

ENTERTAINMENT

Vol.38, No.39 ~ Friday, July 7, 2006

TODAY



New reviews on:

Pirates of the Caribbean

—*Peter Sobczynski*

A Scanner Darkly

—*Adam Barnick*



LIFE AFTER DEATH? The surprise success of *Who Killed the Electric Car?*

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Revamped CTG knocking down *Walls*



Laurence Fishburne and Matt Lanter in Alfred Ihlry's *Without Walls*



Ticket Holder with
Travis Holder

Since Williamstown Theatre Festival guru Michael Ritchie came west last year to take the reigns of the Center Theatre Group (CTG) from retiring Gordon Davidson, not all of his decisions have been met with favor in the LA theatre community—particularly the early elimination of the CTG's minority workshops and the beloved artists who ran them, and, more recently, the grave loss of Amy

Lieberman, perhaps the best, most imaginative and supportive casting director working anywhere in this hardhearted, industry-obsessed town of ours.

Still, Ritchie has made some brave artistic choices that left him way out on the proverbial limb and, gratefully, most of them have proven inspired. CTG's pre-Broadway mountings of *The Drowsy Chaperone* (which swept the 2006 Tony Awards) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* were both embraced on the Great White Way—although

Howard Kissel wrote in his review of *Drowsy* in the *New York Daily News*: "It's full of wit and high spirits, so entertaining you can almost overlook the fact it came from Los Angeles." Don't you love how Manhattan sees our theatre community, which is in truth far more prolific and far less commercial these days than most of what's being mounted in New York?

Since his arrival, Ritchie has also brought to the Taper Mамет's hilarious *Romance*, *iWitness*, and the Molina/Bening-infused

Cherry Orchard. And, although my own critical praise was decidedly in the minority, I maintain Ritchie's recent, ultra-courageous choice to bring Robert Wilson, William Burroughs, and Tom Waits' stridently spectacular *Black Rider* to the Ahmanson was the best thing to hit Los Angeles stages this year. In other words, Mr. Ritchie's doing something right, galldurnit.

Now adding to his list of successes is *Without Walls* by Alfred Uhry, author of the multi-award winning *Driving Miss Daisy* and *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*. Uhry's newest work is a revelation even if occasionally flawed. Laurence Fishburne stars as Morocco Hemphill, a fey, failed Broadway chorus boy who finds a vocation and sufficient hero worship teaching drama at a prep school in the mid-70s—ignoring inequities such as being able to "eat out for a year" on the cost of one of his rich, teenaged charge's designer footwear. Morocco's quiet life works for him, allowing enough adoration and fulfillment to all but forget his career as a performer, hardly one for the theatre history books he loves to peruse. But his success as an educator is soon rocked by a troubled transfer student named Anton McCormick, played here by Matt Lanter (Geena Davis' son on *Commander in Chief*).

Basically ignored by a fabulously wealthy, globetrotting mother, Anton's previous enrollments have all ended in expulsion, and Morocco's Dewey Academy is his last resort. Anton's interest in theatre is more forced than steadfast—a way to skate through school without effort. Anton's not a theatrical novice, however; he's run a lightboard a couple of times

and is happy to perform an overzealous monologue from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that incites Morocco's comment: "You think what you did was God's gift to William Shakespeare, but you're nowhere near special enough to be as arrogant as you are."

Uhry's bold, engrossing play, energized by the amazingly intense and fiercely committed Fishburne—who seems to be channeling the gloriously rich but effete vocal delivery and stance of Roscoe Lee Browne—may end up being this year's most notable work. Sadly, while the *über*-needy Anton is meant to be bursting with youthful bravado and raging hormones that predictably lure him out of his clothes in the play's controversial seduction scene, Lanter offers only a cardboard-cutout, Hollywood-film-kid version of teenaged angst. Obviously sitting on a lot of raw talent, Lanter rarely speaks from the gut, so devoid of spontaneous communication that, in most scenes, he could bob away on headphones listening to KROQ. Oh, what TV has spawned: actors who don't know how to listen and respond freshly and honestly!

Amanda MacDonald generally manages to avoid the same pitfalls as Morocco's prize student, and Anton's love interest, Lexy. In one lovely, heartfelt scene, she confesses what she *thinks* she knows about Morocco and Anton's relationship via payphone to her industrialist father.

Uhry's script ultimately falls short due to one important omission: a resolution that is less a theatrical band-aid and more a transformation. Insight on Morocco's stalwartly decent character is frustratingly absent, and might have been explored more fully and effectively with a more experienced stage actor cast as Anton, allowing Fish-

Center Theatre Group presents
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burne and MacDonald the freedom and camaraderie to soar to higher levels. As the emotional catalyst who turns his mentor's world upside-down, Lanter's Anton is just too obnoxious to warrant Morocco, or any of the rest of us, to care much about what happens to him.

Still, led by Christopher Ashley's sharply focused direction and extremely provocative staging, *Without Walls* is a masterful, delicate, haunting, highly thought-provoking production, marked by an impressive stage turn by Fishburne, one of our time's best and least cookie-cutter film stars.

Ritchie-dom at CTG continues its prolific summer with two more shows that sound as though they'll be more than worthy of our attention: *Six Feet Under's* wonderful Frances Conroy costars opposite Tessa Thompson in David Greig's *Pyrenees* at CTG's Kirk Douglas Theatre, and the world premiere of the musical *Curtains* begins its pre-Broadway run at the Ahmanson Aug. 9. *Curtains* features *Frasier's* David Hyde Pierce and Broadway royalty Debra Monk, as well as Karen Ziemba, Jason Danieley, and Edward Hibbert. Scott Ellis directs and the backstage mystery features a book by Rupert Holmes, music by John Kander, lyrics by his late partner Fred Ebb, and additional lyrics by Kander and Holmes. Rob Ashford choreographs. No chopped liver here.



Chay Yew

Sounds like a great summer for the new regime at Center Theatre Group, doesn't it? If only some of LA's most talented and hardworking creators of great theatre past and present could keep their jobs instead of losing them—including Luis Alfaro, Chay Yew, and the universally treasured Amy Lieberman—my lingering apprehension about CTG's future could be allayed. ☞

Travis Michael Holder has been writing for ET since 1990. Also an award-winning actor, he has authored five plays produced in LA, including *Surprise Surprise*, soon to be a feature film. His first novel, *Waiting for Walk*, will hopefully be published before he jettisons his corpulent frame off the Hollywood Sign.

Theater Review

Laughs abound in *Fever*



Bo Hudson as Richard Greatham; Rachel Leone as Myra Arundel; Coco Leigh as Clara; Amanda Wing as Jackie Coryton; Max Bird-Ridnell as Sandy Tyrell.

by Mary Mallory

A lighthearted concoction of frivolity and nonsense, Noel Coward's *Hay Fever* entertains audiences with its arch humor and madcap characters. As such, it is a good choice for Theatre Creators Collective's first presentation, easy on the actors and the audience.

The story, such as it is, revolves around the self-absorbed, theatrical Bliss family: novelist father David (Donovan McGrath), actress mother Judith (Maria Menozzi), beautiful daughter Sorel (Samantha Kern), and artist son Simon (Frederick Dechow). Each has invited a member of the opposite sex to their country house for the weekend. How will the family entertain their guests, amuse themselves, and not get on each other's nerves? Who are they really romancing, their guests or each other?

Hay Fever is an amusing production containing good laughs and fine acting. Leading the cast is an over the top, flirtatious Menozzi as the famous actress Judith.

The ensemble exudes a warm chemistry and charm. Certain roles are double cast, with different actors appearing Friday and Saturday nights. Kern makes daughter Sorel a wide eyed, innocent hoot. Dechow brings a sarcastic, understated charm to lay-about Simon. Jackie Coryton brings a touching vulnerability to the sensitive Amanda Wing.

Timing is a little ragged at the beginning before settling down into a comfortable groove in the second act. The English accents, however, remain inconsistent to the end. *Hay Fever* is an entertaining trifle filled with madcap characters, delicious wit, and good acting. ☞

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Community

Expo features art, culture of China's Naxi minority

by Jerry Quinn

The Los Angeles Web Culture Center hosted "The World Culture Heritage Naxi Ethnic Group Culture Exhibition" on July 1st and 2nd. A total of 41 exhibits included copies of Ming and Qing Dynasty murals, Tomba hieroglyphs, and Chinese calligraphy. The exhibition was designed to promote China's Naxi ethnic minority overseas, and foster friendly relations between the United States and China through cultural exchange. Naxi artists Zhonglin Zhao, Ying Xiang, and Kang Zhao traveled from China to attend the exhibition. Phuntsok Tashi, of Tibet, accompanied them as an interpreter and guide.

The Naxi people live primarily in Lijiang, Yunnan, a city with a population of 300,000. They are one of 56 Chinese minority groups, with a long history and culture that can be

traced back to the third century A.D. Unique elements of the culture solidified around the seventh century, when the Naxi migrated along the upper Yangtze River.

Early Naxi people created a kind of pictorial writing system known as Tomba hieroglyphs. The Naxi call this hieroglyph "jiusilusi," which means "marks inscribed on the wood and stone." Such hieroglyphs are still being created in the Lijiang region—the only hieroglyphs still in use today.

The Naxi people welcomed influences from other cultures. Han and Tibetan painters were commissioned to paint murals in Lijiang during the 14 century. Some of these projects lasted more than 300 years, from the Ming Dynasty into the Qing Dynasty. Lijiang's Ming and Qing Dynasty murals occupy an important place in Chinese art history and are considered national relics. ☞



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Finn's *Mexico* anthology transports the mind

by Sean Reynolds

Much more than a travel guide, Maria Finn has compiled an anthology of vivid recollections and poignant essays illuminating the unique history and culture of a diverse country misunderstood by many visitors. *Mexico in Mind* celebrates with vibrant realism the complex aggregate of culture and geography found on the great southern peninsula. Finn, also the editor of *Cuba In Mind*, has chosen a troupe of literary giants spanning over 150 years with tales describing bullfights and love affairs, dancing and spirituality. The stories and journals are from English speaking authors and poets who have traveled the country.

Mexico In Mind would be a good companion while sitting in a deck-chair bound for Puerto Vallarta or at home in a comfortable armchair. The book addresses the practical and the problematic, the desires and fears of a nation struggling in many ways, but deeply rooted by cultural and religious identity. Exceptionable prose and poetry cover a wide arrangement of topics from William Burroughs' sordid accounts of heroin addiction to Richard Rodriguez's essay describing the allure of the Virgin of Guadalupe and her revered status in Mexican culture. Rodriguez writes, "The Virgin of Guadalupe symbolizes the entire coherence of Mexico, body and soul. You will not find the story of the Virgin within hidebound secular histories of Mexico—nor indeed within the credulous repertoire of Senor Fuentes—and the omission renders the history of Mexico incomprehensible."



Author/Editor Maria Finn

D. H. Lawrence suffered from tuberculosis while he and his wife lived in Oaxaca. He wrote opulently descriptive portraits of daily life in essays titled *Mornings in Mexico*. "The Market is a huge roofed-in place. Most extraordinary is the noise that comes out, as you pass along the adjacent street. It is a huge noise, yet you may never notice it. It sounds as if all the ghosts in the world were talking to one another, in ghost voices, within the darkness of the market structure. It is a noise something like rain, or banana leaves in a wind." Editor Finn notes that the market "continues to this day as a riot of color, crafts, and produce that showcases the richness of rural Mexico."

In an excerpt from *Some Travels and Some Travelers There*, author Alice Adams tells of her visit to the home-turned-museum of painter Frida Kahlo. "Her sheer painterly skill is often overlooked in violent reactions, one way or another, to her subject matter, but only consummate skill could have produced such meticulous images of pain and love and loneliness." Adams is dismayed, however, by the lack of Frida Kahlo's artwork in the museum, and the overwhelming presence of her husband Diego Rivera's.

The collection also includes John Reed's *The Rise of a Bandit*, an account of Pancho Villa written while Reed rode alongside the outlaw and his soldiers in 1914, and Jack Kerouac's expatriate musings on Mexican soldiers and village women. Award winning author Luis Rodriguez contributes a selection from his recently published book of poems, *My Nature is Hunger*. The contemporary poet exemplifies the kind of imagery to be found on the pages of *Mexico In Mind*.

