge* is about a an actor-turned-documentary filmmaker who follows around his unem-

ployed roommate who is looking for a job that he is not overqualified for (he is, after all, a qualified engineer). It is in part a film about unemployment woes and corporate morality, but just as importantly it is about how the media can interfere with people's lives. Even though the filmmaker is merely an independent filmmaker, he is just like any other member of the mainstream media because he manipulates the unemployed man's life while still pretending to be an objective observer; he will do anything to make an interesting film. Anybody who appreciates good satire will certainly appreciate *The Left Side of the Fridge*.

Best Heist Film: *Sexy Beast*

In a year with so many great heist films to choose from—*Snatch*, *The Score*, *Heist*, *Sexy Beast* and *Ocean's 11*—*Sexy Beast* stands out because it is not so much about the thrill of the heist as it is about avoiding the thrill of the heist. The main character Gary "Gal" Dove is a retired London gangster living with his wife in a beautiful house in Spain; he's fat, tanned and content. His contentment changes, however when Don Logan (Ben Kingsley) shows up and tries to convince him to take part in the robbery of a high security vault in London. Dove does not want to come out of



**The Man Who Wasn't There:
Best Coen Brothers Film**