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CECILIA TSAI

GUEST EDITOR
ERIC BYLER

ART PRODUCTION
DAVID TAGARDA

TECHNICAL SUPERVISOR
KATSUYUKI UENO

COPY EDITOR
JULIAN CAMILLIERI

WRITERS
ADAM BARNICK
FRANK BARRON
JULIAN CAMILLIERI
WARREN CURRY
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KATSUYUKI UENO

SALES

ALICIA APAGHIAN
KIRT KISHITA
PRESTON WEBSTER

CIRCULATION SUPERVISOR
DANIEL ESPINOSA

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

2325 WEST VICTORY BLVD, SUITE 5
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INDEX



14 Little Man



10 The Oh in Ohio

ENTERTAINMENT

Vol.38 | No.40 | FRIDAY, JULY 14, 2006

TODAY

10 COVER:

In *The Oh in Ohio*, Parker Posey battles sexual dysfunction with help from Danny DeVito and Liza Minelli. Review by Julian Camillieri.

FILM

- 11 DUPREE OVERSTAYS WELCOME**
You, Me and Dupree is unworthy of it's all-star cast, or so says Jonathan W. Hickman
- 14 CONRAD ADAPTATION LACKS REASON**
Michael Guillén prefers the work of Isabelle Huppert to that of her director in *Gabrielle*, based on Joseph Conrad's *The Return*
- 14 LITTLE TO LIKE?**
Peter Sobczynski compares *Little Man* to *White Chicks*, and to Bugs Bunny, *Home Alone*, and the work David Lynch
- 15 BACKSEAT TO NO ONE**
Jonathan W. Hickman champions an indie gem in search of distribution in "Films You Ought to See, But Will You?"
- 18 DEVELOPMENT HELL** with Brad Schreiber

THEATER

- 4 SAD FAREWELL IN THE CHERRY ORCHARD**
Travis Michael Holder laments the demise of the evidENCE Room, one of L.A. renowned theatre companies
- 5 HERCULES ON NORMANDIE**
More like Fairfax and Melrose. Beth Temkin praises the world premiere of *Hercules on Normandie* at the Greenway Court Theatre

TELEVISION

- 8 GHOSTBUSTER STILL SMILING**
Frank Barron with latest on Ernie Hudson, Raven-Symoné, Rainn Wilson, Stacy Keach and more
- 6 I WANT MY REALITY TV**
Clayson DeBurger raves about *Big Brother: All-stars* and why *Project Runway's* Michael Kors is unfit to be a designer!

FOOD

- 6 RIBS AND HISTORY GO TOGETHER**
Shirley Firestones reminisces at Lawry's The Prime Rib
- 12 TOP 10 BARS IN L.A.**
Susie Roteman rates and reviews 10 great bars to check out this summer

BOOKS

- 12 NOW THAT WAS A DISASTER**
Sean Reynolds reviews a book on Hollywood disaster films by journalist Glenn Kay and filmmaker Michael Rose

COLUMNS

- 6 HOLLYWOOD BEAT**
by Marci Weiner
- 7 WORDS n MUSIC**
with Kat Kramer

20 FUN, GAMES, AND...ASTROLOGY!!!

Tina Kim rides again, this time with a rant about cheap people. Plus Sudoku, comics, and where would you be without expert advice from our psychic astrologers Lady Kastsura and Suki Yaki?

10-93 CHECK IN

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Theater Review

Sad farewell in the *Cherry Orchard*

Travis Michael Holder looks back at the evidENCE Room's final show



Maria O'Brien and Leo Marks in Chekhov's final masterpiece



TicketHolders with Travis Michael Holder

You might have noticed that my long-running and long-winded weekly column was absent from these pages for the first time in 19 years, partly due to health issues, partly because I spent time shooting the film version of my play *Surprise Surprise* and playing Cheswick in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* at the Rubicon in Ventura. But more than all that — when have I ever before taken a break from *ET* when I was working? — the biggest obstacle was just plain discouragement.

Simply, I was burned out. My writing about and championing theatre in our Industry-obsessed town suddenly seemed like a fantasy outlet for me, something to make me feel as though I'm contributing to the dream of a successful and respected theatre community in *Lost Angeles*. I've spent the last 19 years writing for six different publications (I saw 231 shows in 2005 alone, 209 of them in LA) and nothing's changed. It's the same tired old story: nobody gives a crap about theatre here. It's just as tough for theatre artists and companies to win a loyal audience today as it was when I arrived from New York in 1853 or whenever. Asking my friend Olivia Honegger, who now

produces and directs small theater in the Big Apple after trying valiantly to do the same in LA, What's the main difference? "In New York," she said, "I don't know everyone in the audience."

Then came a nearly fatal blow when I heard that the groundbreaking and dearly adored evidENCE Room (ER) would be closing its doors — after a knockout 11-year history where compromise was not in their vocabulary. The demise of the evidENCE Room expelled the unstoppable artistic director Bart DeLorenzo and his uniquely gifted troupe from a glorious warehouse space where the lobby became a hangout and a second playing space, where walls opened and transformed during performances, where audience configurations changed completely from one production to the next, and where Ken Roht hired a cast of 50 for his brilliant *99-Cent Store* productions each year. I had the privilege of working at the ER twice — as Quentin in Tennessee Williams' *Small Craft Warnings* with the lobby turned into a seedy 1970s coastal bar, (earning LA Weekly Award nominations for me, John Fleck, and Wendy Johnson), and in Michael Sargent's raucously funny *American Nympho*. The loss of the evidENCE Room is a terrible blow to anyone who believes theatre can be more than the 83rd revival of *My Fair Lady* and *The Odd Couple*.

So what does the courageous evidENCE Room present as their final production? Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* of course, about a family forced to leave their cherished home due to financial ruin. As Bart explained, "We had just closed our most successful season when the company and the landlords found ourselves in the middle of an irreconcilable lease dispute. By consent and with respect, the landlords generously allowed the theatre to carry out our planned spring production, which poetically and coincidentally presents a story of displacement."

The Cherry Orchard was written in 1903 when debilitating illness forced Chekhov — a practicing physician — to realize this would be his last play. Though heartbreaking, it is also oddly and sweetly hilarious at times, as Liubov Ranyevskaya (here played by the remarkable Maria O'Brien) refuses to realize the gravity of her situation until the workers arrive to chop down her trees, unable to listen to Lopakhin (ER favorite Don Oscar Smith in his finest performance) as he suggests turning the orchard into vacation properties, the sale of which could save the house itself. "Forgive me," she says, taking a break from gobbling food and fine wine with her brother Gayev (Tom Fitzpatrick), "but subdivided leisure homes? It's all so hopelessly vulgar!"

