

DVD & Streaming

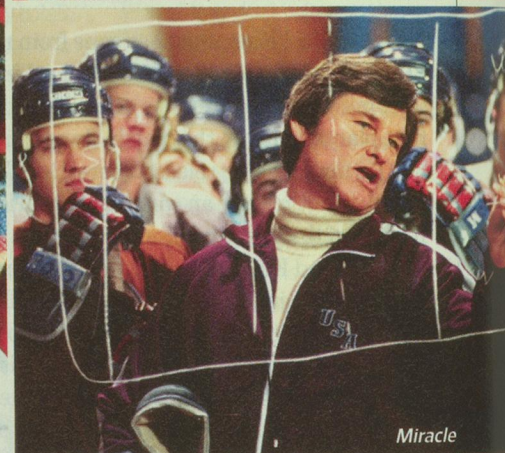
What movies to own, rent, and stream this week **BY CHRIS NASHAWATY**



Cool Runnings



Personal Best



Miracle

Olympic Bests

Get psyched for the Summer Games with these enduring five-ring classics

→ **CHARIOTS OF FIRE** (1981) Long before the Olympics became a pit stop on the way to earning lucrative, Phelpsian endorsement deals, they were about God and national pride. Hugh Hudson's rousing Best Picture winner tells one such tale, focusing on the 1924 British running team. The film's slo-mo jogging sequence, set to the Muzak strains of

Vangelis, still soars. **A-** → **PERSONAL BEST** (1982) *Chinatown* screenwriter Robert Towne's directorial debut provides a rare glimpse at the inner lives of female athletes—and subtly explores the lesbian relationship between two Olympic track-and-field hopefuls (Mariel Hemingway and Patrice Donnelly). *Personal Best* nails the drive and heartache that

fuel high-level competition perhaps better than any other sports film. **A-** → **AMERICAN ANTHEM** (1986) Back in the '80s, gymnasts like Kurt Thomas and Mary Lou Retton were red-white-and-blue heroes. So why not movie stars, too? Real-deal tumbler Mitch Gaylord scores a perfect 10 in this gold-medal guilty pleasure, where he's equally at home on the rings and in the arms of Janet Jones. **B** → **COOL RUNNINGS** (1993) If the words *Jamaican bobsled team* bring a smile to your face, wait till you get

a load of John Candy as the squad's slob coach, Irv. Based on an unlikely true story, this Disney confection isn't deep, but it's damn fun. **B** → **MIRACLE** (2004) At the height of the Cold War, the 1980 U.S. men's hockey team warmed the hearts of American fans with its David-and-Goliath upset over the Russkies. Kurt Russell, despite a really bad wig, plays tough-as-nails coach Herb Brooks. Even though you know the outcome, you might catch yourself yelling, "U.S.A.! U.S.A.!" **B+**



Roberto Benigni and Nicoletta Braschi in *Down by Law*

The Singular High Of *Down by Law*

How Jim Jarmusch's odd fable, now on Blu-ray, sparked a lifelong affair with indie film

Three years before Steven Soderbergh's *sex, lies, and videotape* ushered in a new era in personal, low-budget filmmaking, Jim Jarmusch directed *Down by Law* (1986, R, 1 hr., 47 mins.). I was in high school at the time, just starting to fall in love with movies. And Jarmusch's weird black-and-white fable—along with its deadpan predecessor, 1984's *Stranger Than Paradise*—was like nothing I'd ever seen before. It was strange, hip, and funny (although way too cool to admit it was

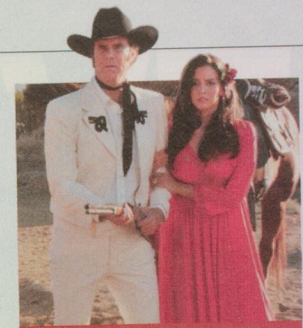
trying to be a comedy). It was also my first brush with independent cinema. If you've never seen *Down by Law*, there's no better time than the present to give it a spin thanks to a new Criterion Blu-ray that makes Robby Müller's inky noir cinematography seem more haunting and beautiful than ever. The plot of the film is almost beside the point, but here it is anyway: A down-on-his-luck radio DJ (Tom Waits) and a small-time pimp (John Lurie) are each set up and thrown in a Louisiana jail. The cellmates bicker and brawl until a third prisoner is brought in—an infectiously cheerful Italian (Roberto Benigni) spouting random pidgin-English phrases like "I screama, you screama, we all screama for ice creama." The three manage to escape and wind up slogging through swamp country. That's pretty much it. Thankfully, Jarmusch is more interested in the journey than the destination. Waits and Lurie, who also provide the film's jazzy soundtrack, are two of the heppiest cats on the planet, but it's Benigni—years before his shtick got old—who gives this early indie its kick. The disc's **EXTRAS** are solid, but not new. They include outtakes and interviews with the cast and crew. **A**

Mel Gibson's Latest? Dark, Angry, and Not Terrible.

Even with all of Mel Gibson's toxic PR missteps, it was still surprising to see his latest film, *Get the Gringo* (2012, R, 1 hr., 36 mins.), bypass theaters entirely and receive an on-demand debut this past May. Just released on disc, it's actually worth checking out if you're a fan of nasty, nihilistic Mad Mel action flicks like 1999's *Payback*. Here Gibson plays a smart-ass crook who gets tossed in a Mexican prison, where he has to outwit brutal drug lords with the help of a 10-year-old sidekick (Kevin Hernandez). It may not be one for the ages, but it deserved a better fate than it got. Karma's a bitch. **B**



Mel Gibson and Kevin Hernandez in *Get the Gringo*



ALSO AVAILABLE

→ **CASA DE MI PADRE** (2012, R) Will Ferrell, Diego Luna It would have been a great idea for an *SNL* skit, but grows tiresome at feature length. A Spanish-speaking Ferrell plays a Mexican boob who falls for his brother's girl and runs afoul of a drug cartel. *iDios mio!* (Also on iTunes) **B**

FRIENDS WITH KIDS (2012, R) Jennifer Westfeldt, Adam Scott When their friends' lives start to revolve around baby talk, Scott and writer-director Westfeldt decide to become platonic-pal parents. (Also on iTunes) **B+**

SALMON FISHING IN THE YEMEN (2012, PG-13) Emily Blunt, Ewan McGregor In one of the stranger recent premises, McGregor is a Brit who brings the sport of fly-fishing to the desert. Stranger still, the movie kind of works. (Also on iTunes) **B**

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (1956, Not Rated) Kevin McCarthy, Dana Wynter Don Siegel's sci-fi classic concerns a community where people are being replaced by emotionless alien doppelgängers. Blu-ray debut. **B+**

BAREFOOT IN THE PARK (1967, G) Robert Redford, Jane Fonda Mismatched newlyweds move into a fifth-floor walk-up in Neil Simon's rom-com treat. (Available on Netflix instant viewing) **B+**



COMING SOON

→ **THE DEEP BLUE SEA** (2012, R) Rachel Weisz, Tom Hiddleston Terence Davies directs a drama of romantic desperation, starring Weisz as an unhappy housewife who goes to extremes. **A** 7/24

FOOTNOTE (2012, PG) Shlomo Bar Aba, Lior Ashkenazi Father-and-son religious scholars square off in Joseph Cedar's Oscar-nominated Israeli import. **A** 7/24

Most grades are from EW's reviews of the original theatrical release