*The old woman stares out
an open window,
Shards of sunlight pierce her face
Cutting shadows on skin. She is washing
Her hands after the dishes, dipping them
Into a sea of hues and shapes,
A sea of syllables without sound,
In a stone house in Merida,
Her Merida of dense Mexico.* ♪

Column

A word with the guide to *Getting Down*



Paul Sapiano, director of *The Boys and Girls Guide to Getting Down*



Hollywood Insider
Dawn Miller

Paul Sapiano is the writer/director of the LA Film Festival favorite *The Boys and Girls Guide to Getting Down*. The film hilariously dissects the partying culture in Los Angeles, in the format of a 'how-to' guide on planning your night for optimum success.

Describe a typical day in your life?

There are no typical days. One day I'm hobnobbing with the stars, the next day I'm cleaning my bathroom. I spend a lot of time polishing the wheels on my car. I like to sleep. I'm 32, but I like to look like I'm 24, and the way I maintain that 24-year-old façade is by sleeping a lot and hydrating.

What and where was your first job?

I got a job proofreading bus timetables, I'm not kidding. As a kid, I was also part of a bed of nails, fire-eating and snake charming act, and we would tour all the clubs in the United Kingdom & Ireland. I used to have to wear a studded

leather jacket as a part of my costume, which I still have, by the way.

What is it you like most about your job?

I like not having a boss. I like that nobody can tell me what to do.

What has been the most interesting project you have worked on?

The Boys and Girls Guide to Getting Down—finally it came about that my twisted sense of humor could be seen as a positive thing. When I was working in commercials, I always felt I had to scale it back.

Do you have any tips or advice for those looking to get into your industry?

Yeah, I do actually, and this is it: Do it yourself. Nobody's going to do it for you, just do it yourself. There are already too many directors, DP's and hairdressers. I should have raised the money and made *The Boys and Girls Guide to Getting Down* ten years ago. It's all about the

money. If you have the money, you have the control. So raise the money and do it yourself. Don't think that somebody's going to see your script and think you're the new wonder-kid. I used to think that I would just write the movie, someone would read it and like it, and then I would get to make it, but until you actually do it and raise the money, it's not going to happen.

What are some current projects that you're working on?

They Played Soccer With His Head. The true story of the 1980 New Mexico prison riots, where 32 people were murdered in 36 hours, one of whom was decapitated and the inmates had a kick around with his head.

Who are some of your influences?

I'm strongly influenced by Mary Jane and J. Daniels. Two of my favorite writers.

What's next for you?

Two more *Boys and Girls Guides*. Hopefully the box set will generate enough revenue for me to open a soul bar in Hawaii called The Edwin Star. ♪

Quips from a defensive driver



My Town with
Michael Levine

*Folks who naively think people are basically good have never tried to enter the freeway on the ramp at about five PM.

*Illegally parked cars that have cluttered city streets for two months while transportation officials worked to resolve a legal glitch can now be towed away after being parked 72 hours in the same spot.

*Maneuvering through traffic while talking on the phone increases the likelihood of a crash fivefold and is actually more dangerous than driving drunk, U.S. researchers report.

*Excellent buzz on the street for Joe Cortese starring role in the soon to be released independent film, *Shut Up and Shoot*, where he stars as a flamboyant gay movie producer.

*Los Angeles airport chief Lydia Kennard recently described \$1.2 billion worth of coming improvements to LAX: an expanded Bradley International Terminal, realignment of the southernmost runway to improve safety, and automated screening of all checked baggage.

*Good ideas are not adopted automatically. They must be driven into practice with courageous impatience.

*If there is one thing that Los Angeles has learned in Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's first year in office, it is this: He does not shy away from a fight in pursuit of his vision for the city.

*Calling the historic Hall of Justice downtown a "money pit," the county grand jury accused officials of wasting hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars on renovation efforts even as they risk losing a \$16 million federal grant for the project.

*It seems like every other week; Pat Robertson gets himself into hot water by announcing that he received yet another personal message from the Almighty.

*Immigrant-rights groups and unions are kicking off a months-long campaign to naturalize 1 million immigrants nationwide, bolster the voter registration rolls and send a message to politicians that immigrants are a force to be reckoned with.

*Jeffrey Cohen, author of the Aaron Tucker Mystery series, has a three-book deal for a new series of mystery books, the Comedy Tonight series. In *Some Like It Hot Buttered*, the first in the series, Elliot Freed owns a local New Jersey movie theatre that shows only comedies. When a patron's popcorn is poisoned, he feels obliged to investigate. Due from Berkley Prime Crime in 2007.

*Some of LA's most buxom babes will strut their stuff next month to benefit stray animals, but the city of Los Angeles said Tuesday it is pulling out of the controversial "Hooters for Neuters" bikini contest.

*Emulating the "listening tour" of Hillary Clinton when she first ran for the Senate, the newly minted anchor of the "CBS Evening News," Katie Couric, will soon embark on a listening tour of her own.

*Walt Disney Corp. lost at the U.S. Supreme Court in the 15-year legal battle over the merchandising rights to Winnie the Pooh characters.

*The Justice Department claims impressive results in curbing counterfeit trading and copyright theft but Hollywood leaders and economists aren't buying it—L.A.'s movie industry still is losing \$6.1 billion each year to piracy.

*Tired of the state of public bathrooms? Do something about it! Join the fight for cleaner, safer, more accessible and public restrooms. www.americarestroom.org.

*Polls show that some three out of four Americans support allowing doctors to prescribe medical marijuana for patients who need it. ☞

Taylor: Music a way to give back



Words n Music with
Kat Kramer

I recently attended The Help Group's 29th Annual Spring Luncheon, where the 2006 Honoree was Elizabeth Gabler, the president of Fox 2000 Pictures and "the classiest lady in show business." Gabler was presented with The Help Humanitarian Award by the co-chairmen of Fox Filmed Entertainment, Tom Rothman and Jim Gianopulos. The Help Group has been serving children with special needs for 30 years, including kids with autism, Asperger's Disorder, emotional problems, and learning disabilities. The chairman of the board is Gary Carmona, and the president/CEO is a take-charge lady named Dr. Barbara Firestone. Together, they have made The Help Group one of the largest, most innovative non-profit organizations in the country. They've also assembled an impressive team to create the musical portion of the luncheon.

One such team member is a talented singer/musician named Sarah Taylor who teaches music to kids, and rehearses a select group of them to sing at the Luncheon each year. Taylor, along with the fabulous former Temp-tations vocalist Louis Price, rehearsed the kids on such tunes as "I Believe I Can Fly" and "What A Wonderful World." The kids were thrilled to sing along with special guest Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds. I was lucky to be able to sit down with Sarah Taylor after the show.

Kat Kramer: How did you become involved with The Help Group?

Sarah Taylor: I had just gotten off the road with Joe Cocker—in fact, my suitcases weren't unpacked yet. A friend of mine called and told me a little bit about The Help Group, and



Sarah Taylor sings with her music students at the The Help Group's Spring Luncheon

explained that they didn't have a music program, and they needed someone to come in and teach the kids a couple of songs for their up-coming event. It just so happens that I always wanted to be a teacher. My mom was a teacher. My grandmother was a teacher. I'd done volunteering in the past, but at the time, I was so busy in the music industry.

Kat: What was the job interview like? Can you remember how you felt?

Sarah: I went over and met Barbara (Firestone). I'd never had a "straight job" before—I'd been doing nothing but singing. I remember I dressed in what I thought was "appropriate" for my interview. I gave them my resume—which I'm sure they were looking at it thinking, "What's this?" It had

all the tours I'd done, but it had nothing to do with teaching credentials. But Barbara could see how much I wanted to do it. She's amazing, and she saw my passion. I came back a week later, and worked with the kids. It went great.

Kat: How did you approach teaching them?

Sarah: I just taught them the way I would if I was at a recording studio, and I had a session, and I was going to teach the

parts to the session singers. It worked. When I started teaching them, the population of the kids was mostly SED (severe emotionally disturbed). They had been abused and neglected. SED kids respond well to an exciting environment. They're good at last minute changes, it doesn't freak them out because their lives are so undependable and unreliable, so if I want to change my mind, it doesn't faze them. I play piano and guitar—and I choose the songs. I think all the kids respond to a more contemporary approach.

Kat: With Music Education being cut from most normal school budgets, it seems yours is thriving. How has it changed your day-to-day routine?

Sarah: Barbara is so supportive of the arts, it's ridiculous. She's all about reaching the kids in a creative way. I'm grateful to her for allowing me to find a new sense of self-identity. I used to be so consumed with my music career. I was part of that world where you're checking your voicemail all the time to see if you have a job. In working with the kids, I'd find the whole day had gone by, and I hadn't even thought of doing that. I've learned a lot about myself from the experience—it's a new level of self-discovery. For some of these kids—it's the music that gets them out of bed in the morning. It's been an exciting journey for me. ☞

See The Help Group kids perform on December 2nd at "The Teddy Bear Ball" at The Beverly Hilton Hotel. For tickets, please visit www.TheHelpGroup.org.



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TODAY

Television

King draws stars to *Dreamscapes*



William Hurt battles an army of vengeful toys in Stephen King's *Dreamscapes*

by Frank Barron

From the stories of Stephen King, *Nightmares & Dreamscapes* is a four-week television event presented by TNT on Wednesdays starting July 12 at 9 PM. Big stars and fine actors, such as William Hurt, William H. Macy, Steven Weber, Tom Berenger, Marsha Manson, and Kim Delaney have flocked to the Turner cable series, but the startling stories by Stephen King are the real stars. There's not a word of dialog in the first, hour-long episode titled *Battleground*, but the story about a hit man (Hurt) who wages war with the creations of the toymaker he just killed will have audiences spellbound.

Umney's *Last Case* (airing July 19), stars Emmy-winning Macy as a hard-bitten gumshoe in 1938 who discovers he is the main character in a series of novels that a writer named Sam is writing in 2005. "Stephen King is bold," Macy said. "His imagination is fantastical, so he'll take great leaps. He will put together plots that are unlikely, but he's such a skilled writer that you buy into them."

The next episode, *You Know They Got A Hell of a Band*, stars Steven Weber, who worked with King on three other projects, including the recent ABC mini-

series *Desperation*. Weber says his *Nightmares & Dreamscapes* story is, "very Stephen King because it's twisted and humorous. It's about a couple that goes on a road trip and encounters the denizens of a small town called Rock'n'Roll Heaven. It's more than just scary. This has a lot to say about America's love affair [with] pop culture."

Move over Buffy

If you liked the *Blade* films with Wesley Snipes, get ready for *Blade: The Series* on Spike TV (Wednesday's at 10). The show, based on the popular Marvel comic books, recently debuted with a ratings-grabbing two-hour movie, setting up the premise of a noble half vampire hell-bent on crushing a colony of full-bred vampires in Detroit. Starring as the heroic night stalker is Kirk Jones, who audiences may remember from last summer's brilliant war drama *Over There*. But

music fans will know him best as Sticky Fingaz from the hip-hop group Onyx. Now Jones is showing off his athletic side, as he participates in breathtaking stunts in the action-packed series. That's what makes *Blade* distinctive—in addition to all the usual shootouts and chase scenes, there's a lot of martial arts and high-wire work.

"The training is extensive, six hours a day just in the gym," Jones said. "Then there's the martial arts, sword work, everything. But it's easy for me because I'm an athlete. I love it. The first time I got in a wire rig, hanging four stories up, everybody is like 'Are you okay?' I'm like, 'Are you kidding me? I live for this. Let's do it again.'"

Aiding the blood-sucking exterminator is Jill Wagner as Krista, a soldier just back from Iraq, and Nelson Lee as Blade's sidekick Shen. He's the one who creates imaginative weapons to destroy the vampires—sort of like James Bond's "Q."