Theater Review

HERCULES ON NORMANDIE

by **Beth Temkin**

The world premiere of *Hercules on Normandie* is a splendid musical drama with a heavy anti-war message, written and directed by James Eric and Mark Kemble with songs by Mario Padilla and Gordon Glor.

The large stage of the Greenway Court Theatre is transformed into a church. The cross is covered due to Good Friday and the benches are soon filled with a motley group of parishioners, in particular a blind black woman (Diane Sellers) who sings a pretty solo. We hear thunder and lightning, the sound reflecting the stormy mood inside and outside the church.

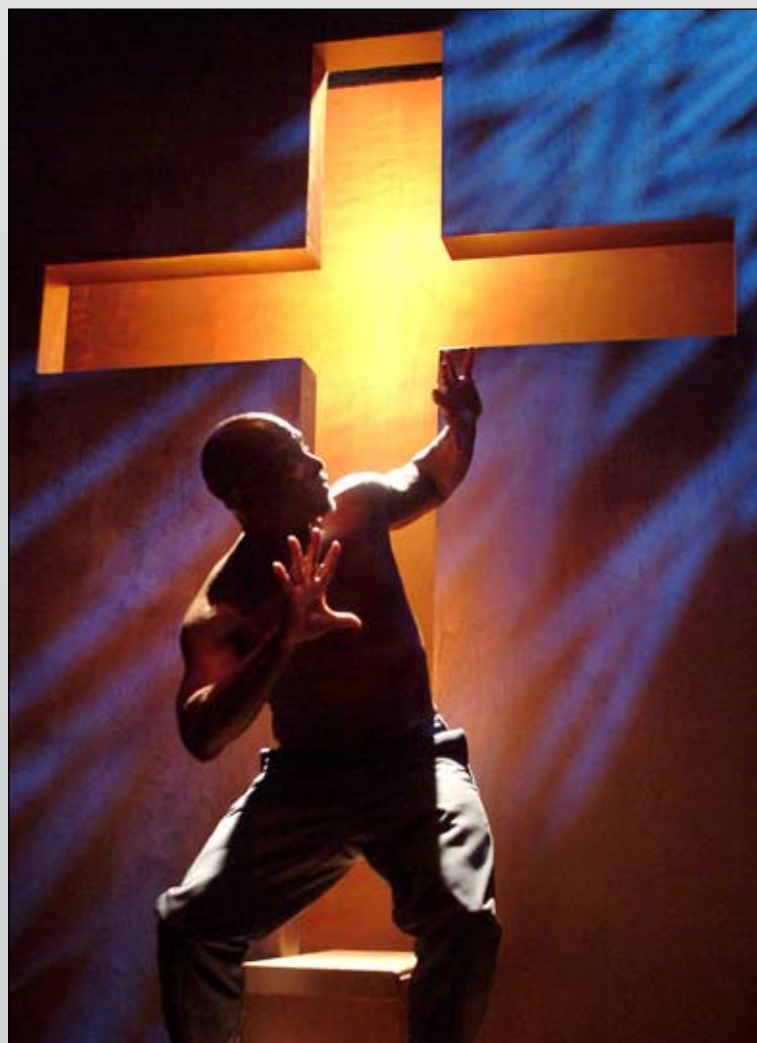
Father Francis (Pierson Blatetz) has his hands full when a trio of malcontents storm in, all on the run after smoke-bombing a military recruiting office. James (IN-Q) is a gay Kentucky hip-hopper, Miguel (Eduardo Enriquez) is an enraged Iraq veteran, and Osasami

(Bethany Pagliolo) is the privileged rich girl who loves him. Father Francis decides to conceal the three protestors, and continues his service, only to have it interrupted by the police.

Good Friday service is further disrupted when the shroud that covers the cross is torn away and a muscular black man descends from the cross. This is Charles "Hercules" Johnson (Daryl Keith Roach), a death row inmate who has escaped with the help of an irreverent angel named Angelo (David Ari).

Roach has great presence and commands every scene he's in. Enriquez excels in a difficult roll of the play. Haunted by the war, he rejects Osasami until Hercules quells his anger, showing him a path to love.

Deserving of special recognition are set designer Victoria Bellocq, lighting designer Jeremy Pivnick, and choreographer Ayana Cahrr. ☞



Daryle Keith Roach as Hercules Johnson

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This was an indelible mounting of *The Cherry Orchard*, made even more poignant as the players mourned viewing "these walls, these windows for the last time." Card-board moving boxes haunted the lobby and cluttered the stage, where they were eventually tossed out the evidence Room's massive back doors into the alley below as the family readied to leave. It was a production dominated by Bart's signature style, featuring magical performances from O'Brien, Smith, and Fitzgerald, as well as ER vets Leo Marks, Lauren Campedelli, and Colleen Kane — not to mention two young people quickly becoming my symbol of hope for LA theatre, Ryan Templeton and Michael Cassady (whom I'm proud to say I brought to Bart and the ER). Veteran actor Lee Kissman offered a delicately nuanced and tragic performance as the aged Firs.

Said Bart: "I thought *Cherry Orchard* was a story of loss, of things ending. Through the process, I have come to understand that the play is more accurately about change. Difficult, complicated change... with no psychoanalyst needed to be consulted to point out the source of that perspective shift. I hope our audience will forgive a little more indulgence than usual as we incorporate our own experience of change into this performance."

Forgive you? We celebrate you. Watching Bart's heroically off-centered spin on *The Cherry Orchard* gave me a new resolve to continue chasing those frigg'n' windmills of the theatrical arts in Los Angeles, no matter how futile my efforts seem on occasion. Better that, than looking back, as one of Chekhov's characters muses in his final great play, and feel as though "life has come and gone and I've never lived." It's the nature of art to be ephemeral and — despite its inequities and cruelties as a passion or a profession, despite often feeling like Lopakhin, trying to say something but "no one ever listens" — I guess the nature of the true artist must be nomadic. Thanks to Bart, I'm writing again. And I'm sure he and his company of astonishing artists will also resurface before we know it.

The evidence Room and *The Cherry Orchard* are now gone, but their spirit isn't. ☞

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.

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Restaurant Review

Steak with a side of history at Lawry's



Dining with
Shirley Firestone



Lawry's famous silver cart that brings the kitchen to the table.

In a country where nearly 50 percent of restaurants fail within the first three years, Lawry's The Prime Rib is celebrating over 67 years of success. It all started with Lawrence Frank and his brother-in-law, Theodore Van de Kamp, who had previously opened a humble potato chip store, and then a baked goods shop called Van de Kamp's Holland Dutch Bakers. Lawrence had a desire to have his own restaurant, and in 1922 he and Van de Kamp teamed up to open the Tam O'Shanter Inn in Los Angeles.

Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, and Gloria Swanson were regulars in the days when Model T Fords reigned. Later John Wayne and Rudolph Valentino were frequent patrons. Tam O'Shanter was the first restaurant in the nation to offer drive-in parking lot service in 1931. In 1933, when prohibition was repealed, beer appeared on the menu at 25¢ a bottle, and in 1936, their popular spaghetti and meatballs sold for 45¢. Now, 76-years later, Tam O'Shanter is one of the oldest restaurants in California, still owned and operated by the Frank and Van de Kamp families.

In 1938, Walter and Lawrence opened Lawry's The Prime Rib in Beverly Hills. Walter suggested they use Lawrence's nickname, Larry, but they agreed Lawry's sounded more distinguished. For more than 50 years, the restaurant served only one entree, roasted prime rib, which became an overnight success. To season the beef, Frank created Lawry's Seasoned Salt, which became the continent's most popular blended seasoning. He also designed the fabulous silver carts to bring the kitchen to the table. The restaurant opened on land purchased by Lawrence at 100 N. La Cienega Blvd. It was so suc-

cessful that by 1947, it had outgrown its quarters and moved to a larger building across the street. In 1993, when the business had outgrown itself again, the restaurant returned to its original home, redesigning it to fit its needs. Today, there are Lawry's The Prime Rib locations in Chicago, Dallas, Las Vegas, Jakarta, Singapore, Tokyo, and Taipei!

We dined at the original in Beverly Hills, and beyond the stunning entrance is a full bar on one side, and reception room on the other. The dining room is akin to a ballroom of important paintings, huge wall tapestries, and magnificent, floor-to-ceiling deco lamps. We felt lucky to get a reservation, as the Oval, Oak, Vintage, and Main Diningrooms were filled to capacity on a Monday. After being seated on leather and brocade banquettes, we ordered wine, and thought how nice it was to have a conversation and hear every word. The service was extraordinary.

Almost everyone knows about the Lawry's cuts of Prime ribs, such as 6-oz California Cut; English 8-oz, Lawry 10-oz, Diamond Jim

Brady 16-oz, and Beef Bowl 24-oz (\$26-\$40). Prime rib dinners include their famous Spinning Bowl Salad, mashed potatoes, Yorkshire pudding, and whipped horseradish.

Menu also features a la carte fresh salmon, fantastically broiled Atlantic lobster tail, plus fresh fish of the day— all include the Spinning Bowl Salad (\$26-\$36). Dinner accompaniments are jumbo shrimp cocktail, skillet of mushrooms, baked Idaho potato, asparagus, corn, peas, or the best creamed spinach in the world, (\$4.50-\$10). Desserts are \$4-\$7. Try the English Trifle, a rum and sherry laced cake layered with vanilla custard cream, strawberries, and whipped cream.

Lawry's is a treasure, with remarkable food, desserts and wines to dream about. *~*

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Column

Keeping tabs on "the sweet life"



Rose McGowan, Cameron Silver, and Maria Bello at La Dolce Vita's 40th



Hollywood Beat with
Marci Weiner

We were invited to celebrate the 40th anniversary of La Dolce Vita, the legendary Beverly Hills restaurant where Frank Sinatra, Gregory Peck and Ronald Reagan held court. Every U.S. President since Kennedy has dined in this elegant eatery, which has maintained a reputation for classic Italian cuisine and impeccable service.

Current celebs in attendance included Maria Bello, Rose McGowan, Gina Gershon, and Sumner Redstone. The event honored Cameron Silver, owner of the renowned Decades boutique in L.A. and London, who was named by *Time Magazine* as one of the "25 Most Influential names and Faces in Fashion." He has dressed such A-list celebs as Nicole Kidman, Jennifer Lopez and Renee Zellweger. There was also a fantastic silent auction, with the proceeds from the evening's events benefiting the American Film Institute.

La Dolce Vita means the sweet life – and you can enjoy a sweet evening every Tuesday through August if you "dress to the nines" for dinner. Gentlemen are encouraged to dress in their best suit and tie, and women in cocktail attire, rekindling the glamour of Beverly Hills. You will even receive a complimentary glass of champagne and the full red carpet treatment!

Speaking of special treatment, we were pleased to attend the launch party for the first Los Angeles issue of BizBash at the Pacific Design Center. This slick publication is the authority for anyone who plans, designs, or influences corporate and nonprofit events.

The first issue features details on the *Superman Returns* celebration, plus a trend report on the newest L.A. venues. Being a party planner (as well as participant myself) it was a joy to touch base with caterers like Along Came Mary and the Patina Group, and schmooze with party mavens like DJ Johnny Night and L.A. Premier Florists. The assortment of hors d'oeuvres from Wolfgang Puck was outstanding, as usual, and who could resist the ice-covered martini bar?

Bizbash founder David Adler formally announced that Elisabeth Familian is the President of the new Bizbash L.A. With her background as publisher of the L.A. Master Calendar, it is sure to be a smashing success.

And, speaking of success, over 900 guests attended the Beastly Ball at the L.A. Zoo and raised \$1,147,000 to support their various programs. Disney was honored for its animal conservation efforts, evidenced by the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund established in 1995.

Some of the safari clad attendees included Harry Dean Stanton, Rebecca DeMornay, Alfred Molina and, of course, Betty White, who is a huge supporter of the Zoo.

Keep July 15th open for the 32nd Annual Block Party to benefit the Concern Foundation for Cancer Research. This scintillating soiree is held at Paramount Studios, and features a live and silent auction, rock climbing, photo studio, casino gaming, and live musical entertainment. But the best thing is the assortment of food from such restaurants as Fogo De Chao, Ago, The Grill, Ortolan, and more. For a fun-filled evening that will also benefit others, call (323) 852-9844. Hope to see you there on the Hollywood Beat. *~*

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Hollywood awaiting Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young



Crosby, Stills & Nash, honored at the BMI Pop Awards, will be joined by Neil Young in concert



Words n Music with
Kat Kramer

Well folks on July 31, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young will rock The Hollywood Bowl in what will be one of most anticipated concerts of the summer. Neil Young has joined the legendary trio this summer on a reunion tour.

I was lucky enough to attend the recent, star-studded BMI Pop Awards where the original trio Crosby, Stills & Nash accepted the BMI Icon Award. They were honored for their "unique and indelible influence on generations of music makers." CSN has produced some of the most recognizable rock songs of all time, including "Teach Your Children," "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes," "Wooden Ships," "Dark Star," and "Just A Song Before I Go." The BMI tribute to CSN thrilled the audience with an all-star lineup of musicians covering CSN hit songs, including singer/songwriter Gavin De Graw, bluegrass chanteuse Alison Krauss, Gregg Allman of the Allman Brothers Band, and popular rockers Maroon 5, who won BMI pop song of the year for "She Will Be Loved."

BMI represents more than 300,000 songwriters, composers, and publishers in all genres of music. It's a non-profit corporation that collects license fees from businesses that use music, and has been in operation for over 65 years.

