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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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The Peaceful Warrior

I felt an overwhelming urge to see the new movie "The Peaceful Warrior." Sure, the reviews were almost universally bad. But its director is Victor Salva, a man who was a convicted sex offender (he videotaped a 12 year old boy in "sexual situations") and THEN went on to forge a successful directorial career beginning with...Disney, of all places. That Disney film was "Powder," and it's hard to imagine an odder, more confused movie. It stars Sean Patrick Flanery of "Young Indiana Jones" as an outcast with almost mystical powers. I don't know how to describe the movie other than to say something about it is tortured and closeted -- and that was my feeling BEFORE finding out Salva's past. He also made a schlocky horror film "Jeepers Creepers" which SPOILER ALERT concludes with the monster triumphing over the good guys END OF SPOILER ALERT that became a solid box office hit. The guy has issues. So when I saw his new project was "The Peaceful Warrior," I went to Barnes & Noble to check out the book it's based on -- it's a poorly written New Age saga about a college gymnast (okay, promising) who is befriended and tutored in philosophy by a garage station attendant named Socrates with vaguely mystical powers. Laughingly based on the author's real life, it's one of those books that is meant to inspire and instruct as much as tell a story. God help me, it's the sort of thing I have no patience for so I put it back. The movie is in fact fairly bearable, thanks to a relatively low-key Nick Nolte as Socrates and a cast of exceptionally handsome young men on the gymnastics team. The camera is still a guilty voyeur when Salva is in charge, but this movie wasn't quite as twisted as Powder. I'm only sorry Ashton Holmes (of A History of Violence) wasn't the lead. He was such a wimpy kid in that movie, I have no idea how he got so buff for this one. To my shock, the theater was pretty full, even though the movie had been out for a week and surely wasn't getting good word of mouth. That should end soon and we can look forward to the DVD and Salva's commentary track -- not to mention the pause button.

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