News-worthy

Brian Williams may be the ideal anchorman on NBC's *Nightly News*, but he admits he relished recent appearances on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* and *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. "I love being funny with them. But there are a lot of things that I care about, although some of them don't lend themselves easily to television. I'm a huge history buff and I love the history of the American presidency. I love watching cars racing around the track, but you can only do so much journalism on NASCAR," he says, laughing.

Speaking of which, NASCAR superstar Jimmie Johnson, winner of the Daytona 500, was part of all the hoopla surrounding the opening of the *Fast & Furious: Extreme Close Up* attraction at Universal Studios Hollywood. It was inspired by the rubber-burning action movie franchise. Although he is no stranger to life in the fast lane, Johnson was wowed by the stunt drivers who jumped over a couple of vehicles, and made "donuts" on the asphalt as the cars spun around in circles. Also he praised the drivers' skill at "drifting," which is sliding around a sharp turn, ultra fast—as seen in the latest film *The Fast & the Furious: Tokyo Drift*. Now, gentlemen and ladies, start your engines. And if you can't get enough of NASCAR on cable, head to the California Speedway, or Universal Studios for the ride of your life.



Macy fractured in *Dreamscapes*

Television

Pilot spells ABC's of *Kyle XY*

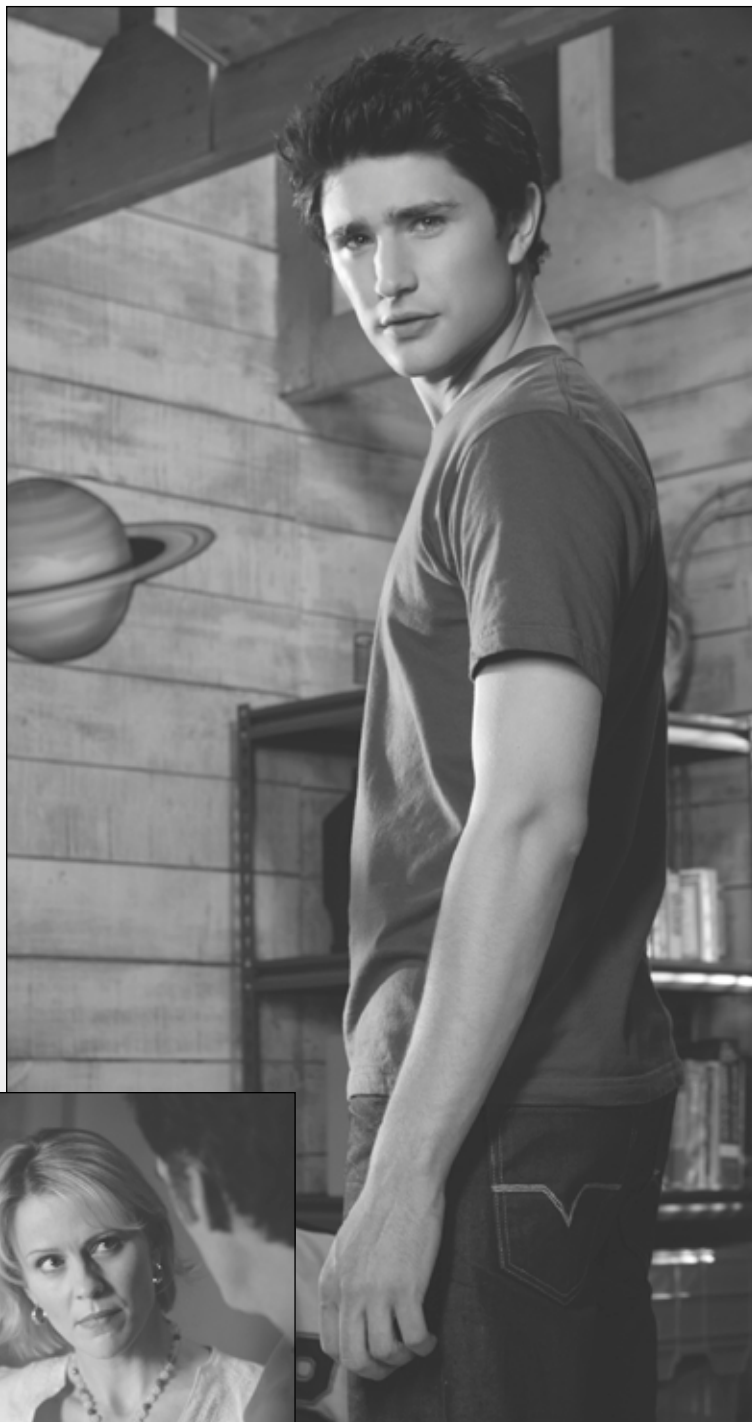
by M. Y. Lee

Kyle XY, the new ABC Family series about a teenage boy with no memory, no clothes, and no belly button, promises to tap into the high school genre with an almost *X-Files* twist.

Found wandering alone in a Seattle forest, unable to speak or understand a word, Kyle (Matt Dallas) is sent to juvenile hall. But when a pretty-in-a-Doris-Day-sort-of-way psychologist, Nicole Trager (Marguerite MacIntyre) meets Kyle, she decides to take him home to her family. While there are a few protests at first, she is able to convince her passive husband, Stephen (Bruce Thomas), boy-crazy daughter, Lori (April Matson), and her annoying son, Josh (Jean-Luc Bilodeau) to let Kyle stay for while.

Kyle makes Doogie Howser look like a slacker, finishing hour-long exams perfectly in five minutes. Medical tests prove he uses massive amounts of his brain when most humans only use seven percent. He also has a photographic memory, the ability to mimic people exactly, reprogram computers in mere seconds, and skillfully dodge fast-moving objects like Neo from *The Matrix*. Whether he is an alien or born in a laboratory, we'll slowly discover as the series unravels. Kyle is a likeable character. He looks innocent without being vacuous. He pulls off being silly, and the more you find yourself embarrassed for him, the more you care.

What also makes *Kyle XY* different is its lighter sensibility. Although it includes a suspicious man who watches Kyle and the Trager family from his truck, the show still has what one might call "The Disney Effect," where you're never really worried that someone is in danger. *Kyle XY* lacks the eeriness of *The X-Files* or *Smallville*, but the writers Eric Bress and J. Mackye Gruber (*The Butterfly Effect*, *Final Destination 2*) do a nice job of keeping you wanting more. The only thing you might not want more



Matt Dallas as Kyle

ofz is voiceover. To make up for the fact that Kyle doesn't really speak, the audience is beset with inner monologues. Although interesting at first, they quickly become tiresome.

Don't let the fact that it's on "ABC Family" throw you off. The network is really revamping its image with the shows it's putting on the air. ABC Family is more like the N or what used to be the WB, than the Disney channel. The programming is edgy, young but not too young, and of course, deals with family. But *Kyle XY* definitely has its PG-13 moments—which include masturbation, teenage sex, and some nudity.

In the pilot, *Kyle XY* relies on its engaging mystery and unusual concept to bring in and hopefully keep viewers. But once Kyle gets past his awkward "baby" phase (and all the set-up needed only for a pilot), he'll start doing everyday activities like going to school, and we'll feel more connected to him. *✍*



Marguerite MacIntyre as Nicole Trager

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Now Playing: Capsule reviews from Entertainment Insiders

The Break-Up

★★ (PG-13)

One might be inclined to walk into a screening of *The Break-Up* thinking that the title says it all. Except in this case, it doesn't. Now if the film had the more appropriate title of "The Argument," then that would have been more like it. (SM)

AMC Loews Universal City 18 & IMAX, The Grove, Pacific Culver Stadium 12, Pacific Galleria Stadium 16

Cars ★★★ 1/2 (PG 13)

Pixar is unique in the history of movies. It's the only studio not to have ever produced a flop. Even Walt Disney himself during his heyday would produce the occasional financial disaster. But not Pixar. The only bad movie they ever produced was a short called *Boundin'* and that doesn't really count, which leaves expectations so high as to cause breathing trouble to see them up close. (EL)

AMC Loews Universal City 18 & IMAX, AMC Century City 14, Pacific Galleria Stadium 16, AMC Santa Monica 7, Century 8, AMC Burbank 16, AMC Media Center 8, AMC Media Center North, Mann Glendale Exchange 10, Pacific Paseo Stadium 14

Click ★★ (PG-13)

Since a magical remote control turns out to be the cause of Adam Sandler's problems in his latest comedy, I couldn't help but hope that a real fast-forward button would appear out of nowhere and bail me out of the last 40 minutes. That's because despite an amusing set-up that aims higher than you'd expect from a Sandler comedy, *Click* tunes out with an ending that's sappy, redundant and not nearly as funny as the hour or so that preceded it. (SM)

AMC Loews Universal City 18 & IMAX, The Grove, AMC Century City 14, Arclight, Mann Criterion 6 Theatres, Century 8, AMC Burbank 16, AMC Media Center 8, AMC Media Center North 6, Mann Glendale Exchange 10, Pacific Beach Cities Stadium 16, Plant 16, Pacific Paseo Stadium 14

Da Vinci Code, The ★★ 1/2

(PG-13) Time to state the obvious: the movie was NEVER going to be as good as the book and everyone knows it. Remember the first *Harry Potter* film or *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. Both were fine films, but you can't do things as nuanced as some novels and remain faithful unless you've got a miniseries lasting a total of four or five hours. This is not to say that Akiva Goldsman and Ron Howard don't TRY. They did a damn fine job of doing an almost exact transcription of the Dan Brown novel, but the simple

fact is that the book was better at when expectorating conspiracy theories than doing chases. (EL) The Grove, Arclight, Pacific Galleria Stadium 16, AMC Burbank 16, Mann Glendale Exchange 10, UA Marina Del Rey 6, AMC Santa Monica 7

Devil Wears Prada ★★★

(PG-13)

The concept of fashion as art is a theme given a proper send-up in *The Devil Wears Prada*. And when that art is worn by the likes of Meryl Streep, you can forgive the softness of the film. *Prada* deals with adult issues but handles adult situations from a distance to make it appropriate viewing for a large audience spectrum. And while this may help at the box office, it waters down the effectiveness of the story. (JH)

Arclight, AMC Loews Universal City 18 & IMAX, The Grove, AMC Century City 14, Pacific Culver Stadium 12, Los Feliz 3, The Bridge: Cinema de Lux, Laemmle Grande 4 Plex, AMC Loews Marina 6, Pacific Galleria Stadium 16, AMC Loews Broadway 4, Century 8, AMC Burbank 16, AMC Media Center North 6, Mann Glendale Marketplaces 4, Plant 16, Laemmle's One Colorado Cinemas, Pacific Paseo Stadium 14

Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift ★★

(PG-13)

The first two were to some extent hits, and so the studio really had no choice but to make a third. It's all the usual crap. The racing scenes are to some extent exciting. But when the camera isn't on fast cars, the action stops dead in its tracks making the film boring more often than not. If you like watching cars crash, *Tokyo Drift* might be for you. Although race car fans might be left wanting as the action becomes gridlock when the drama kicks in. (EL)

AMC Loews Universal City 18 & IMAX, The Grove, Mann Chinese 6, Pacific Galleria Stadium 16, Century 8, AMC Burbank 16, AMC Media Center 8, Mann Glendale Exchange 10, Pacific Paseo Stadium 14

Friends With Money ★★ 1/2 (R)

With Jennifer Aniston, Frances McDormand, Catherine Keener and Joan Cusack. An episodic, fairly enjoyable movie, but never raises its stakes high enough to become truly absorbing. Holof-

cener declines to deeply venture into her characters' trials and tribulations. She opts instead to sugarcoat the film with a litany of whimsical scenes that offer mild amusement. (WC)

Academy 6 Theater

Heart of the Game, The ★★★★★

(PG-13)

Darnellia Russell had game but she needed more. Basketball gave her a start, but what is thought of as just a game to some became the catalyst from which Darnellia will mature into a woman. *The Heart of the Game* is a terribly inspiring documentary that's about more than Darnellia's story, it's a story about a coach with odd ideas about basketball and a heart big



Anne Hathaway in *The Devil Wears Prada*

enough to overcome the odds. (JH)

Laemmle's One Colorado, Landmark NuWilshire Theatre

An Inconvenient Truth

★★★★★ (PG)