The Annual Pop Awards is a black-tie gala that takes place in the ballroom of The Regent Beverly

Wilshire Hotel in Beverly Hills. It gives singers, songwriters, music executives and aspiring musicians the chance to rub elbows with the music business elite – and this year was no exception. At the cocktail reception, I chatted briefly with Lil Jon, who also won songwriter of the year for "Lovers And Friends" (Lil Jon and The East Side Boyz featuring Usher and Ludacris) and "Salt Shaker" (Ying Yang Twins featuring Lil Jon). I also spoke with JellyBean Benitez, known for producing many hits for Madonna.

BMI Film/TV Music Awards

The next night, I went to the BMI Film and TV Music Awards, which also took place at The Beverly Wilshire Hotel. Accomplished composer Harry Gregson-Williams received the BMI Richard Kirk Award for outstanding career achievement, and seemed genuinely humbled by the honor. Gregson-Williams' scores include *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, *Shrek*, *Shrek 2*, *Kingdom of Heaven*, and *Domino*. Veteran television composer Earl Hagen was honored with the Classics Contribution Award, for being a valued member of BMI for more than 50 years. His famous theme songs include *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, *I Spy*, *Gomer Pyle*, and *The Mod Squad*. The event was full of famous faces including Beach Boys icon Brian Wilson and rocker/actor Michael Des Barres.

On July 27, BMI and mun2 (a bilingual, multiplatform youth entertainment cable network) will

present "Verano Alternativo" – a showcase featuring alternative rock acts La Pestilencia, Fronteras, Moktezoo, Maneja Beto, and Crisantes at The Knitting Factory. It will be a hot Latin Rock Show! Doors open at 8 PM. Tickets are \$10, 18 and over. The Knitting Factory is located at 7021 Hollywood Blvd.

Kat's Calendar

Legendary songbird Barbra Streisand will perform in concert at the Staples Center on November 20 along with special guest – Il Divo. It's part of the Streisand 2006 Tour. Please visit www.barbratour.com for tickets.

Rolling Stones back-up vocalist/musician Blondie Chaplin may be touring with The Stones in Europe this summer, but on July 18, he will release a solo CD called "Between Us" on Big Karma Records.

July 22 – "A Starry Night" – Benefit concert at Villa Casablanca in Malibu will honor Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa with The GRAMMY Foundation Leadership Award, with performances by David Foster, Natasha Bedingfield, and Kenneth "Baby Face" Edmonds.

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Kat

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Television

Sliding stars: TV to film to telefilm

by Frank Barron

There's a song in *South Pacific* about racial prejudice that says, "You've got to be carefully taught." Raven-Symoné, star of Disney Channel's *That's So Raven*, tackled that subject with great sensitivity in the telefilm *For One Night*. She commented, "When you are born, there is no hatred in your heart. You are born of love for everyone. Yet you are taught hatred, you are taught ignorance. Or, what you're not taught is the ignorance that comes later on as you grow up. I think that kids nowadays have to teach their parents...to show that you should love everyone. I think nowadays we are so caught up with other people's lives that we are not looking into ourselves



Raven-Symoné stars in a new telefilm dealing with prejudice, *For One Night*

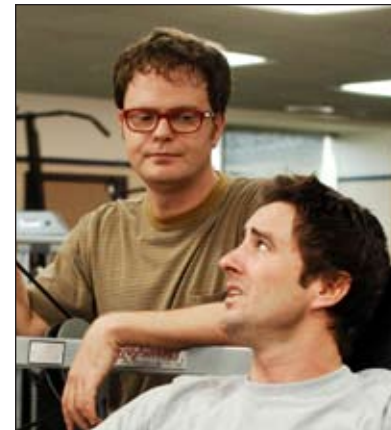
and saying 'I have to fix myself because I'm not loving someone else.' If you don't love someone else, you are not loving yourself." What a wise young lady, no wonder she's considered a great role model for youngsters. To the delight of her fans, Raven has made a sequel to the ratings grabbing *Cheetah Girls* Disney Channel movie. Premiering August 25, *Cheetah Girls 2* was directed by Kenny Ortega, who just got an Emmy nomination for his work at the helm of the Disney Channel phenomenon *High School Musical*, and another for choreography.

One of the finest actors in town, Ernie Hudson has been working steadily at his craft ever since audiences embraced him decades ago in the blockbuster *Ghostbusters*. Hudson should have been rewarded with an Emmy nod for his work on *ER* last season, in a heart-wrenching role as a stoic Colonel who loses his son in Iraq. But the likable guy, who showed a less heroic side in HBO's prison series *Oz*, is happy just to be working. "I don't

take this activity for granted. I really appreciate getting the work. It helps me get my kids through college," he said with a smile. "Three weeks after I finish a movie, I think, 'Oh my gosh, what am I going to do now?' I'm trying to do some writing, a screenplay. It's something I've always wanted to do. I also may do a book on my experiences in Hollywood for the past 35 years, and eventually turn it into a one-man show." But all that may have to wait as he is just wrapping up another movie project *Nobel Son*, plus he has *Hood of Horror*, a film he did with Snoop Dogg, coming out.

Rainn Wilson, Dwight on NBC's Emmy-nominated comedy *The Office*, has gone from salesman on TV to farmer in real life, with the purchase of a farmhouse just outside of Hollywood. Yep — horses, corral, and all that. Of course, Wilson would love to get a gig in a western, but he is spending his summer hiatus filming a strange family drama called *Mimzy*. Wilson also has a role in the new fantasy-comedy film *My Super Ex-Girlfriend*, starring Uma Thurman.

Also at home in the saddle is Stacy Keach, who stars in the west-



Rainn Wilson with Luke Wilson in the upcoming *My Super Ex-Girlfriend*

ern *Desolation Canyon* with Patrick Duffy, airing throughout July on the Hallmark Channel. Keach said he felt very comfortable in the role of a retired gunfighter, but he also recalled another role that had him handling guns, one that made him very uncomfortable. Keach revealed, "One of the most difficult things I've ever done was recreating the suicide of Ernest Hemmingway on the very spot that he killed himself.

I went to his house in Ketcham, Idaho. It was like being in church, and it was like I had an out of body experience. It was unbelievable. ...I felt like I was really in contact with some outer force or something, you know. It was a bizarre moment."



Buffy creator Joss Whedon

Joss Whedon, creator of *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*, reported that the planned movie based on the Spike character has been put on hold, "and I don't know what's happening in the future, television-wise." He has completed writing on the *Wonder Woman* screenplay, but says no one has been cast as yet, and naturally there is no release date at the moment. He said, "writing the script took a long time because, like Superman or Batman, you're working with a persona — the character. There's no story to start with." Leave it to Whedon to come up with a story with lots of humor. Remember, Whedon started as a writer on the sitcom *Roseanne*.

