



**Gladiator** (2000) [154m] D: Ridley Scott. C: Russell Crowe, Joaquin Phoenix, Connie Nielsen, Derek Jacobi, Djimon Hounsou, Richard Harris, Oliver Reed.

An illustrious Roman general (Crowe, in a colossal Oscar winning performance) is discredited and left for dead by his newly appointed emperor (Phoenix) resulting in captivity and, ultimately, combating in the Colosseum where each victory gives prospect to confront and oppose those who betrayed him.

Exciting sword and sandal epic perceptively written (David Franzoni, John Logan, and William Nicholson) and confidently realized by Scott's patented visual panache that advances in a barrage of bloody battles and political intrigue. Booming Hans Zimmer score. Reed's final film. Oscar winner for Best Picture, Actor, Costume Design, Visual Effects, and Sound. **R** **DVD**

**Transformers** (2007) [140m] D: Michael Bay. C: Shia LaBeouf, Megan Fox, Josh Duhamel, Tyrese Gibson, Rachael Taylor, Jon Voigt, John Turturro, Kevin Dunn, Julie White, Peter Cullen, Hugo Weaving.

A spastic teenager discovers his beat-up old Camaro is actually an Autobot—a sentient robotic organism from the doomed planet of cybertron—seeking refuge on earth in hopes to revitalize their dying species. Unfortunately their arch-nemesis, the evil Decepticons, have managed to track them down.

Garish, asinine, and overlong exercise in excess (based on a popular line of Hasbro toys from the 1980s no less) is surprisingly appealing with eye-popping special effects and an unabashed exhibition of honor and sacrifice. Bay's emblematic pyrotechnics are aptly suited to task. Cullen reprises his voice talents as Optimus Prime from the animated television series aired decades earlier. **PG-13** **DVD**



Mark WAHEAN