Is Al Gore doing a Chicken Little act in *An Inconvenient Truth*? I wish he were. This stunning documentary about global warming is a well-reasoned, clearly-proven, intelligent, cogent, irresistible torrent of scientific data, in a curiously warm, engaging, often funny presentation. What an entertaining horror movie this is! (JG)

AMC Century City 14, Arclight, Los Feliz 3, Pacific Galleria Stadium 16, Laemmle Monica 4, AMC Media Center North 6, Laemmle Playhouse 7

Keeping Up With The Steins ★★

★ (PG-13)

The Bar Mitzvah (Hebrew for "first blessing"), is one of the most important ceremonies in the Jewish religion. In olden times, a 13-year-old boy would come up to read the torah at the synagogue for the first time. Then he would be given a party prior to being kicked out of the house and forced to get a job. (EL)

Laemmle Music Hall, Laemmle Town Center

The Lake House ★★ 1/2 (PG)

A time warp allows architect Alex Wyler (Keanu Reeves) to correspond with Doctor Kate Forster (Sandra Bullock). Forster just happens to live in the future. Not all that far in the future, however, about two years to be exact. And as luck would have it they live in the same house. In Forster's future Alex moved out well before. Reeves and Bullock both do a decent job and Christopher Plummer as Alex's father delightfully chews the scenery. *The Lake House* is a one hankie weepy for gals who really don't want to see any of the superhero action flicks that usually come out this time of year. (EL) AMC Loews Universal City 18 & IMAX, The Grove, AMC Century City 14, Arclight, Pacific Culver Stadium 12, Pacific Sherman Oaks 5, Mann Criterion 6 Theatres, Century 8, AMC Burbank 16, AMC Media Center North 6, Mann Glendale Exchange 10, Plant 16, Laemmle's One Colorado Cinemas, Pacific Paseo Stadium 14

Leonard Cohen: I'm Your Man ***

★ (PG-13)

This concert documentary gathers solid interviews, anecdotes, recitations and tribute performances that present a fairly engaging portrait of the wry, dark poet who became a distinct voice in pop music. Unlikely to appeal much

beyond Cohen's loyal fans or bring converts to the brooding whimsy and dense wordplay of his songs. But the reclusive Cohen offers warm and amusing recollections. — David Germain, AP

Laemmle Sunset 5, Laemmle Monica 4

Loverboy ★★ 1/2 (R)

Even devoted fans of *Loverboy*, based on Victoria Redel's novel and directed by veteran actor Kevin Bacon, will have to admit it's a mess of a movie. With a tone so uneven and scattered that you can almost (but not quite) believe it's actually what the director intended, *Loverboy* is an odd little movie...but not always in a good way. Primarily a vehicle for Bacon's wife Kyra Sedgwick to dive into what has to be the most bizarre role of her career, the film sputters in more than a few spots, yet its quirkiness manages to keep you intrigued to some degree. (WC)

Laemmle Sunset 5, Laemmle Monica 4

Nacho Libre ★★ (PG)

Jared Hess' sporadically funny *Nacho Libre* is a messy film carried through on the misanthropic charisma of its lead Jack Black. Lots of unique sketch type comedy can't make this incomplete story work. And this despite some inspired moments from anti-star Black. (JH)

AMC Loews Universal City 18 & IMAX, The Grove, AMC Century City 14, Mann Chinese 6, Pacific Culver Stadium 12, Los Feliz 3, Pacific Galleria Stadium 16, Century 8, AMC Burbank 16, AMC Media Center 8, Mann Glendale Marketplace 4, Plant 16, Laemmle's One Colorado Cinemas, Pacific Paseo Stadium 14, UA Marina Del Rey 6, AMC Santa Monica 7

The Omen 2006 *** (R) is an awfully good film. Surprisingly, it exceeds its predecessor but could not have been made without it. Though it has been a while since



Frances McDormand as the ill-tempered Jane in *Friends with Money*



Sandra Bullock receives mysterious love letters in The Lake House

I've seen the Richard Donner directed original, I believe that the 2006 remake is fairly faithful to its source. But instead of feeling like a dirty impostor (ala Van Sant's technically excellent but something missing *Psycho*), this version is sleeker and more consistently entertaining than the first. (JH) AMC Loews Universal City 18 & IMAX, Mann Criterion 6, AMC Media Center 8, Plant 16

Over The Hedge ★★★★★ (PG)

Between the controversy surrounding its subject matter, the popularity of its star and the fact that just about everyone on the planet has already read the book, theater owners can finally count on getting that big opening weekend they've been waiting for. And if *The Da Vinci Code* doesn't do it for them, then *Over the Hedge* probably will. That's because the computer-animated big screen adaptation of the popular comic strip series created by Michael Fry and T Lewis is a clever, charming and often funny movie that the whole family can enjoy. (SM) Mann Culver Plaza 6 Theatres

A Prairie Home Companion ★★★★★ (PG-13)

Robert Altman's star-studded ensemble piece was inspired by Garrison Keillor's understated, unpretentious radio show from a mythical, benign, heartwarming, American hinterland. Altman's direction is as laid-back and unostentatiously clever as Keillor's show. With Keillor himself as writer and self-effacing star, Altman comes up with a wonderfully substantial, light-hearted and

wistful film. In it, the radio show is taking place against the suddenly pending demise of station WLT, sold to an evil Texas conglomerate, making this the last hurrah. There is lots of backstage "reality," and - above all - fabulously stick-in-the-brain good music. Surprisingly effective vocals by Meryl Streep, Lily Tomlin, Virginia Madsen, Woody Harrelson, and John C. Reilly. Yes, they also act in the context of monologues and interweaving stories. (JG) AMC Century City, Arclight, Pacific Culver Stadium 12, Pacific Galleria Stadium 16, Laemmle Fairfax, Laemmle Playhouse 7

Road to Guantanamo ★★★★★ (R)
Please see two contrasting reviews on page 17. Laemmle 1 Colorado, Laemmle Fairfax

A Scanner Darkly ★★★★★ (R)
Please see full length review on page 16. The Grove, Laemmle Monica 4,

Strangers with Candy ★ (R)
Roughly four times the length of a normal episode, *Candy* unfortunately does not contain a similar multiple of laughs. The film is a smug and dreary slog through largely unfunny material that will completely bewilder newcomers while testing the patience of loyal fans of the show. Amy Sedaris as Jerri Blank is best in small doses. However I will admit that the film does contain one bit that actually made me laugh as hard as anything else that I have seen this year: a gym class sequence featuring an activity more hazardous than even

dodgeball. This bit is so weird and unexpectedly hilarious that it makes you wonder who the people were that came up with it and where they were when the rest of the script was being written. (Peter Sobczynski)

Landmark NuWilshire, Laemmle Sunset 5, Laemmle Playhouse 7, Laemmle Town Center 5

see LISTINGS p.18



Stephen Colbert and Amy Sedaris team in the Comedy Central spin-off, Strangers With Candy

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Depp to the rescue in *Pirates*



PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST

★★★☆☆
(3 out of 4 stars)

DIRECTED BY GORE VERBINSKI

STARRING: JOHNNY DEPP,
ORLANDO BLOOM, KEIRA KNIGHTLEY

150 MINUTES, RATED PG-13

by Peter Sobczynski

Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest contains many of the elements seen in the original 2003 film—a freewheeling plot consisting of equal parts swash-buckling, action, and silly humor, plenty of icky creatures, creepy villains, and sexy heroines and—most importantly—a central performance by Johnny Depp that starts off over-the-top and proceeds from there. The one thing that it doesn't have—and the one thing that none of the zillions that went into it could possibly buy—is the sense of novelty that the first film had. When that one came out, most people assumed that it would be a shameless cash-in effort by a

studio so desperate for material that they were reduced to ransacking their theme park rides for inspiration. When audiences discovered that it was better than expected, they were so excited that they were willing to overlook its obvious flaws—mostly a rambling screenplay and a running time that was about thirty minutes longer than necessary. Now that the surprise is gone, *Dead Man's Chest* has to stand on its own merits and reveals itself to be—surprise—a relatively entertaining film often hobbled by a rambling screenplay and a running time about thirty minutes longer than necessary.

Picking up soon after the first film ended, *Dead Man's Chest* opens as the wedding of lovebirds Will Turner (Orlando Bloom) and Elizabeth Swann (Keira Knightley) is interrupted by the loathsome Lord Cutler Beckett (Tom Hollander) who

arrests them and sentences them to death for aiding in the escape of wanted fugitive Captain Jack Sparrow (Depp). Beckett makes a deal with Will—in exchange for a pardon, Will is to track down Sparrow and retrieve the magical compass that Beckett desires. Will sets sail in pursuit of his quarry and before long, tracks Sparrow to a distant island where the natives worship him as a god. Unfortunately for him, these natives have a tendency to eat their gods in order to release their spirits into the world.

The film's passable plot revolves around a deal that Sparrow struck many years ago with the loathsome Davy Jones (Bill Nighy), a long-dead buccaneer who resides on the Flying Dutchman with his half-man/half-fish/all-undead crew. Sparrow received a ship, the Black Pearl, in exchange for his soul.

Naturally, Sparrow wants to save his own skin and sends Will in his place. This doesn't sit well with Davy and he demands that Sparrow provide him with 100 souls in three days under penalty of a fate worse than death. After a half-hearted attempt to coerce potential souls in Tortuga—a stop that reunites him with Elizabeth (who escaped from jail during all of this)—Sparrow decides to try to find the legendary Dead Man's Chest, a long-buried chest belonging to Davy that contains a still-beating heart and promises everlasting life and control of the seas to its owner. This leads to a



Keira Knightley fetching as Elizabeth Swann

number of wild swordfights, attacks by zombie pirates and the fearsome Kraken, plenty of cliff-hangers, and what may be the first selfless act performed by Sparrow in his lifetime.

All of this is fun for a while but the problem with a film like *Dead Man's Chest* is that a tone of sustained whimsy can only be maintained for so long before it starts to get a little wearying. (If you doubt this, try watching *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* sometime.) By trying so hard to thrill, dazzle and amuse us in every single scene, the filmmakers never give the film the kind of breathing room required to fully appreciate their efforts. Take the first set-piece involving the escape from the cannibal island—for a while, it is a genuinely hilarious slapstick ballet on a scale not seen since Steven Spielberg's thoroughly underrated *1941*, but it goes on for so long that it winds up peaking long before it ends. Thus, what should have been a priceless example of slapstick stunting (a three-way duel fought atop a enormous runaway water wheel) just kind of lies there. Screenwriters Ted Elliot & Terry Rossio and director Gore Verbinski (all returning from the first film) apparently didn't heed the criticisms that the original was too long for its own good—*Dead Man's Chest* packs approximately 105 minutes of top-notch entertainment into 156-minutes of movie.

At the same time, I am still recommending *Dead Man's Chest* for many of the same reasons that I recommended the first film. Although they go on far too long, the action set pieces are an ingenious blend of practical effects, elaborate CGI creations, and impressive fight choreography. The storyline deftly moves from high melodrama to low comedy to creepy horror with nary a hiccup and ends on a note that should have everyone salivating for the other sequel coming out next summer. (Like the first film, this one is rated PG-13 and parents should heed that when considering whether or not to bring the wee ones.)

As for the performances, Nighy (the man underneath various motion-capture devices in the same manner as Andy Serkis in the *Lord of the Rings* films) is appropriately loathsome and icky as Davy Jones. Knightley is appropriately spunky and delightful as Elizabeth (not to



Orlando Bloom as Will Turner

mention quite fetching when decked out in a tri-cornered hat). And Bloom is . . . Bloom is the boring and blandly handsome straight man that no one notices because everyone else gets all the colorful material.