Nearly one hundred pilots were filmed this season in hopes of landing on the fall schedule of a major network— or anywhere, for that matter. So you can see what your chances are if you created or acted in one. The question is, with more than 90% of the pilots rejected, where do all the shows wind up?



Former *Ghostbuster* Ernie Hudson wowed fans of *ER*, and will soon appear in *Hood of Horror* with Snoop Dog

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I want my, I want my Reality TV



Lets do lunch with
Clayson DeBurger

Some say "Reality TV" is in its final throes, if you will. But let's be careful not to speak too soon. As summer re-runs are now a thing of the past, Reality TV is heating up on every channel.

I don't always like to admit it, but I am a HUGE fan of the dearly dimwitted reality competition *Big Brother*. This summer, check out the "all-star" cast drawing from the past 6 seasons of CBS's mind-numbing catfight of a show. *Big Brother* promises to bring back the most cantankerous, backstabbing, and hypercompetitive players, which could mean nothing other than quality TV viewing. I even welcome the return of Jase from season 5 — who could possibly be most vain and idiotic person to appear on Reality TV, and that is saying something! Of course, no reality show is complete without a blond bitch and lucky for us, not one but TWO have returned for this season: Janelle the VIP cocktail waitress and Alison, who nearly slept her way to a win during season 4. While I would love to see one of season 6's cunning cast members win it all, my bet is on either Nakomis or Diane from season 5. These gals were fierce in their first go-round, and now they've had some time to hone their strategy.

My only complaint is that the American version is lacking in adventure, compared to several other *Big Brother* shows airing around the globe. Other versions have see-through showers and torture their inmates by blasting the sound of crying babies if there isn't enough drama. In the U.K., *Big Brother* crowned a Portuguese transsexual as a winner and had Sly Stallone's mother as a competitor. There, they seek out the most unusual, unseen members of society — whereas the American version seems to cast each season from the pages of the International Male catalog and the Janice Dickenson Modeling Agency.

While *Big Brother* is a show I watch in secret, I am very public about my obsession with Bravo's ratings-winning *Project Runway*, which is making its season debut this week. As with the first two seasons, *Project Runway* continues its search for the great American designer. What has made the show stand out is that the contestants actually know how to sew and have designed before. Without having to

learn a completely new trade, there's Michael Kors. As fantastic a designer as he is, I have always had an issue with him because of his men's lines — his shirts, in particular, are always too baggy and are cut in an unflattering shape that makes me look like a pumpkin. Therefore, I do not find him the most qualified judge!



Shirts designed by Michael Kors, above, are unflattering on ET's Clayson DeBurger

only minor complaint about this show is that its judges are starting to bore me. Nina Garcia has tried her best to conjure up her inner Anna Wintour, but after seeing *The Devil Wears Prada*, she seems like a pussycat. I hope this season she'll step it up with her backhanded compliments. Heidi Klum is fine and all. But then

would have added that extra *je ne sais pas pourquoi* to the show. Tom Ford comes to mind, as does Donna Karan. Now go set your Tivos!

Award winner *Cain And Abel* to screen at Dances with Films

Cain and Abel has been chosen by the prestigious Danceswithfilms Film Festival to screen opening night, July 21st at the Laemmle Fairfax in a midnight screening. The film co-stars rap icon and reality TV star Flavor Flav.

"*Cain and Abel* is pure comedy. People want to laugh," said Mercury Films founder Christy Oldham. "No one wants to be reminded of how hard life is. People live that everyday. Besides, laughter's good for the soul."

Oldham formed Mercury Rising Films in 2001 with fellow actor Shane Woodson, a Louisville, Kentucky native and lateral descendent of legendary film director D. W. Griffith. Woodson wrote, produced, directed, and starred in this comedic, genre-bending film that plays like *Starsky and Hutch* meets *Superfly*. Oldham, a native of south Louisiana, was co-producer, assistant director, and co-star.

Cain and Abel follows the misadventures of two Hollywood undercover detectives, Malcolm Cain (Terrence Flack), and John Abel (Woodson). The story opens with a drug bust when Cain and Abel pose as bug exterminators in Operation: Extermination. Unfortunately, the crooked Chief of Police is onto Cain and Abel's antics and hires a new lieutenant and his secret weapons, called The Angels of Death, to take out Cain and Abel "by any and all means necessary."



Flavor Flav and Shane Woodson in *Cain and Abel*

Woodson has supporting roles in three upcoming features: *Crossing Paths*, with Minnie Driver, *Zodiac*, with Robert Downey, Jr., and *Resident Evil: Extinction*, with Milla Jovovich.

The Indie filmmakers found both drama and comedy behind the scenes. "Two days before principle photography even began, we lost our DP, line producer, assistant director and full crew," says Woodson. "The line producer, who had referred most of the crew, turned out to be a complete flake. Then, about 13 days into the shoot, the new DP fell in love with an extra and they fled the set in the middle of shooting, never to be heard from again. It's funny now, but at the time, it was a complete disaster".

More ambitious and resourceful than ever, Oldham and Woodson found another DP and completed principal photography on *Cain and Abel* in September 2005. Their hard work finally paid off when the film was accepted at The Other Venice Film Festival in March 06 and won the "Audience, Best Feature Award". As a result, the filmmakers have found themselves fielding calls from distributors. "It took 3 years of exhausting work to get *Cain and Abel* in the can, and we aren't going to jump at the first deal," Oldham said.

Mercury Rising Films next production, *The Truth About Men*, a dark comedy, which Oldham wrote and will produce (www.thetruthaboutmenthemovie.com), will start filming next year in Los Angeles in her home state of Louisiana.

For more info, go to:
www.CainandAbelTheMovie.com
www.Danceswithfilms.com

###

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Oh what a promiscuous girl



THE OH IN OHIO

★★★☆☆

(2 1/2 out of 4 stars)

DIRECTED BY BILLY KENT

STARRING: PARKER POSEY, PAUL RUDD, DANNY DEVITO, MISCHA BARTON, KEITH DAVID

81 MINUTES, NOT RATED

by Julian Camillieri

In the opening scene of Billy Kent's feature film debut *The Oh in Ohio*, Priscilla Chase (Parker Posey) reveals a personal sore spot in an awkward smile shared with her assistant. A factoid in a magazine estimates that 30 million women suffer from sexual dysfunction, and the look on her face betrays the fact that Priscilla is among them. Priscilla is a beautiful and successful executive at a corporation designed to attract business to Cleveland. Her marriage and her life seem to be going very well, except for the fact that she has to deal with the colossal bummer of never having had an orgasm. There are several funny, touching, and even sexy moments in Kent's depiction of Priscilla's chaotic sexual awakening. But an uneven tone that wanders as aimlessly as the movie's heroine causes *The Oh in Ohio* to come off as patchy and incomplete.

