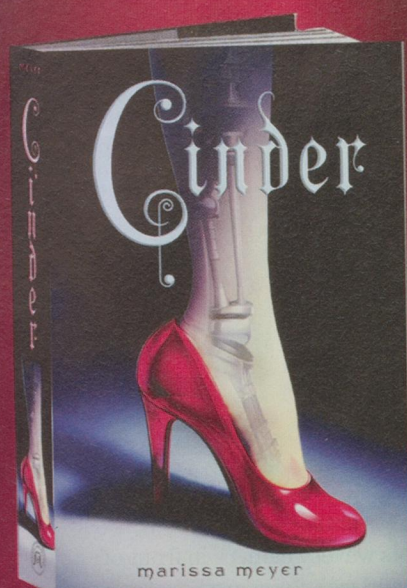


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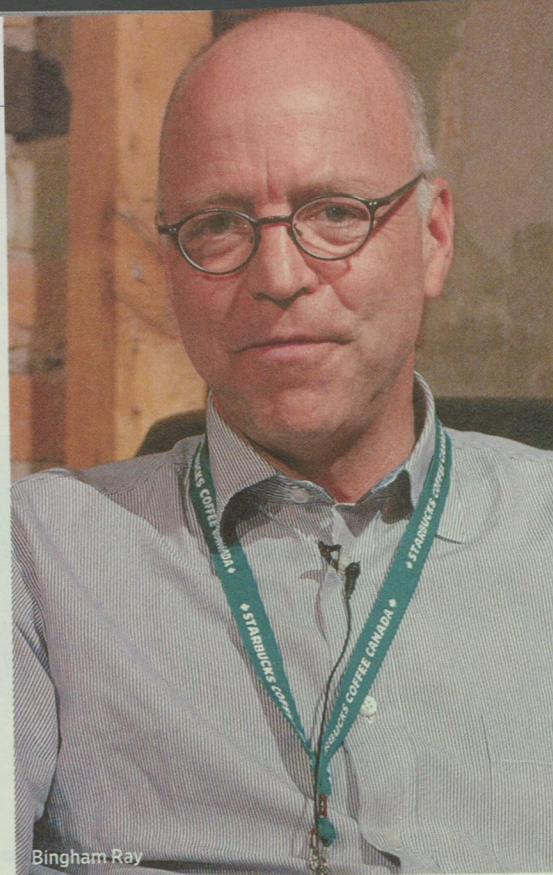
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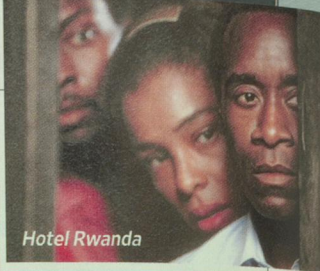
Bingham Ray

Legacy of an Indie Film Legend

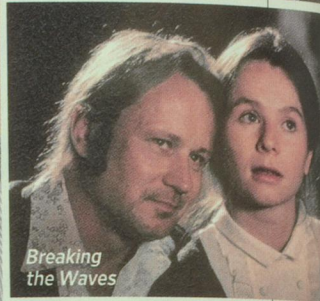
Independent movies have lost a passionate and beloved champion in the late film exec Bingham Ray. A look at who he was—and what he stood for. —LISA SCHWARZBAUM

Bingham Ray was in Utah to attend the Sundance Film Festival in his role as executive director of the San Francisco Film Society when he suffered the strokes that led to his death on Jan. 23, 2012, at the age of 57. Ray had just taken the San Francisco job in November, but he'd been pursuing and promoting independent cinema for decades. He was an expansive, gregarious man—one so passionate and powerful that obituaries referred to him as a "beloved titan of the indie film world" and an "indie film god." (Ray also declared his independence with his fondness for wearing Bermuda shorts whenever possible.)

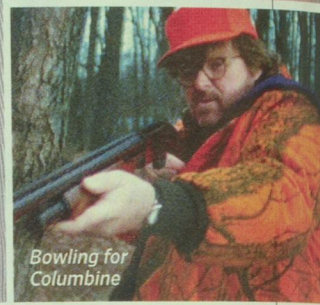
After early gigs booking movies into theaters in the 1980s, Ray, along with Jeff Lipsky, cofounded October Films in 1991, with Mike Leigh's soon-to-be award-winning *Life Is Sweet* as their auspicious first offering. And throughout the great flowering of commercial-grade American independent film culture in the 1990s, Ray was in the thick of what was good and interesting on screen. October gave the world *Breaking the Waves* by Lars von Trier, *Lost Highway* by David Lynch, Robert Duvall's *The Apostle*, and Thomas Vinterberg's *The Celebration*. Later, as president of United Artists, Ray backed Michael Moore's Oscar-winning documentary *Bowling for Columbine* and Terry George's drama about genocide, *Hotel Rwanda*. Peter Biskind, in his indispensable book *Down and Dirty Pictures*, notes that Ray "didn't have much in the way of a firewall between thought and speech." His transparency—and good taste—is what made the man a treasure.



