

# Newsday

## NEW YORK CITY

### MOVIE DIGEST

FRIDAY, JULY 18, 2003

#### THE EMBALMER ★★★

**Running time:** 104 mins. **Not rated:** Sex, nudity. **In Italian with subtitles.** **At the Quad.**

Ah, summer. The season of pirate movies, SFX-heavy sequels, and Italian melodramas about bisexual, taxidermist dwarves in the Mafia. Okay, so you won't find that one at your local multiplex. But if you're getting sick of big-studio flicks, this creepy little indie is the ideal antidote.

Pint-sized Peppino is a secretly desperate charmer who hires the stupid but studly Valerio to be his apprentice in the embalming business and expects something equally significant in return.

At moments, the story skirts uncomfortably close to the grotesque. But this atmospheric oddity delivers a surprisingly sensitive take on the overwhelming ache of loneliness.

*Elizabeth Weltzman*