The real selling point of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise is, once again, the magnificently fruity performance by Johnny Depp as Captain Jack Sparrow. Once famously based on Keith Richards (though one could also detect traces of Depp's late pals Hunter S. Thompson and Marlon Brando), he has here taken the role far beyond mere impression into the kind of demented realm that only the most supremely confident of performers ever dare to enter. Most actors would shy away from a role like Sparrow for fear of coming off as ridiculous. Here, no matter how strange the circumstances—whether he is tied to a barbecue spit or battling oddball creatures or demonstrating that the monkey in his possession is indeed undead—Depp always figures out a way to put an additional spin on the material via his hilariously mannered approach. In a film that comes close to proving that there really can be too much of a good thing, Depp somehow manages to leave audiences hungry for more. *✍*

Peter Sobczynski writes for the Liberty Suburban Chicago Newspapers chain and on-line at www.efilmcritic.com. He can also be heard on the nationally syndicated radio program, Mancow's Morning Madhouse. Comments, complaints, questions, threats and Milla Jovovich's phone number can be sent to him at petersob@netzero.net.

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TODAY

Will *Car* influence lawmakers?

Michael Guillén asks the avengers of the *Electric Car*

by Michael Guillén

Earlier this year at the 49th San Francisco International Film Festival's opening night gala, I couldn't resist my Skyy vodka martinis, and, you know what they say: one is too many and two is not enough! So I arrived at my interview the following morning a little worse for wear but eager nonetheless to have a chat with the team behind *Who Killed the Electric Car?* Former General Motors specialist Chelsea Sexton was overdue, having missed a flight, so we started the ball rolling with director Chris Paine, gas conservation expert Wally Rippel, and executive producer Dean Devlin. Sexton arrived soon after.

Michael Guillén: I'm 52 years old, I've never had a driver's license, and I've never had a car. But I was so enthused by *Who Killed the Electric Car*, I wanted one! I've been interviewing a number of documentary filmmakers who seem to share a common motivation, which is to counter the systematic erasure of history perpetrated by various powers-that-be. In your film, the culpability has been narrowed down to the usual suspects, but what are we supposed to do with this information?

Chris Paine: That's a good question! Well, I would hope that people finish this film thinking, "My god, there are alternatives to the gasoline car I've been driving. There are alternatives in the way I think about what transportation is. About what kind of cars I want to have available to me. What do I want to do with the car that I currently own?" You don't use a car, which is fantastic, because you're obviously not—

Wally Rippel: You don't create emissions! [Laughter.]

Chris: That's terrific! I hear people talking on the radio about four dollars a gallon for gasoline and one solution is, "Well, why don't I just drive less?" That's terrific. But also, the auto companies—and you would hope the government would [provide the incentive for] this—should really make it easier for us to use

electricity to make cars go because we create that here in the U.S. Our film talks about how effectively that can work if we all put our minds to it. It did work, in the 90's we had it, and it can come back now. The technology is still there.

Wally: There's a lot of stuff happening. There's the Prius, the hybrid made by Toyota. I think it's being driven in many cases because of high fuel prices. Remember when the electric car [the EV1] was out, fuel prices were much lower than they are now; but, we saw this coming. I think that things are going to happen whether or not the government is involved. My concern is not "Are we going to do the right thing to save the planet?" but "Is America going to be left behind?" Are we going to watch as the Japanese corner the market? As the Chinese move in? As India steps up? Are we going to be the odd man out? I'm sensitive to that as an engineer. I want to be in the leadership role. I want to be a participant. I do not want to be an observer. I want to be in the game.

Michael: My concern—and I think it's a growing concern as we're becoming more aware of the current administration—is the addiction for oil justifying aggression. The other day I was listening to a news report about the oil resources in Venezuela and how suddenly we have war ships off the coast of Venezuela and just as suddenly we're finding reasons to be angry with them. The transparency of the situation irks me.

It seems that it has fallen to documentary filmmakers to correct the adage that history belongs to the victors. Certain documentaries, like yours, cause us to re-evaluate this. At first we trust the decisions of our leaders, they seem to be for the best, but then we take a second look and realize their decisions are wrong and their "histories" self-serving. A.O. Scott [of the *New York Times*] called *Who Killed the Electric Car?* a "prosecutorial examination" and *Grist Magazine's* Dan Bree called it a whodunit in the form of a love story.



Electric Car director Chris Paine and executive producer Dean Devlin at the scene of the crime. Devlin calls *Car* one of the highlights of his career.

[Chelsea Sexton arrives and, after initial introductions and salutations, she settles into the interview.]

Michael: Chelsea, I was talking about how *Who Killed the Electric Car?* has been posed as a whodunit mystery but that it's really a love story. And you walked in just at that moment!

Dean: The love interest!

Chelsea Sexton: Hardly.

Michael: What are you doing now, Chelsea? How have you continued on with your advocacy of the electric car?

Chelsea: I still do quite a lot of work with Plug In America, which was the organization that you saw towards the end of the film. We went through this evolution from saving cars to trying to get more cars built. And so we still continue to do that. We work with policy makers and car companies and the whole point

is to get these cars back on the road, to take the lessons that we learned and keep it from happening again, and also figure out how to move in a forward positive direction.

Michael: Audiences have definitely been moved by this film. How do you think the American consumer is going to react? Will they rally to the call?

Chelsea: I think they will. And our experience has proven that they want to. They come out of each screening saying, "What do I do? Where do I go? Who do I call? What do I buy?" The whole point is to give them more of those options. It's about creating more choices.

Michael: Why do you think General Motors was so drastic in destroying the EV1's? (That was the emotional part of this documentary. They saved those cars!) Why was there such a systematic erasure and destruction of the electric car?

Chelsea: I think the short answer is that the EV1's were their own best advertisement. The more they were on the road, the more people wanted them and if that's not the business you want to be in, having them out there becomes a liability in itself.

Chris: The official reason they claimed was that there were no spare parts and that cars couldn't be kept on the road and that there was a potential long-term liability. But their arguments seem very circular. We really came to the conclusion they just didn't want electric cars out there on the roads. What do you think, Wally?

Wally: Let's suppose you were a typewriter company and it's 1975, and you started a little venture with computers and a little bit of stuff with word processing and, of course, these things are more expensive to make than typewriters. And you really didn't believe in it but you thought we'll do this just in case [the government is serious about wanting computers]. But people like your product, and you're getting pushed in directions that just don't fit in with your typewriter plans. Then, it turns out [the government isn't serious.] If you didn't have vision for computers, you probably wouldn't do anything more to move your business toward them. And this is the big picture that I see. I see General Motors doing things that are hurtful, not just to the rest of us, but to themselves! Look at their bottom line right now. They're losing a million dollars an hour, twenty-four hours a day. The thing is, when you tell lies, you sometimes believe your own lies.

Dean: It's interesting talking about General Motors, on *60 Minutes* a couple of weeks ago they did a big piece about how General Motors may be near bankruptcy and they blamed 100% of this on their workers! They blamed it on how much they have to pay into retirement funds and the health benefits and I thought, "How disgusting! Blame the people who built your company and not even mention that you abandoned the technology you had before anyone else



Wally Rippel on consumers and the electric car: "Yes, we're all consumers. We should be chasing the best deal for our dollar. But we're also citizens and we can say, Advertising is just advertising. What product really corresponds with my values? What do I want for my vision of the future?"

in the entire world, technology that could have put you on the map, technology that could have changed the face of your company. Just ignore that and blame the workers."

Michael: CARB (California Air Resources Board) initially implemented the Zero Emissions Mandate to ward off California's pollution crisis but then ended up revoking it due to compromises struck with the auto industry. Can the Zero Emissions Mandate be brought back somehow? Can your documentary in any way help lobby for a re-evaluation of that decision?

Chelsea: The Zero Emissions Mandate is actually going to be revisited this summer. There are some new hearings to try to figure out what to do with it. So we not only hope, but expect this film to have an impact on those hearings. And the bottom line is the consumers have got to start asking for what they want. The traditional model of the auto industry was, "We're going to build something and then convince you that you want it." That needs to be reversed.

Michael: You do place culpability on the consumer—their lack of awareness—and yet at the same time I'm curious whether it's entirely their fault. At that time, the average consumer was being bombarded with advertisements for "preferable" products that the auto industry wanted to sell them. Can the consumer really be blamed?

Wally: This is such a fascinating question for us. We went back and forth because consumers

really didn't have a chance to buy this in 99% of the country, you never ever heard about this, so how can we blame them? It's a close call, but, we decided that those consumers that knew about it, they said, "You know what? I need to wait and see." Or, "I'm going to go with what I see advertised on television." Yes, we're all consumers. We should be chasing the best deal for our dollar. But we're also citizens and we can say, "Advertising is just advertising. What product really corresponds with my values? What do I want for my vision of the future?" And that requires that we look beyond advertising. I don't mean to soapbox here, but, we decided in the end that consumers are part of the solution. So since the electric car was killed, we're all in this together. And we all need to work together to get out of the situation we're in now.

Dean: It's a very different world today. For the average consumer, the consequences of not embracing this kind of technology are much more apparent today than at that time.

Wally: Hurricane Katrina....

Dean: The threat of global warning is palpable now when before it was theoretical. Meanwhile in Iraq people are dying all the time and it's directly related to our addiction to oil. And, frankly, just gas prices! If you look at how the sales of the Toyota Prius have skyrocketed, it shows that consumers can make

a big difference. You can imagine what they could do to bring back the electric car.

Michael: What I liked about your documentary was its positive tone. You're giving us hope that we can do something, you know. But one complaint I've heard about the electric car is replacing the batteries, that it would be very expensive: is that true?

Wally: Well, that bridge has already been crossed. The battery technology that was developed for the Prius, the nickel metal hydride battery, is being guaranteed for 150,000 miles. But the Prius is a little bit more expensive to buy than a conventional vehicle. You're talking about a 10-15% cost difference. If you run all the numbers assuming \$1 a gallon for gas, the Prius doesn't quite pay for itself. But gas doesn't cost \$1 a gallon, it costs \$3 a gallon and the arrows are all pointing upward. Two years from now, Priuses will be powered by lithium batteries rather than the nickel metal hydride and we have some spy people telling us that the Priuses are going to have—at least some of them—will have the option of being plug-in vehicles so that instead of getting just 50 miles per gallon, you'll be able to get well over 100 miles per gallon.

Michael: Thank you so much for your time. It's a wonderful project. I think you're on Oscar track. I'm serious! Thank you very much. *W*

Michael Guillén is a staff writer and critic for Entertainment Today.
For more interviews and writing by Michael Guillén,
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Film Review

Scanner offers dark predictions

A Scanner Darkly

★★★★☆
(3 out of 4 stars)

DIRECTED BY RICHARD LINKLATER

STARRING: KEANU REEVES,
WYNONA RYDER, WOODY HARRELSON,
RORY COCHRANE, ROBERT DOWNEY JR.

100 MINUTES, RATED R

by Adam Barnick

A pitch-black meditation on perception, paranoia and identity, this adaptation of celebrated science-fiction author Philip K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly* takes place in the near future. The futility of an endless war on drugs continues unchecked, meshed with the "endless surveillance" culture we are approaching today. Over 20 percent of the population is hopelessly addicted to Substance D, a mind-destroying chemical that unbalances the brain's hemispheres, causing paranoia, hallucination, dependence, and eventually death. The government's solution to the problem is to flood nearly every street and home with cameras, and to detain and silence anyone critical of these methods.

Keanu Reeves stars as Bob Arctor, an undercover cop whose own addiction is concealed but growing. All but permanently ensconced in another identity as "Fred" (created by a scramble suit, a hologram that masks one's identity), he is asked to consistently scan his addicted friends (Rory Cochrane, Woody Harrelson, and Robert Downey Jr.) and report on their behavior. Bob's sometimes girlfriend Donna (Winona Ryder) is believed to have a connection to a major drug supplier. "Fred" is soon ordered to scan the person believed responsible for the supplies/origins of Substance D in Orange County. That man's name? Bob Arctor.

Largely delivered through claustrophobic environments as well as interior and interpersonal dialogue, *Scanner* is directed by Richard Linklater, no stranger to talkative characters who endlessly ponder the nature of the world they inhabit. Filtered through a haze of drugs and fear, *Scanner*'s characters hyper-articulate their paranoia, with analyses of life that draw no solid conclusions. The story maintains the sense of the absurd—its black humor and pathos depicted though the misadventures of Bob's interac-



A rotoscoped Keanu Reeves is Bob/Fred in Linklater's *A Scanner Darkly*

tion with Donna and his friends, all burned-out shells who can no longer connect.