Kent provides some comic gems in Priscilla's search for the illusive "Oh." At a seminar headed by a hilariously over-the-top Liza Minnelli, Priscilla is forced to give a name to her vagina. While her classmates come up with zealous monikers like "Velvet Volcano," Priscilla cautiously chooses "My Vagina." Priscilla's problems are exacerbated by her

biology teacher husband, Jack (Paul Rudd) who blames his depression and the failure of their marriage on her unending frigidity, in and out of the bedroom. Rudd steals many of the film's early scenes, as a self-deprecating, sarcastic former ladies man who openly berates himself for not being able to satisfy his wife. Essentially, Rudd's Jack

is a rehash of previous work in *The 40 Year Old Virgin* and *The Baxter*. But this is more than forgivable — he's really good at it. Keith David is crudely charming as the school's head football coach/school counselor, relentlessly foisting unsolicited

marital advice on Jack, who does his best to implement his suggestions to varying degrees of success.

Priscilla and Jack visit a marriage counselor who offers little, other than a suggestion that Priscilla start shopping for vibrators. This she does, after a friend seconds the recommendation, and the results are memorable to say the least. While the first half of the movie focuses on the dysfunctional relationship between Jack and Priscilla, the second half mostly follows the sexually liberated Priscilla through dating letdowns, lesbian experiences, and an unexpected relationship with Wayne the Pool Guy (Danny DeVito).

Mischa Barton as Jack's student and love interest Kristen plays a much smaller role than advertisements would have you think. Gorgeous but outclassed by Rudd and Posey, Barton is asked to portray a stoner turned biology geek, both of



The OC's Mischa Barton as Kristen



Miranda Bailey and Parker Posey discuss female sexual dysfunction in *The Oh in Ohio*. Inset: (1) Liza Minnelli coaches Posey to peep at her own privates. (2) Danny DeVito as an unlikely love interest. (3) Paul Rudd and Keith David as high school faculty colleagues.

which are hard to believe. Although no serious effort is required, Barton can be credited for adding needed sex appeal to a film that is mostly about sex. Amongst the numerous sad and unsuccessful sexual experiences depicted in the film, Barton's inevitable love scene with Rudd offers a striking contrast, and a glimpse of the passion Priscilla has been missing. Unfortunately Jack and Kristen's story is forgotten in the lengthy second act, and is resolved in a cursory and unsatisfying fashion in the third.

A surprising twist develops in the relationship between Priscilla and DeVito's pool guy, Wayne. Only with Wayne does Priscilla reveal the tenderness beneath her uptight and career-obsessed facade.

Posey adds nuance and depth to her character in Wayne's elaborate backyard pool. From the underwater palace of a lonely, small man with a big heart, Priscilla emerges as a woman who has finally found physical and emotional fulfillment.

Boasting an array of humorous and well-acted moments, *The Oh in Ohio* suffers from unsuccessful turns from comedy to drama, and an abrupt shift in tone and plot from the first half of the film to the second. Jack and Kristen's romance is sexy, but feels unfinished, while Priscilla and Wayne's relationship could do with more development. Ultimately, the film is not consistently funny enough, or racy enough, or meaningful enough to keep the audience engaged. *F*

Film Review

Dupree overstays welcome

YOU, ME AND DUPREE



(1 1/2 out of 4 stars)

DIRECTED BY ANTHONY RUSSO,
JOE RUSSO

STARRING: OWEN WILSON,
KATE HUDSON, MATT DILLON

108 MINUTES, RATED P-13

by Jonathan W. Hickman

You, Me, and Dupree is a mediocre film that squanders the talent of its stars. The off-kilter humor that earned Joe and Anthony Russo Emmy Awards for *Arrested Development* is missing from *Dupree*, a formulaic romantic comedy highlighted by too few chuckle-inducing moments.

Dupree opens on an island paradise, the site of the wedding of Carl (Matt Dillon) and Molly (Kate Hudson). The high-end event is bankrolled by Molly's controlling father, Mr. Thompson (Michael Douglas). Carl's best man, Dupree (Owen Wilson), arrives late having first gone to the wrong island. Dupree is immediately established as some kind of goofy ne'er-do-well, swooping in on a single-engine island hopper plane. He rolls out of the tiny craft with a large duffel bag across his back. His grin is wide and innocent.

At the wedding reception, Mr. Thompson delivers a stinging speech roasting Carl, and Dupree warns Carl that Mr. Thompson wasn't kidding about his disdain. Afterwards, the players return to the mainland, and Carl and Molly begin their life of matrimony. Dupree has fallen on hard times. And Carl offers to put him up for a few days. The first morning the newlyweds find Dupree sleeping nude on their plush leather couch. For those of you who've seen the trailer, where Wilson (or a body



Owen Wilson, Kate Hudson and Matt Dillon star in *You, Me and Dupree*

double) is wearing thong underwear, the PG-13 version features what the censors would call "brief nudity." My thought is that the thong would have been funnier.

As Dupree's stay at the Peterson residence becomes longer and longer, efforts are doubled then redoubled to get him out. It seems the house has no second bedroom even though it's decorated really well, and, from the outside, looks like a single-family dwelling. Dupree moves from the couch to a porch converted into an office. This contrived arrangement smells of script tinkering for the purpose of squeezing out laughs. But instead of being genuinely funny, the whole thing rings false, creating an artificial tone for the entire production.

Part of the story focuses on Dupree's efforts to find work. He reads the want ads and even goes on a job interview at Levitz Furniture (are they still around?). This could have been an opportunity to develop the character, and/or place him in some amusing situations. But the script moves in another direction as Dupree gains the adulation of the neighborhood kids. The first scene about playing baseball in the street is funny. But later when Dupree organizes a search party made up of children, the scenario feels forced and padded.

Dupree is the type of character that the script requires to be smarter than everyone else, despite a lack of mainstream savvy. In one scene, it appears that Dupree is reading a *Mensa* publication, which would have been interesting if followed up on. We've seen other Duprees in the past. I kept thinking about that Johnny Depp film *Benny & Joon*. Like Depp in *Benny*, Wilson plays Dupree like a blissful dreamer who's damaged in some way. Unfortunately, the Russo

brothers fail to develop Dupree into something more substantial and instead embrace his oddness, making him into some kind of tilted soothsayer, or worse, just slapstick comic relief.

Michael Douglas is handcuffed as Molly's one-note, overbearing father. Mr. Thompson draws much of his texture from wardrobe (colorful power suits) and production design (a Zen inspired office décor). Douglas does his imperious best with the role he's given, but with the exception of a zany dream sequence on a boat, the writing never allows him to do anything fun or interesting. Kate Hudson's elementary school teacher Molly is so grounded and bland that there really is no way the two could be related. The dream sequence is also Hudson's best scene, largely because she looks so delicious in a bathing suit.

