

# movies

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## 'Trouble the Water'

★★★★ (unrated)

BY JOHN ANDERSON

Special to Newsday

The how-we-lost-our-home movies taken by New Orleans native Kimberly Roberts during Hurricane Katrina are the spine of "Trouble the Water," a film that's as harrowing for what Mother Nature can do as for what the U.S. government can't. Or won't. Shot predominantly from the attic of their rapidly submerging house during the worst of the storm, Roberts' visual record gives us a palpable sense of impending doom. But it's only after the Robertses — in the company of filmmakers Tia Lessin and Carl Deal — return to their battered city their crime-ridden neighborhood that the true, sustained and still-unresolved damage of Katrina becomes so terribly clear.

Unlike most of what happens in "Trouble the Water" — involving an abusive military, clueless National Guardsmen and unlikely heroes — the happenstance meeting of the two couples behind the film was economic serendipity. After all, if the Robertses had had the money or credit to rent a car and flee New Orleans, the movie (which won the top prize for U.S. documentaries at this year's Sundance Film Festival) might have never happened.



ZEITGEIST FILMS PHOTO

Kim and Scott Roberts outside their flood-damaged home in New Orleans

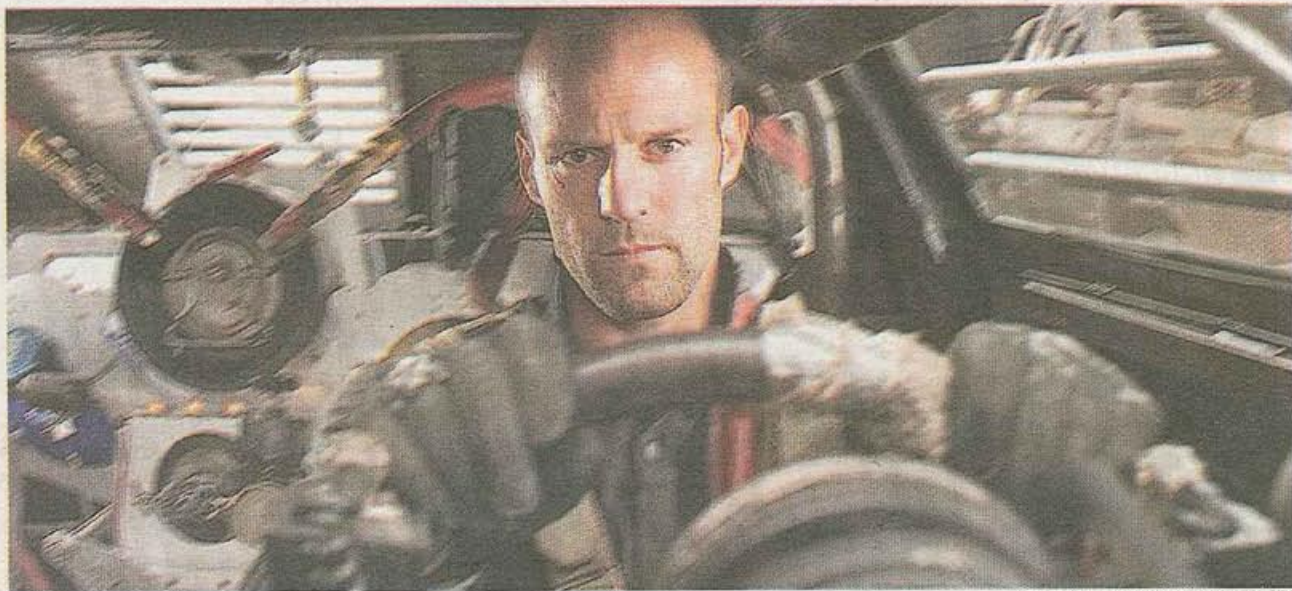
**PLOT** The story of New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina as seen through the eyes and camera of a couple who made it through the weather but weren't sure they could survive the government.

**CAST** Kimberly Rivers Roberts, Scott Roberts

**LENGTH** 1:36

**PLAYING AT** IFC Center and ImageNation at the Faison Firehouse Theater, Manhattan. Coming in September to Cinema Arts Centre, Huntington

**BOTTOM LINE** Brilliant melding of first-person footage, heart, and directors Tia Lessin and Carl Deal's documentary expertise.