For viewers, it's tough to anchor feelings or a rooting interest in a mind-fried character with shifting identities, but he's all we have. Even if we don't quite connect emotionally (intentional, considering the prevalent theme in this film), Bob/Fred's situation keeps us interested in his plight, wondering if he can stop himself from drowning. Ordered to spy on himself by a man whose identity is also in flux (Bob/Fred's superior never removes his own scramble suit), Bob/Fred struggles to suppress his own addiction and hold on to what he believes to be his original identity. Reeve's characterization is largely achieved through his own thoughts, which may not sit well with a film-going crowd looking for an active 'hero.' Fans of Dick's book and sensibilities, and those of Linklater's non-studio work should feel right at home.

Rory Cochrane as Freck represents the end of the line, a twitchy mess of a man so far gone we're not sure whether to laugh or cry at his condition, while Woody Harrelson's Ernie Luckman comes off as the one 'honest' member of the group—he only has one tangled identity to deal with. Robert Downey Jr. excels as Jim Barris, a man who

can barely catch up with the places his mind is going. His mile-a-minute performance is stunning. Ryder is more intense than she's been given a chance to be in her desperate explanation of why she can no longer feel or be intimate is chilling.

An almost-animated film, *Scanner*'s look comes from the same studio and the same animation style that created Linklater's *Waking Life*. Actors were filmed and then painted over with ever-changing animation schemes—an interesting way to depict the material, making the more overt hallucinations and effects easier to pull off (like characters thinking their bodies are infested with insects). The reality presented though this technique recalls *Waking Life*, but this is a skewed, shifting version of the here and now, rather than a malleable, liquid, dream state.

Though not quite the emotional sucker-punch it aims for, the film is affecting, and its tragic, futile ending is striking—not quite a twist, but it adds further depth to a film that has a lot on its mind. *B*

Adam Barnick is a staff writer and film critic for Entertainment Insiders. For more reviews by Adam Barnick, got to www.Einsiders.com

Critics diverge on *Guantanamo* road



Riz Ahmed stars in Michael Winterbottom and Mat Whitecross' *The Road to Guantanamo*

The Road to Guantanamo

★★★★☆

(3 1/2 out of 4 stars)

DIRECTED BY MICHAEL WINTERBOTTOM,
MAT WHITECROSS

STARRING: RIZ AHMED, FARHAD HARUN, WAQAR
SIDDIQUI, ARFAN USMAN

95 MINUTES, RATED R

by Warren Curry

The Road to Guantanamo, based on a true story, should anger everyone who sees it. If you embrace this film's humanist stance, you will be appalled by the injustice it depicts and more ready than ever to criticize the "war on terror." If your politics place you on the other side of the dividing line, you might view this as a short sighted propaganda piece created solely for the purpose of eliciting knee jerk reactions.

The prolific Michael Winterbottom (whose versatility knows no boundaries) shares directing credit with Mat Whitecross, and they employ a frenetic, take-no-prisoners style. In the docu-drama's first half, it appears this stylistic choice might overwhelm the film's other elements, but once the directors take a step back and slow the pace a touch, *The Road to Guantanamo* delivers a powerful attack.

In October 2001, four friends, Ruhel (Farhad Harun), Asif (Arfan Usman), Shafiq (Riz Ahmed) and Monir (Waqar Siddiqui), all between the ages of 19-23, set off from their comfortable homes in the British midlands for Pakistan to attend Asif's wedding. A few days after their arrival, the group, upon the plea of an Imam at a mosque, decides to cross the border to Afghanistan in order to aid the nation's suffering citizens. Their arrival coincides perfectly with the drop-

ping of U.S. and British bombs.

Their return trip is grossly more harrowing than their initial journey. Monir gets separated from the pack and is never heard from again. Ultimately, Ruhel, Asif and Shafiq are captured by Northern Alliance troops.

The threesome is held captive at two American military prisons in Afghanistan, where they are subjected to various forms of abuse, and eventually all are transported to Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. Hostile interrogations, physical beatings, and sensory deprivation tactics are inflicted upon them, but no matter how relentlessly the military officials attempt to force them to confess to being terrorists, the three young men refuse to break. After two years of unthinkable torment, they are returned to England and released without charge. What's depicted here is not something that can or should be shrugged off as an honest mistake. And the directors' hyperkinetic style repeatedly hammers their point-of-view home. Some may feel they smack the audience in the face too often with their underlying agenda, but it's difficult to deny the film's power. *The Road to Guantanamo* will get your blood boiling—my recommendation is to see it with a friend whose politics differ from your own. The post-screening discussion will be lively.

Watching the punishing tactics employed by the interrogators is maddening, and sometimes painfully laughable in its stupidity ("Where is Osama bin Laden?!" is a frequent demand). And our view is colored by the fact we know these men are innocent. The film forces one to ponder whether basic human rights—i.e. the right not to be tortured—should be extended to all, even those who intend to harm us (or, in this case, share the same skin color with those who have harmed us in the past). *R*

The Road to Guantanamo

★★★☆☆

(2 1/2 out of 4 stars)

by Peter Sobczynski

At some point or another, any intelligent film writer is forced to grapple with the question of art versus ideology in terms of providing critical analysis. If one finds a film to be impressive on an aesthetic level but objectionable on a personal or political level, does one praise it because of the former, or slam it because of the latter? I have always placed artistic concerns above ideological ones because that is what my job is supposed to be. This is why I am perfectly content to laud the work of right-winger John Milius despite my own left-leaning political bend. With Michael Winterbottom's *The Road to Guantanamo*, I find myself facing the flip-side of that question in confronting a film that has serious flaws from an artistic standpoint. *Guantanamo* tries so hard to succeed as a polemic that it winds up falling short as a story.

The film tells the story of the "Tipton Three," a trio of young Brits of Pakistani or Bangladesh descent—whose harrowing ordeal as suspected Al Qaeda members helped shine a light on the ongoing scandals involving the treatment of U.S. prisoners even vaguely suspected of terrorist ties. Their tale begins in the days following 9/11 as one, Asif (Arfan Usman), is sent off to Pakistan by his mother to get married and his three pals—Shafiq (Rizwan Ahmed), Ruhel (Farhad Harun) and Monir (Waqar Siddiqui)—decide to tag along. After hanging around for a few days, the guys crash at a local mosque (only as a cost-cutting measure, they insist) and are subsequently inspired to travel into Afghanistan for a few days. This turns out to be a horrible mistake on their part as some of them fall ill, all of them get lost, one of them disappears, and the rest find themselves caught up in a group of Taliban members who are captured by allied forces and imprisoned.

After their arrest, the three naively assume that their nightmare is at an end—eventually their captors will realize that they are British citizens who were merely in the wrong place at the wrong time. Sadly for them, the presence of three English-speaking men among the Taliban forces sets off any number of alarms and they, along with many others, are shipped off to Cuba and detained at the infamous U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay. This was the start of a seemingly endless ordeal in which they were repeatedly drilled for information that they didn't have and physically and psychologically brutalized for neither

supplying such information nor confessing to being members of Al-Qaeda. Even when they claim they can prove that the main evidence against them is in error, they are repeatedly inflicted with any number of cruelties—one of them is chained to a floor while strobe lights are flashing and death metal is blasting—for a two-year period before they are finally released.

This is shocking material and even if one chooses to play pessimist by saying that the events were only half as bad as they claim, what we see is enough to inspire even the most conservative of viewers to rethink U.S. policies towards detainees.

A film in which the men simply sit and calmly recount their ordeal while we in the audience try to picture what happened in our minds could have been an incredibly bold and powerful work of cinema and social commentary. The trouble with *The Road to Guantanamo* is that Winterbottom was apparently worried that such an approach simply wouldn't be powerful enough to get his point across. Instead, he has taken a docu-drama approach in which actors reenact the events (occasionally in the actual locations where they happened) while also appearing in "interview" footage in which they further recount their stories. While this approach may give the material a far more immediate and visceral feel than the one I suggested, it also winds up inflicting an oddly distancing effect as well—since we are aware going in that these are actors recreating something instead of the real people, some of the punch is gone. Winterbottom is so insistent on rubbing our noses in the torture that it begins to take on a feeling of unreality.

A more fundamental flaw is that Winterbottom eliminates any idea, discussion or suggestion that might detract from that goal. We learn virtually nothing about these men that might provide any insight into who they are—including their thoughts at the time about America, the Taliban, or 9/11 and its aftermath. Some of their actions, especially their decision to go into Afghanistan "to help" as they put it, are so inexplicable that Winterbottom's refusal to explain them gives the impression that somebody is hiding something and there may be more to the story than what meets the eye. Of course, nothing could justify their treatment—unless each of them was captured with a severed head in one hand and Osama bin Laden's phone number in the other—but by painting them as blameless angels instead of actual human beings, Winterbottom takes the easy way out and winds up doing a great disservice to his film.

see *GUANTANAMO*, p. 20

Reviews by Warren Curry appear on Entertainment Insiders (www.insiders.com) and can be heard on the podcast Filmmakers Pod (www.filmmakerspod.com).

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Brandon Routh is the Man of Steel in *Superman Returns*

Superman Returns ★ ★ ★ (PG-13)

Does the big screen still need a Superman? The answer is a resounding yes. It may take itself a little too seriously, and the love story tends to overwhelm the gee-whiz fun of it all, but *Superman Returns* is a very good movie—it's not quite super, but it's definitely good. Director Bryan Singer's clever device to link to previous Superman films by incorporating John Williams' theme music, familiar dialogue, and unused footage of Marlon Brando will surely give longtime fans the chills. (SM) AMC Loews Universal City 18, The Grove, Grauman's Chinese, AMC Century City 14, Mann Chinese 6, Pacific Culver Stadium 12, Mann Village Theatre 1, Vista, University Village 3, Pacific Sherman Oaks 5, The Bridge, Laemmle Grande 4 Plex, UA Marina Del Rey 6, Pacific Galleria Stadium 16, AMC Santa Monica 7, Century 8, AMC Burbank 8, AMC Media Center 8, AMC Media Center North 6, Mann Glendale Marketplace 4, Mann Glendale Exchange 10, Highland 3 Theatre, Plant 16, Laemmle's One Colorado Cinemas, Pacific Paseo Stadium 14

Thank You For Smoking ★ ★ ★ (R)

This is the star-making vehicle Aaron Eckhart's abundant talents have screamed for since *In the Company of Men*. Although a stellar supporting cast surrounds him, this film belongs to Eckhart, who, in the showy role of tobacco lobbyist Nick Naylor displays his brash, confident and often borderline sleazy charm. (WC) Academy 6 Theater

Waist Deep ★ ★ 1/2 (R)

How do you recycle old clichés without anyone noticing? Change the location of course. (EL) AMC Loews Universal City 18, & IMAX, Mann Culver Plaza 6 Theatres, The Bridge: Cinema de Lux, Mann Criterion 6 Theatres, Plant 16

Wassup Rockers ★ ★ ★

An affectionate portrait of seven nonconformist Latino punk rock skaters who square off on their home turf in South Central against hip-hop gangstas and skinhead cholos, and then take crosstown buses to Beverly Hills to devastate the rich White pseudos. Part documentary, part narrative reconstruction, and part ridiculous fantasy. Not Larry Clark's best, nor his most polished, but certainly his sweetest. (MG)

Landmark NuArt Theatre, Laemmle Sunset 5, Laemmle Playhouse

Water (PG-13) ★ ★ ★ 1/2

An unflinching look at the life of a widow in 1930's India. A widow, is left at a home for cast out widows where she is expected to spend the rest of her life. (JH) Laemmle Music Hall, Academy 6

Who Killed the Electric Car? (PG) ★ ★ ★ 1/2

The killers of the electric car were so good—so efficient—most of us forgot it existed. But in Chris Paine's documentary, we focus our attention, not on the problem, but on the solution. If you were depressed by *Inconvenient Truth*, you'll be horrified by *Electric Car*. (Steven Snyder) Landmark NuWilshire Theatre, Laemmle Playhouse 7

X-Men: The Last Stand ★ ★ 1/2 (PG)

The third, and supposedly final installment hints at "X4." It's entertaining enough, and it's certainly far superior to some of the other recent superhero flicks to come flying off the Marvel Comics conveyor belt

Capsule Authors:

WC – Warren Curry

JG – Janos Gereben

MG – Michael Guillén

JH – Jonathan W. Hickman

EL – Eric Lurio

SM – Scott Mantz

(especially 2004's *The Punisher* and 2005's *Elektra*). But the film lacks focus, the dialogue is weak and there are far too many underdeveloped characters, resulting in a franchise that ends on a relative whimper rather than the X-cellent bang that it deserved. (SM) AMC Loews Universal City 18 & IMAX, Mann Chinese 6



Francisco Pedrasa as Kico in Larry Clark's *Wassap Rockers*



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Let's do lunch

with Clayson DeBurger

While mingling my way through several of the Los Angeles Film Festival's parties, I discovered the drinking delight of Absolut's Ruby Red Vodka. This grapefruit infused vodka comes in a red bottle—thus it is easy to spot even in the most dingy corner bar. Crisp with its citrus nose, it goes down very smooth. Here are three drinks you can make with zthis zesty vodka:

The Skinny Red Head

This is the drink for the calorie conscious who are tired of the standard rum and diet coke. At around 55 calories, this drink will keep one's cuffed shorts fitting throughout the season.