Completely wasted is Matt Dillon as the witless Carl. The script's flaws are awfully apparent in one scene in which Carl sits in a bar and downs one shot after another. With the customary stack of shot glasses sitting next to him, it appears he's been drinking for a while. But after a pep talk from sage Dupree, Carl immediately leaves the bar and lucidly confronts his boss (Mr. Thompson, of course). Not only would this be impossible, it wastes Dillon's talent for playing a drunk (see his excellent work in *Factotum*).

You, Me, and Dupree is meant to be a light romantic comedy capitalizing on the success of last year's *Wedding Crashers* and Wilson's growing fan base. Wilson has a special on-screen radiance that can earn him instant trust (see *The Life Aquatic* and his early work in *Bottle Rocket*). But without the constant gabbing of Vince Vaughn, Wilson's eclectic magnetism isn't enough to carry the show. *R*



Kate Hudson as Molly

ENTERTAINMENT

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Book Review

Disasters thrive in Hollywood

by Sean Reynolds

The complete title of the new book by journalist Glenn Kay and filmmaker Michael Rose is *Disaster Movies: A Loud, Long, Explosive, Star-Studded Guide to Avalanches, Earthquakes, Floods, Meteors, Sinking Ships, Twisters, Viruses, Killer Bees, Nuclear Fallout, and Alien Attacks in the Cinema!!!!*. The book is (as the cover more than suggests) an extensive evaluation of motion pictures that crash and destroy with special effects. Authors Kay and Rose employ a liberal measure of sarcasm and satire throughout the guide. Rose says, "This is a genre in which a lack of subtlety and an exploitive nature are almost required elements." Referring to the 1970 movie *Airport* Kay writes, "Of course with Dino (Dean Martin) in the cockpit, disaster is inevitable." However, the authors' honest enthusiasm emerges frequently. They eulogize the 1996 blockbuster *Titanic* by writing, "The sinking itself is chilling. Passengers slide down the side of the boat as it tips upward and breaks in half. Unlike other versions, swimmers are shown being sucked back into the boat as the water crashes through the windows. All of this is horrifying and extremely well executed."

A five level scoring system rates each movie. The top exclaiming, "Highly Recommended" and the bottom: "So Bad It's Good." The hallmark disaster saga, *Earthquake*, released in 1974, which portrayed the metropolis of Los Angeles torn apart in "Sensurround," is hailed as a "connoisseur's delight." On the other hand; the 1979 film *Meteor* starring Sean Connery, Natalie Wood, and Henry Fonda is scorned as "an example of how not to make a disaster film."

Disaster Movies opens with a foreword by comedy writer Mike Nelson. Host and head writer for *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, he led his writing staff to three Emmy nominations, four Cable ACE nominations, and the Peabody Award for Excellence in Broadcasting. Nelson offers his interpretation of the public's undying interest in thunderous explosions and on-screen carnage. "Let's face it, it's deep in our subconscious to want to see Charlton Heston try to survive a massive geological upheaval while


simultaneously being forced to choose between his wife and a beautiful mistress. Thank heavens for disaster films, or our needs would go unmet. We would have to settle for *The Wedding Planner*." Co-author Glenn Kay continues to elucidate the underlying principles for the fascination with disaster films. In the book's introduction he writes, "And, strangely enough, I watch disaster movies to see famous celebrities die horribly violent deaths. I like that best — I happily admit it."

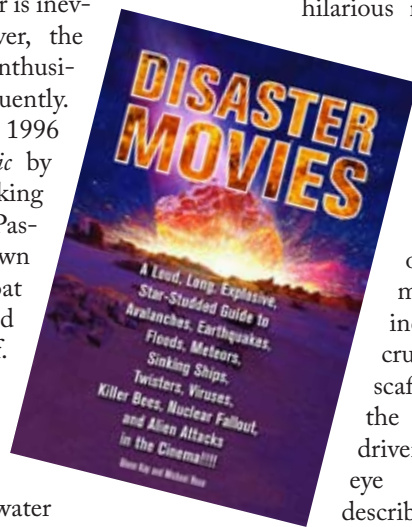
With that in mind, the book includes a "Most Spectacular Moment of Carnage" segment at the end of each review. Some films are derided for their spurious special effects like the 1998 film *Airspeed*, "The pilot's electrocution, displayed via dime-store special effects, is by far the cheesiest, most unintentional

hilarious moment in the film." Others are praised for their mayhem. The moments of carnage in the "Highly Recommended"

movie *Die Hard 2* include a fatal crushing under a scaffold, a bullet to the head, an icicle driven through the eye which Kay describes as "a hands down winner" and the sucking of a man into a jumbo jet's propeller. Kay writes, "*Die Hard 2* was one of the biggest hits of 1990, grossing \$117 million domestically and finishing somewhere around \$237 million worldwide."

There are also insightful observations of lesser-known, but well-made motion pictures. The 1988 film *Miracle Mile*, a tale of nuclear Armageddon depicting the chaos of mutually assured destruction, is commended for its "clever and visually inventive hybrid of drama and black comedy."

Disaster Movies contains sixteen pages of full color movie posters from films like *The War of the Worlds*, *Kingdom of the Spiders*, *Dante's Peak*, and *Mars Attacks*. Kay and Rose list their "Ultimate Disaster Movies" as well as their favorite "So Bad they're Good" selections. The book is fun and entertaining. It would be a great addition to the coffee table in a vacation house or the bookshelf in the family room — four hundred pages of facts on the highest grossing movies of all times and the biggest flops to reach the screen. 



Community

TOP 10 BARS to check out this summer

by Susie Roteman

If bar hopping is on your agenda this summer, perhaps this list will help you find some new favorite watering holes. Warning! If you're looking to get wasted with the Hilton sisters, or engage in a cat fight with Lindsay Lohan, this guide is not for you. If you want to wait in long lines only to pay \$20 for a Jack and Coke, stop reading now! These bars are just plain ol' fun — without the expensive drinks or snobby crowds. So here are my top 10 L.A. bars, in no particular order:

THE GOLDEN GOPHER

417 W. 8th St. ~ (213) 614-9909

Outside of the Golden Gopher you can expect the usual Downtown madness, you know — crackheads, panhandlers, and creepy drunk guys peeking out of the dive bar next door. The inside is a different story altogether. The Golden Gopher is decorated in gold chandeliers, tacky gopher-shaped lamps, old video games, and a killer juke box pumping out everything from The Steve Miller Band to Marvin Gaye. This place is fun for a laid-back night with friends, plus you can have pizza delivered to the bar. And because the owner of the bar is the proud owner of one of the oldest liquor licenses in L.A., the Golden Gopher is also allowed to have an in-house takeout liquor store. Talk about a cool bar....