Hotel Rwanda



Breaking the Waves



Bowling for Columbine

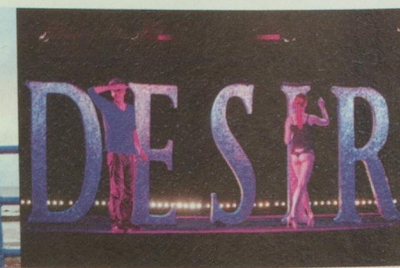
REVIEWS MOVIES



Albatross

Jessica Brown Findlay, Felicity Jones, Julia Ormond, Sebastian Koch
NOT RATED, 1 HR., 30 MINS.

All the requisite quirky shenanigans occur when a troubled teen (Jessica Brown Findlay) starts working at a British seaside inn run by an author (Sebastian Koch), his brittle wife (Julia Ormond), and their bookish daughter (Felicity Jones). Trite lessons are learned. Plotlines play out in familiar arcs. A few blips of sex and drug use aim to make the movie feel more grown-up. Instead, they make it off-limits to the only age group likely to find any charm in its smug Britcom cutesiness. (Available on VOD) **C-** —Adam Markovitz



Crazy Horse

NOT RATED, 2 HRS., 14 MINS.

At the upscale Parisian nudie cabaret Crazy Horse, beautiful, spry, nearly bare-naked ladies perform erotic dances of preposterously Gallic ooh-là-là proportions for the pleasure of Champagne-sipping tourists. Completing his wonderful French cultural trilogy that also includes portraits of the Comédie-Française and the Paris Opera Ballet, indefatigable documentarian Frederick Wiseman freely, unobtrusively prowls the joint to create a movie that respects the serious work involved in simulating the sensations of pleasure. **A-** —Lisa Schwarzbaum



Underworld Awakening

Kate Beckinsale, Stephen Rea
R, 1 HR., 29 MINS.

Kate Beckinsale still looks supernaturally good in a patent-leather catsuit in the fourth *Underworld* chapter, shot in 3-D but one-dimensional in every other sense. The movie is set amid a battle between humankind, drop-undead-gorgeous vampires, and feral werewolves. Why are they fighting again? Never you mind. Just sit tight till the next action sequence (it won't be long), and get ready to laugh—with equal parts scorn and fanboy joy—as Beckinsale strikes another Rodinesque pose under a slo-mo shower of inhuman innards. **B-** —Adam Markovitz



Declaration of War

Valérie Donzelli, Jérémie Elkaim
NOT RATED, 1 HR., 40 MINS.

Valérie Donzelli directs and stars in an unexpectedly upbeat autobiographical drama made with French New Wave pizzazz about a young boy with brain cancer and the parents who pull together to fight for him. Donzelli knows her stuff: She's the real mother, and Jérémie Elkaim is the boy's real father (and Donzelli's co-writer). An adventurous song selection and stylish narrative techniques put a strangely romantic face on a harrowing story that's a parental nightmare. Adding to the romance: Donzelli and Elkaim are madly attractive. **B** —Lisa Schwarzbaum



James D'Arcy and Andrea Riseborough; (inset) director Madonna

W.E.

STARRING

Abbie Cornish, Andrea Riseborough

DIRECTED BY Madonna

R, 1 HR., 59 MINS.

By Lisa Schwarzbaum

The movie is a folly, a desultory vanity project for its director and co-writer. But for those very reasons, *W.E.*, by world-renowned personage and lesser-known filmmaker Madonna, is not without twisted interest. The title's initials refer to American-born Wallis Simpson and her royal husband, Edward, a man who was groomed to be king of England but abdicated the throne, frittering away the rest of his silly life with his missus as the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. As Madonna herself has explained, she developed a sympathetic identification with Wallis—not typically a recipient of sympathy—while living in England as the American wife of British director Guy Ritchie and trying to fit in, just like Wallis. From there springs this mad, feverish endeavor, a story-within-a-story about a Manhattan woman (Abbie Cornish) who, abused by her husband in an unhappy marriage, subsumes her misery in an obsession with the tribulations of Wallis (Made in Dagenham's Andrea Riseborough, stealing the picture with class) and her no-longer-kingly spouse (James D'Arcy).

Anyhow, who is she kidding? In the end, Madonna clearly made this movie for the fun of filling the screen with fantastic fashions and unaffordable home-decorating finds. Every shoe, dress, silk undergarment, and silver sugar bowl is suitable for editorial consideration in the chicest style magazines. Therefore, the curious would do well to watch *W.E.* as if flipping through a stack of glossy mags with a pal, oohing and aahing about *stuff* without caring a fiddle-dee-dee about substance. **C-**