- 1 part Absolut Ruby Red
- 2 parts Soda or Seltzer Water

Serve over ice with a wedge of lime.

The Pippi Longstocking

This drinks packs loads of citrus flavor. As refreshing as it is delicious.

- 1 part Absolut Ruby Red
- 2 parts Lemon-Lime Soda
- A splash of Orange Juice
- A splash of Cranberry Juice

Garnish with a cherry and wedge of lime.

Ruby's Coketails

Think of this as the grown-up childhood favorite the Roy Rodgers with a citrus kick.

- 1 part Absolut Ruby Red
- 2 parts Coca-cola or Diet Cola (I would suggest Coke Zero)
- A splash of Grenadine

Serve over ice and garnish with a sprig of mint and a wedge of grapefruit.

Although the above drinks are Absolut-ly delicious, for those times when one would rather not partake in alcohol, no drink is more fashionable than the classic Arnold Palmer. Cool down this summer with a combination of refreshing iced tea and puckery lemonade. Below are some tips to make the most thirst-quenching Arnold Palmer's possible.

- 1) Brew your own iced tea. Dump the instant stuff and throw out the Arizona crap! Brewing your own iced tea is as simple as making coffee. Several companies including Tazo now package tea specially selected for brewing iced tea. Making freshly brewed iced tea will bring an earthiness to your Arnold Palmer that helps to balance out the tang of the lemonade.
- 2) If you have your own lemon tree, by all means make your own lemonade. If not, buy the freshest lemonade possible. Unlike iced tea, many brands of lemonade are outstanding and not too sweet. I would recommend Odwalla's Fresh Squeezed Lemonade.
- 3) Do not use Crystal Light! All that sugar substitute makes an Arnold Palmer taste artificial. Add real sugar if you like: a 12 oz. Arnold Palmer is less than 100 calories.
- 4) Garnish. A simple garnish can really change the flavor of an Arnold Palmer. I recommend experimenting with garnishes from the traditional lemon slice and mint sprig to more exotic flavors such as a basil leaf, a curl of grapefruit peel, or even a Thai red chili pepper to kick in some heat! ☞



Film Review

Fabulous! celebrates queer pioneers



Hedwig's John Cameron Mitchell is featured in *Fabulous!*

Fabulous! The Story of Queer Cinema

★★★★
(3 1/2 out of 4 stars)

DIRECTED BY LISA ADES,
LESLI KLAINBERG

WITH: JOHN WATERS,
GUS VAN SANT, CHRISTINE VACHON,
TODD HAYNES, B. RUBY RICH

82 MINUTES, NOT YET RATED

by Jonathan Hickman

Lisa Ades and Lesli Klainberg's documentary *Fabulous! The Story of Queer Cinema* chronicles the origins, evolution, and present incarnations of gay and lesbian cinema. Dubbed the "New Queer Cinema" by film critic B. Ruby Rich, gay and lesbian films have evolved from obscure, independently made productions to studio-green-lit blockbusters. But *Fabulous!* points out that there are still big hurdles associated with coming out in Hollywood.

Fabulous! provides illumination for those not intimately familiar with the genre. In 1985, for instance, while I was watching *Back to the Future* at my local multiplex, Donna Deitch's *Desert Hearts* had recently made a splash at the Sundance Film Festival where it was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize. But long before *Desert Hearts*, films like Kenneth Anger's *Fireworks* (1947) paved the way. *Fabulous!* employs interviews with filmmakers and historians such as John Waters, Gus Van Sant, Rose Troche, Christine Vachon, Todd Haynes, and Guinevere Turner to bring us up to date. It is always fun to hear from the sarcastically direct Waters, but my favorite interviewee was a collector of movie posters from

the early era of gay and lesbian cinema. I was taken by images of this knowledgeable woman carefully leafing through original movie posters and publicity material from perhaps every gay and lesbian film ever made—an amazing collection!

Ades and Klainberg deliberately show us the juicy clips from landmark films, refusing to censor. This is important because many of the interviews point out the need to show same sex love scenes on screen. Especially insightful were the frank, youthful comments of Heather Matarazzo from *Welcome to the Dollhouse* who said she grew up wanting to see lesbian sex validated on screen but was denied for too long. Rich makes the blunt point that without sex scenes, the sexual identity of supposedly gay and lesbian characters was constantly questioned. Rich's "show me the money" comment crystallized for me this critical development in the mainstreaming of queer cinema.

Interestingly, *Fabulous!* reveals that, even as the market grew for lesbian and gay movies, it became difficult to secure screening venues. Thus, the home video and DVD market became more and more vital to both the films and their audience. This led to the appearance of Queer sections in video stores across the country featuring gay and lesbian themed films. Dan Bucatinsky, the writer and star of *All Over The Guy*, laments his refusal to sell his film as a gay title when, in reality it probably was.

Happy Endings director Don Roos makes the point that when he writes characters, parts of himself go into them, especially when writing gay characters. This was true in *Happy Endings* where a teenage boy is struggling with his identity. Waters points out that if a straight actor plays a gay character it is Oscar time (kissing a man is giving it up for the craft!). When a gay actor plays a gay character, should we not recognize this as well? What comes through in *Fabulous!* is a common desire throughout the movement to see queer identities represented accurately on screen. As New

Queer Cinema grows into the mainstream, such films will be made by talented artists regardless of their sexual identity.

Featured this Sunday at Outfest, *Fabulous! The Story of Queer Cinema* will soon air on IFC as part of "Queer Month." My hope is that IFC shows the film unedited. Ades, Klainberg, and her crew have amassed a significant amount of archived and new material in an effort to educate gay, lesbian, transgender, and, yes, even straight audiences. As recent events have demonstrated, ignoring marginalized communities is an aid to those who target them. ☞

Jonathan W. Hickman serves as Editor-in-Chief, columnist, film critic, and deep philosopher at Entertainment Insiders. For more writing by Jonathan W. Hickman, go to: www.ELInsiders.com

GUANTANAMO, from p. 17

This is all the more frustrating because Michael Winterbottom is one of the most fascinating filmmakers working in the world today, and one who is usually willing to take the kind of dramatic risks that most of his contemporaries would shy away from. In films as varied as *Welcome to Sarajevo*, *24 Hour Party People*, *In This World*, *9 Songs* and *Tristram Shandy*, he has given viewers challenging works that have effectively blended the techniques of fictional and documentary filmmaking in intriguing and thought-provoking ways. (Even his outright failures, such as *9 Songs*, are more interesting than the best works of other directors too numerous to mention.) *The Road to Guantanamo* was clearly made with passion, anger and sincerity, but those qualities simply aren't enough to overcome its weaknesses. Winterbottom may have wanted to produce a stirring and eye-opening bit of cinematic agitprop, but what we are left with is little more than a vaguely leftist version of *Hostel* ☞.

Peter Sobczynski writes for the Liberty Suburban Chicago Newspapers chain and on-line at www.efilmcritic.com. He can also be heard on the nationally syndicated Mancow's Morning Madhouse radio program. Comments, complaints, questions, threats and Milla Jovovich's phone number can be sent to him at petersob@netzero.net.

Sunday July 9th, 2:30 PM at the DGA • www.Outfest.org
Catch the *Fabulous!* television premiere on IFC's "Queer Month"
July 16th, 10 PM ET / 10:45 PM PT • www.ifc.com

Outfest gears up for Friday kickoff

by David Magdael

It's summer in the city and it's time for one of the hottest film festivals in the nation. Starting July 6 and ending on July 17, Outfest 2006 – The 24TH Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Film Festival will screen over 200 feature films, shorts, and videos from 25 countries. Since its founding in 1982, Outfest has presented more than 4,000 films to audiences of over half a million people. It is the oldest and largest continuous film festival in Southern California.

This year's festival offers something for everyone from dramas to comedies to musicals to documentaries to sing-along screenings to panels and discussions. The 11-day fest opens with the audience favorite *Puccini for Beginners* from director Maria Maggenti and closes with the brilliant *20 Centimeters (20 Centimetros)* from Spain's emerging filmmaker/writer Ramon Salazar.

"In 2005, mainstream audiences embraced queer themed films such as *Brokeback Mountain*, *Capote*, and *Transamerica*, and the question came up about the relevancy of our festival and all of the other gay and lesbian film festivals across the land," states David Courier, Outfest 2006 Senior Programmer. "This year's Outfest films all tell remarkable universal stories that

know no borders. These filmmakers and their stories continue to show us that Outfest is just as relevant and important today as it was 24 years ago. New stories and new voices from the queer filmmaking diaspora continue to rise to the top, and we are showcasing these works over 11 days for everyone to experience."

In Outfest 2006's "5 In Focus: New Directors Spotlight," new and emerging talents unveil features such as: *Fat Girls* from Ash Christian; *Forgiving the Franklins* from Jay Floyd; *Mom* from Erin Greenwell; *Coffee Date* from Stewart Wade; and *Colma: The Musical* from Richard Wong. Each of these filmmakers offers something new and fresh to the queer film genre, as well as to the American independent film scene.

This year's Documentary Centerpiece film is the moving and insightful feature, *Wrestling with Angels: Playwright Tony Kushner* from Academy Award winning filmmaker Freida Lee Mock. Her film covers three years in the life of Pulitzer and Tony Award winning Kushner (*Angels in America*) from 9/11/01 to the 2004 presidential election providing a look into his life, his work, his thoughts, and his art. A hit at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival, it will screen on Tuesday, July 11 at the DGA at 7:30 PM with the director in attendance.



Two roommates confront their attraction to one another in *Boy Culture* from director Q. Allan Brocka



The artist at work in *Wrestling with Angels: Playwright Tony Kushner*, a new documentary from Oscar winner Freida Lee Mock. Photo courtesy of the American Film Foundation

On Awards Night, Sunday, July 16 at the Ford Amphitheatre, audiences will be treated to the Los Angeles premiere of the sexy smart new comedy from local filmmaker Q. Allan Brocka entitled *Boy Culture*. Destined to be an audience pleaser, Brocka continues to solidify his place as one of American independent cinema's important voices and brings together a talented cast of up and coming actors.

Other highlights at this year's Outfest include:

Colma: The Musical – Yes, the genre is alive and well. A small town in Nor Cal where the number of graves outnumbers the population is the backdrop for a coming of age story about three friends newly graduated from high school dealing with pending life issues. Comedic, clever and fun – audiences will find themselves singing the title song as the credits roll. From first time feature director Richard Wong.
Sat. July 8 at the Regent Showcase, 6:30 PM

film follows the story of a prodigal son who must return to face a family he hasn't seen in years. With a cast that includes hottie Rockmund Dunbar (*Prison Break*, *Soul Food*, *Punks*), Loretta Devine (*Gray's Anatomy*, *Dreamgirls*, *Waiting to Exhale*), Jenifer Lewis (*Girlfriends*, *Madea's Family Reunion*, *What's Love Got to Do With It*) and Alec Mapa (*Half and Half*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Connie and Carla*), *Dirty Laundry* is a certain audience rouser.
Sat., July 15, Regent Showcase at 6:30 PM.

