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The Tampa Tribune

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MOVIE REVIEW
STILL BREATHING
SHOOTING FISH

Sweet, smaller films deserve attention

A mystic romance and a con artist comedy offer gentle amusements.
Author: *Bob Ross*

Article Text:

On this busy movie weekend, giant lizards and Warren Beatty are getting the most attention. But a couple of noteworthy smaller films are also on the schedule, aimed at those who prefer quieter, more thoughtful fare.

"Still Breathing" <star1><star1>1/2

This gentle, predictable comedy about fate and true love was produced, written and directed by James F. Robinson of San Antonio, Texas.

That explains why at least half the story is set near the Alamo, where eccentric artist-puppeteer Fletcher McBracken (Brendan **Fraser**) is a street performer who dreams (literally) of finding his perfect soul mate. It's a McBracken tradition: The men in the family have midnight visions of their future spouses, and then they go on quests to bring them home.

Unfortunately for Fletcher, his dream gal is Roz Willoughby (Joanna Going, most recently in "Inventing the Abbotts"), a cute but cynical Los Angeles swindler.

At first, Roz has no interest in the handsome lug. She prefers hustling rich guys into

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buying overpriced paintings, then splitting the profits with her partner (Ann Magnuson).

But Fletcher believes in magic and Roz starts to wonder whether he's right or just crazy. He's a bit of both, of course, but **Fraser** maintains his lovable lunkhead persona from "George of the Jungle" and proves irresistible.

Of course, he gets help from his adorable grandmother, ably played by sparkling veteran Celeste Holm.

It takes a while for this mystic, cheery little love story to develop fully, and surprises are scarce. But Robinson gets maximum mileage from a charming premise and a likable cast. (110 minutes; rated PG-13 for profanity, sexual situations)

"Shooting Fish" <star1><star1>1/2

You know, like in a barrel. A couple of clever swindlers have an easy time fleecing rich Brits until they meet their match in the form of a beautiful woman who obviously will ... well, you've probably seen enough con-artist caper comedies to figure it out well in advance.

Dan Futterman (he played Robin Williams' handsome son in "The Birdcage") and Irish newcomer Stuart Townsend star as Dylan and Jez, the smiling crooks who justify their thievery because they are orphans. Dylan's the smooth talker, Jez is the awkward technician. They see themselves as latter-day Robin Hoods. They live in a nicely retro-fitted industrial gas tank - rent-free, of course - and their home stereo is a jukebox called "Big Burt" because it's stocked exclusively with Burt Bacharach tunes.

Kate Beckinsale, so winningly confident in "Cold Comfort Farm," plays Georgie, a wholesome, middle-class woman who unwittingly becomes an accomplice in the boys' latest computer-sales scam. As she gets to know them, she drifts apart from her stuffy fiance and starts to enjoy the dangers of fooling people for fun and profit. This is hardly an original premise, but director/co-writer Stefan Schwartz keeps us moving fast enough to overlook cliches.

Spry gags and pop-culture cleverness enhance this zippy fable. The best jokes are casual asides: The con men send a victim (who wronged them) free tickets to a new Andrew Lloyd Webber musical to get him out of the house. When we see this dolt at the theater, the place is packed - and at least half the audience is sleeping peacefully through the performance.

You won't have that problem with the film. Futterman, who looks like a cross between Pierce Brosnan and John Kennedy Jr., has the boyish enthusiasm required to win our sympathy. And Townsend is believable as the goodhearted guy who commits felonies only because he has never had a home of his own.

Seldom do movie crooks finish their stories on such an altruistic note as these two. (93 minutes; PG for mild adult references)

Caption:

Brendan **Fraser** is a lovable street performer in "**Still Breathing**." Photo from October Films
PHOTO

Memo:

MOVIES

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