CRUISE / WAGNER PRODUCTIONS PHOTO

Jason Statham at the wheel to win his freedom in "Death Race"

★★★ (R)

## 'DEATH RACE'

Cheap thrills but, boy, thrills, nonetheless

BY RAFER GUZMÁN

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Parents, here's the truth. This weekend, your 14-year-old boy may claim to be seeing a Saturday matinee of "The Rocker," rated a mild PG-13, but he is assuredly planning to sneak into "Death Race," rated R. And who could blame him? Filled with weaponized vehicles, pyrotechnics, exploding skulls and some mesmerizingly enormous female breasts — but no sex or love-stuff — "Death Race" seems almost scientifically designed to trigger every boy's prepubescent pleasure-centers.

Yours, too, if we're being honest. "Death Race" may be a loud, low-brow piece of pulp, but it's also crackling entertainment — the very definition of a cheap thrill.

The film bears little resemblance to

Roger Corman's 1975 schlock classic, "Death Race 2000," in which drivers clipped pedestrians for points. Corman serves as executive producer here; this time, the gimmick is convicts who race each other to win their freedom. Onetime pro driver Jensen Ames (Jason Statham), framed for his wife's murder, conveniently lands in Terminal Island prison, where the ice-queen warden (Joan Allen, cursing a hilarious blue streak) just happens to need a skilled racer to keep her reality show high in the ratings.

What the movie lacks in character development (e.g., everything) it makes up for with terrifically preposterous car chases and impressively brutal bouts of jailhouse mano-a-mano. Statham, the bullet-headed Brit star of the "Transporter" films, is a fine physi-

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**PLOT** Convicts race to the death in the hopes of winning their freedom.

**CAST** Jason Statham, Tyrese Gibson, Joan Allen

**LENGTH** 1:29

**PLAYING AT** Area theaters

**BOTTOM LINE** Loud, lowbrow entertainment, and a crackling good time.

cal actor who's been recently restrained ("The Bank Job," "Revolver"), and it's great to see him back in action.

Writer-director Paul W.S. Anderson and his savvy editor, Niven Howie (both were behind "Resident Evil: Extinction"), keep the energy level cranking, even while they essentially play for laughs. The supporting characters, including an unfazed racing coach (Ian McShane), the vengeful driver Machine Gun Joe (Tyrese Gibson) and gorgeous navigator Case (Natalie Martinez), are so cartoonish they eventually become endearing. In the end, "Death Race" is objectionable fun for all ages.

## 'House Bunny'

★★ 1/2 (PG-13)

BY CHRISTY LEMIRE

The Associated Press

The entire purpose of this late-summer comedy is to be a showcase for Anna Faris, star of the "Scary Movie" franchise, whose sunny disposition and solid comic timing make "The House Bunny" a whole lot more enjoyable than it ought to be.

You've seen it all before. It's essentially a female remake of "Revenge of the Nerds," with a script from "Legally Blonde" writers Karen McCullah Lutz and Kirsten Smith, so it contains the same type of facetious humor as that 2001 hit. Faris, in

all her ditsy glory, functions as a descendant from a long line of supposedly dumb blondes, but she's so unafraid of going for the big, goofy laugh at her own expense that she makes this familiar role her own.

Faris stars as Shelley, a perky Playboy bunny who gets kicked out of Hef's mansion and becomes the house mother for a sorority of misfits. The Zetas only have seven members, and they need to come up with 30 pledges to avoid being kicked off campus.

So Shelley, with her itty-bitty outfits, pouf of platinum hair and an endless stream of malapropisms, transforms these wallflowers into Pussycat Dolls.

Silly? Impossible? Of course. This is a "Happy Madison" film, after all — though it is refreshing to see Adam Sandler's production company come up with a female-centric comedy for once.

**PLOT** A bunny living in the Playboy Mansion gets tossed out because she's too old, and has to find work. She lands a gig as housemother to a sorority of socially inept women.

**CAST** Anna Faris, Colin Hanks, Katharine McPhee, Rumer Willis

**LENGTH** 1:38

**PLAYING AT** Area theaters

**BOTTOM LINE** Essentially a female remake of "Revenge of the Nerds," but Faris makes it more enjoyable than it ought to be.