The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros (Ang Pagdadlaga Ni Maximo Oliveros) – Already a hit on the festival circuit with audiences and critics alike, this amazing film takes you into the life of an openly gay 12 year-old boy taking care of his family: the main leaders of the local crime ring in Manila. Maximo unwisely develops a huge crush on the handsome neighborhood policeman in this very funny and sweet tale of life, love and family.
Fri., July 7, DGA 1 at 7:00 PM

Hot Chicks – Producer P. David Ebersole, brings together an array of indie filmmakers who employ animation, puppets, men

in drag, music, and a totally John Waters-like filming style making for a zany collection of short films adapted from the work of cult artist Jack Chick. Filmmakers include P. David Ebersole, Todd Hughes, Rodney Ascher, Jamie Tolbert Franklin, Syd Garon, Bryce Ingman, Tim Kirk, and Tommy!

Sat. July 8, at the Vista at Midnight

Loving Annabelle – From filmmaker Katherine Brooks. Moving performances from emerging actresses Diane Gaidry and Erin Kelly underscore the tender and controversial story of young Catholic high school girl who falls in love with her poetry teacher while attending an all girl's boarding school.
Sat. July 8 at the DGA 1 at 9:30 PM

Time To Leave (Le Temps Qui Reste) – from France's Francois Ozon. This stirring and moving film is Ozon's most personal film to date starring Jeanne Moreau, Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi and the smoldering Melvil Poupaud.
Thurs., July 13, Barnsdall Art Park 7:15 PM

Buffoons invading my space!



with
Tina Kim

MySpace.com has confirmed my belief that most people who live or socialize on the web are serious BUFFOONS. The sheer volume of dumb notes I receive on a daily basis only reaffirms it.

MySpace.com was originally intended for independent artists to promote themselves, and such is the case with me. I am a stand-up comic, thus I put my COMEDY profile on MySpace.com. I thought okay, it's free, why not. I can post some clips up and let people know about my shows, as well as get my name out there. It is a way for me to network, get new fans.

What I didn't realize was how most of the people are on there to hook up and flirt in the virtual world. Hey, that's fine with me. Do your thing but please don't bother me with terms like "let's get jiggy" or "hollah at your man."

Notes I have received on MySpace.com have caused me to shake my head in disbelief and raised my blood pressure too:

Why did you send me a friend request, or why do you want to be my friend?

Are you for real? Can't you see I have a Comedy Artist page? DUH!! I am promoting myself. It is up to you to add me or deny me. It is no sweat off my back.

Are you adding my friends because that is not cool.

That has to be the stupidest thing I have ever read and what makes it even worse, it's from a woman who says she works for a radio station in LA. This sap of a soul actually perused the 6000+ friends on my list to see if her friends were on it, or got mad that I sent her friends a friend request. Oh excuse me. I didn't

know the friends on your list were your property. If you are so private, then get off of this online nonsense.

I have written you a few times and I am warning you that if you don't write me back, I will delete you from my list.

Oh I am shaking in my Depends. I'm so scared that a complete stranger is going to take me off their page. I do not have time to write everyone back. I even put a disclaimer on my page letting people know that I don't write most people back.

Do I know you? Who are you?

Can't you see I have an artist's page? I can have a banner going across my face saying I AM a COMEDIENNE only here to promote myself, yet I know that will not stop these notes.

When is your next show?

Oh this one really gets my goat. My show dates are posted on my page you moron.

Here is my number call me.

This is absolutely ridiculous. Do you think I have nothing better to do than call strangers on the phone, just to chat about my life? I am not an internet troll.

You are hot.

Well yes, I am. Those notes are nice to receive but one has to realize that you can have a picture of a pimple and chances are you will receive at least 50 notes letting you know you are hot.

I know everyone is not mentally ill because I sometimes get normal notes and I do try to write those people back. I am not made out of wood.

This is a free service, so I guess you get what you pay for. See you online!

www.myspace.com/tkcomic ♪

Tina will be headlining the
Ice House Comedy Club
Sunday July 9th at 9:00 PM

Say her name at the door and get in for 1/2 price!

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www.icehousecomedy.com

Astrological forecasts for women ONLY

by Lady Katsura and Suki Yaki



Capricorn (December 22 January 20)

Our astro-vibes tell us you're going to cross paths with your soulmate this week. Ignore all the ugly people and be on the lookout for "the one." Usually, soulmates look like models or rock stars, but be prepared for yours to look like an Olympic swimmer instead.

Aquarius (January 21 – February 18)

Stop wondering when your boss is going to notice your new cleavage and aim for someone lower on the totem pole. That redhead in the mail room has been ogling you for weeks and his dogs are going to love you.

Pisces (February 19- March 19)

We are happy you are enjoying your "amazing" cybersex with SurfaBoy69. You've been envisioning Ryan Seacrest with muscled but our psychic signals tell us that he's more of a Captain Lou Albano with extra rubber bands.

Aries (March 20 – April 19)

That favorite scarf you've been missing did not get lost in the dryer. Your cousin stole it from your closet for her Australia trip. Can you believe she made you drop her off at the airport with your scarf and two of your G-strings in her suitcase?

Taurus (April 20- May 20)

It's okay to think about superheroes when you're having sex with your boring fiancé, so stop beating yourself up! For some variety, don't limit yourself to celebrities in spandex and try group sex scenarios involving animated heros from the Superfriends (they didn't call him Green Lantern for nothing).

Gemini (May 21 – June 20)

Just because all your girlfriends are popping out babies left and right, you don't have the right to "forget" to take your pills without telling your boyfriend. You need to snap out of your breeder fever. Try baby-sitting your sister's bratty kids for the weekend— it cured you the last time.

Cancer (June 21 – July 20)

Okay, enough time has passed. It's time to call your parents and tell them what a terrible job they did raising you. They'll appreciate your honesty, and it will make it so much easier to move in with them again if you don't sell a screenplay soon.

Leo (July 21 – August 20)

If humans were meant to have sex every day; they wouldn't sell condoms in multiples of six. Even God rested on Sunday. So please give your pizza boy a break this weekend. Go for some Chinese instead.

Virgo (August 21 – September 20)

We know your cat is the only one who sees you naked these days, but that's no reason not to get that tattoo you've always wanted. Go ahead and use your ex-boyfriend's name. If you don't get back together, you can always let your hair grow out.

Libra (September 21 – October 22)

When was the last time you had a conversation with someone who actually interested you? It's time to dump your usual crowd, and find a new group of friends. Le Sex Shoppe has a meet-and-greet for new customers every Friday night from 10:30 to midnight. Be there and be yourself, you've got nothing to lose.

Scorpio (October 23 – November 21)

We know you want revenge for all those parking tickets, but if you go around smashing meters with a baseball bat you're bound to get caught. Instead, try taking it out on someone who has absolutely nothing to do with it. He or she will be caught off guard, so you're likely to escape without retaliation.

Sagittarius (November 22 – December 21)

Stop letting people on TV tell you when and why to be angry. So what if two more lesbians got married and some Mexican people want to work for a living? They're just trying to be happy and so should you. Cheer up! ♪

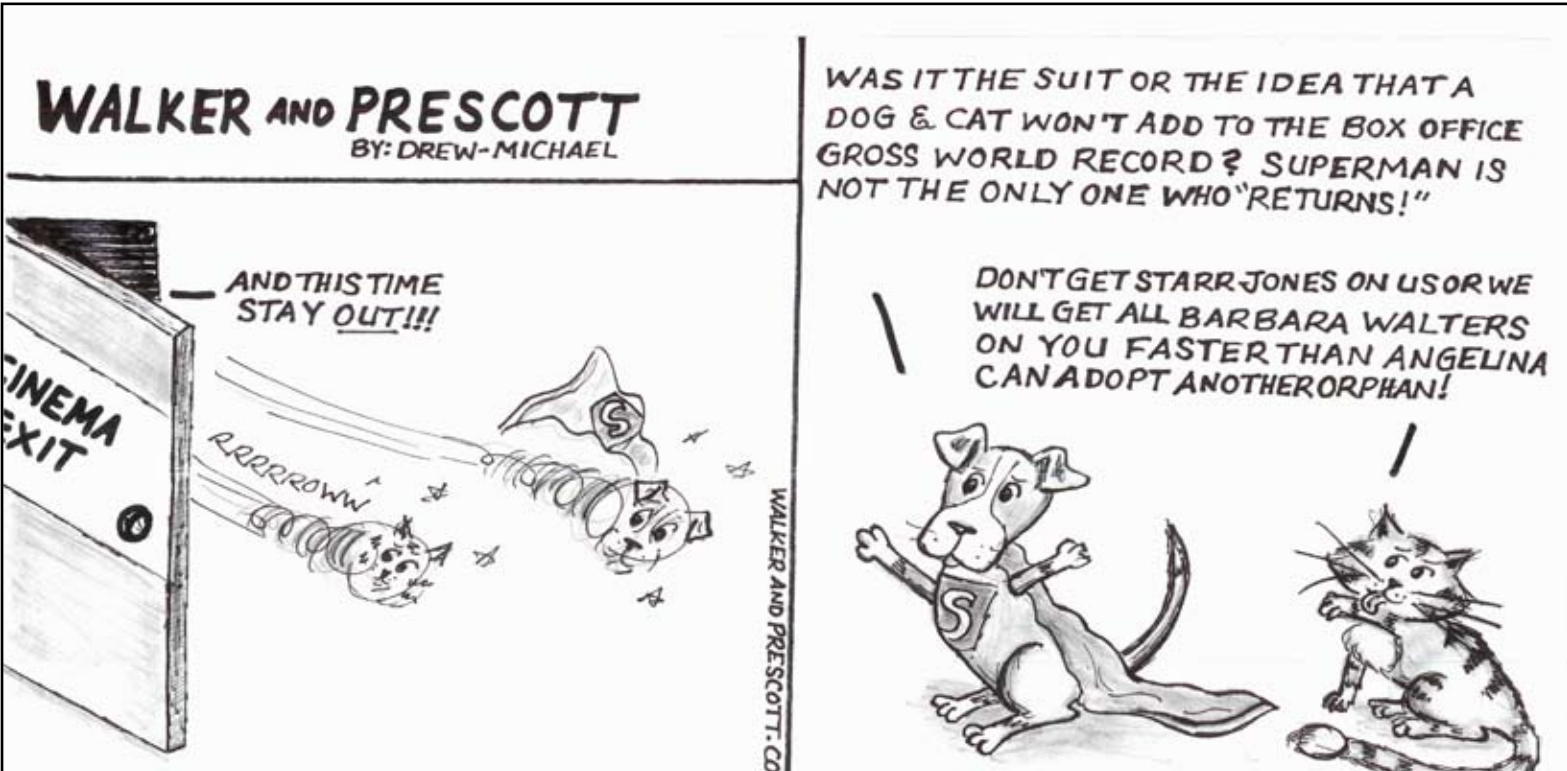
The Hot Zone

by Mark Darcourt



Walker and Prescott

by Mark Darcourt



SUDOKU

The ultimate logic puzzle

The object of the game is to fill in the blank cells with the numbers 1 to 9 such that:

- Every row should have the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 (in any order).
- Every column should have the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 (in any order).
- Every 3x3 bolded square should have 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 (in any order).

Remember you should NEVER have to guess. There will always be a logical answer.

	9	8	1			6		
	2					7		
	6							
		5	8		6			
1				3	2	9		
				9		4	6	
2				4		8		
			3	7			5	2

Answer to last week's puzzle:

3	9	8	1	5	7	6	2	4
5	2	1	9	6	4	7	3	8
4	6	7	7	8	3	5	1	9
9	4	5	5	1	6	2	7	3
1	7	6	6	3	2	9	8	5
8	3	2	2	9	5	4	6	1
2	5	3	3	4	1	8	9	7
7	1	9	9	2	8	3	4	6
6	8	4	4	7	9	1	5	2

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