



latest REVIEWS

Bring It On

reviewed by Laurel DiGangi

A film about the rivalries between two competing cheerleading squads, *Bring*

It On neither lampoons its subject matter nor takes it too seriously. Instead, it proffers a sometimes funny, sometimes endearing look at the world of competitive cheerleading that doesn't strain the brain—in other

words, a film that might entertain the above-drinking age crowd in the mood for a typical B-grade teen flick with plenty of high kicks, gymnastics and booty shaking.

Soon after her election as captain of the Toros' cheerleading squad, Torrance (Kirsten Dunst) discovers that her team's perfectly choreographed routines have been stolen from an African-American team, the Clovers. Suddenly the upstanding and moral Torrance is faced with a crisis of con-

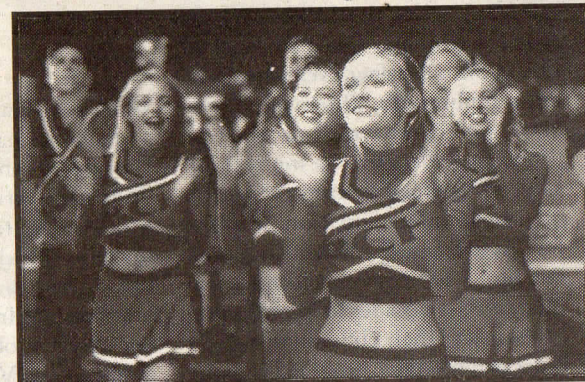
science. And just to make sure the film's target-audience gets it, the Clovers throw some gentle intimidation into the mix, leaving the Toros no choice but to develop some new moves practically overnight.

Meanwhile, the underprivileged Clovers are busy scraping up funds to achieve their dream of participating in the cheerleading championship. Unfortunately, *Bring It On* rarely shows us any Clover character when she's not copping an attitude in response to the Toros or showing off her athletic prowess. Instead of revealing the behind-the-scenes complexity hinted at by the Clovers' leader Isis (played with verve by Gabrielle Union), the film's

subplots involve the recruitment of a reluctant, goth-poseur cheerleader named Missy (Eliza Dushku) and a half-baked romance between Dunst's character and Missy's brother Cliff (Jesse Bradford).

Bring It On is director Peyton Reed's first full-length theatrical feature, and in it his experience directing music videos for such alternatives bands as The Connells and Superchunk is apparent. Show-offy camera moves and quick-cutting are used effectively throughout most the film, giving it an energy that the script at times lacks. Unfortunately this MTV technique is jarring throughout the cheerleading sequences, when the dancer-gymnasts should be the only ones showing off.

If anything, *Bring It On* is probably the first film to demonstrate the skill and stamina necessary to become a cheerleader. Unfortunately it's cursed with a schizo mixture of innocence and vulgarity that's become almost standard in teen flicks. The racial conflict between the Toros and Clovers is about as watered-down and unbelievable as the tension between bikers and surfers in a 1960s beach flick —



Dunst (front) gets her kicks in Peyton Reed's *Bring It On*

after all, we wouldn't want to upset anyone — yet the sexual references reach a new low for its PG-13 rating. A scene in which a female cheerleader is digitally penetrated while being hoisted in the air by a male cheerleader is played for laughs, and almost undercuts the film's efforts to acknowledge cheerleading as a legitimate sport.

Halfway through the film a character declares, "Cheerleaders are dancers who have gone retarded." One might say that *Bring It On* is a dance movie that has done likewise. Yet, despite its faults, *Bring It On* still manages to effectively promote hard work, commitment and, most importantly, sportsmanship. Given the fact

that the competition in most teen flicks concerns who's the first to get laid, *Bring It On* is a refreshing, if flawed, alternative. (Universal, PG-13, starts Friday, citywide)

"SPELLBINDING!"

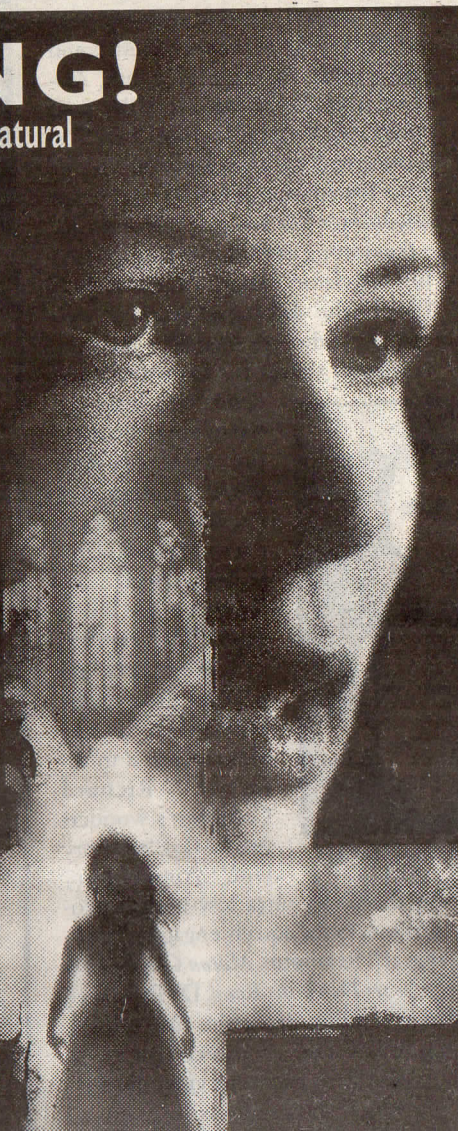
Excellent cast led by Kim Basinger, makes this supernatural thriller work. Get a big box of popcorn and enjoy."

Jim Ferguson, DISH NETWORK

"HOLLISTON COLEMAN, THE YOUNG ACTRESS PLAYING CODY... ENORMOUSLY COMPELLING, A REAL FIND."

Elvis Mitchell, THE NEW YORK TIMES

KIM BASINGER BLESS THE CHILD



JIMMY SMITS AND CHRISTINA RICCI