YE OLDE RUSTIC INN

1831 Hillburst Ave. ~ (323) 662-5757

Ye Olde Rustic Inn is tucked into a typical L.A. mini-mall; it features a jukebox full of all the '80's bands you may be too embarrassed to admit you love, and has the best chicken wings in town, or so I've been told. Ye Olde Rustic Inns' goofy British name doesn't at all match the cheesy American '80s music, the decor (dark brown semi-circle booths), the food (chicken wings and nachos), or the clientele (college kids, thirty-something men, and the occasional hipster). But it's a ridiculous, noisy dive bar, and the type of place where you can find your intoxicated friends singing to Poison's "Pour Some Sugar on Me." The bar opens daily at 6 a.m. for those of you who like to get an early start.

THE ROOM, HOLLYWOOD

1626 N. Cabuenga Blvd. ~ (323) 462-7196

I think I love this bar because the entrance is in the back alley and it reminds me of a seedy New York dive. It's a small, dark and crowded hallway — but it's actually really fun. The bar is always free to get in to, and the bartenders are surprisingly cool for a Hollywood spot. Almost every night features a live DJ, but it can get a little insane on weekends when the place is jammed with a party-till-you-drop crowd that comes to hear some of the L.A.'s top DJs do their thing. Monday nights are definitely good if you like Reggae music and mellow crowds.

THE MOUNTAIN BAR

475 Gin Ling Way ~ (213) 625-7500 ~ Open Tues.-Sun. from 6pm til 2am

This artsy Chinatown bar is definitely one to check out if you and your friends are looking for stiff, reasonably priced cocktails and good vibes. Formerly known as General Lee's, an old school Chinatown restaurant and bar smack dab in the center of Gin Ling Plaza, The Mountain Bar has been completely redone in shades of dark red and features everything from Heavy Metal shows to Dancehall boogie-downs. On an average Friday or Saturday night, you might find an eclectic blend of locals, trendy Eastsiders, and the occasional celebrity enjoying the non-pretentious atmosphere and awesome staff. This place has two distinct levels each with fully-stocked bars, and a lounge area for those who need some time to work their way, or drink their way over to the dance floor.

THE STANDARD DOWNTOWN ROOFTOP BAR

550 S. Flower St. ~ (213) 892-8080 ~ Admission: Free-\$20

Okay, so The Standard Downtown is too trendy for words but the views of the Los Angeles skyline are well worth the snooty crowds. The Standard roof-top bar is a chic 60s-style pool side lounge done up in swirls of red and white, with various squishy couches to lounge on while you sip their pricey but tasty cocktails. There's a projector screening Hollywood classics on the next-door building, and waterbeds to lie on by the pool — which you can swim in if you don't mind murky, brown water. This place is especially fun if you enjoy laughing at people who think they're "too cool for school." Monday nights are free to get in, and by far the most mellow night at The Standard.



BIRDS

5925 Franklin Ave. ~ (323) 465-0175

There is an isolated strip of artsy bookstores, cafes, and restaurant/bars on Franklin between Hollywood and Los Feliz and among them is Birds, a bar and restaurant that serves alcohol and rotisserie chicken. Birds is candle lit and painted rust red. There is a huge photo of Alfred Hitchcock holding two crows hanging from the exposed brick wall in the dining area, while the bar is modestly decorated but filled with super friendly bartenders who have been there for years. A DJ spins mostly quiet grooves that are perfect for conversation. But around midnight, the bar gets wild and drunken patrons proceed to dance in the bar's human size birdcage. Bird trinkets decorate the drinking area, which consists of a small-but-cozy bar, a few two-seater tables, and an outdoor patio where the smokers can hang out.

TIKI-TI

4427 Sunset Blvd. ~ (323) 669-9381 ~ Open Wednesday through Saturday

This bar is tiny, there are only 12 stools, with a handful of tables against the walls — but what it lacks in square footage it makes up for in menu. There are 85 Tropical Drinks to choose from, and all of them are huge and very, very potent. I would advise drinking no more than two in one sitting, or you might end up making out with a complete stranger in the bathroom line (it happened to my roommate). This place gets packed, so come early. It's a great place to start off the night, and for you indecisive drinkers, the bar has a "wheel of Tiki-Ti drinks" to help you choose your concoctions for the evening.

THE DRESDEN

1760 N. Vermont Ave. ~ (323) 665-4294

Yes, this bar is in the movie *Swingers*. And yes, if you like the movie, this bar will make your night. But the main attraction at The Dresden is Marty & Elayne, the veteran jazz crooners who've played there for decades. This place is great in just about every aspect, and kitschy in all the right ways. Sometimes the bar gets crowded and it's tough to walk through, but if you're able to get a table or booth, you're looking at good times and even better people watching. The service is excellent, and if you tip well, the bartenders will definitely take care of you.

THE BIGFOOT LODGE

3172 Los Feliz Blvd. ~ (323) 662-9227

This unmarked Los Feliz spot is difficult for first-timers to find, but once you're past the velvet curtain entrance, you enter a log cabin world where forest décor is taken to absurd extremes, with logs everywhere, an animatronic raccoon, customs signs for the Sasquatch National Forest, and stuffed critters all around. Sure, the place is full of trendsetters — but so many different kinds: there are some rockabilly dudes, edgy artists, local musicians, and actors, all in the twenty-to-thirty something range. It's not a meat market though, so if you're looking for that kind of place you'd better head west to Hollywood. Drinks at the Bigfoot Lodge are very reasonably priced. The Flaming Toasted Marshmallow drink is pretty tasty, but the winner for best cocktail goes to the Girl Scout Cookie, which tastes just like a Thin Mint and is supposedly made from girl scouts who have been bad.



THE LITTLE TEMPLE BAR

4519 Santa Monica Blvd. (in Silver Lake) ~ (323) 660-4540

The owners of Santa Monica's Temple Bar have branched out to the east, giving Silver Lake's ex-punk club "The Garage" a complete makeover. The new look is Hollywood meets the Eastside meets Downtown meets Shanghai. Comfortable booths near the entrance give way to a simple raised DJ stage in the main room. There is a smaller room near the entrance of the bar, and this is usually where you'll find the couples making out and those who are too shy to dance. The Little Temple embraces the spirit of eclectic world music through hip-hop, Latin, dancehall, and rare groove DJs. Thursday's "Root Down" is a lively event, with packed dance floors and hip-hop and funk blaring. Cover is usually no more than \$7, but FYI, parking is a hassle, so bring valet money.

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Film Review

Love is too demanding in Chereau's *Gabrielle*



Pascal Gregory and Isabelle Huppert are a mismatched husband and wife in *Gabrielle*

GABRIELLE



DIRECTED BY PATRICE CHEREAU
STARRING: ISABELLE HUPPERT,
PASCAL GREGGORY
90 MINUTES, NOT RATED

by Michael Guillén

Patrice Chéreau's *Gabrielle* is readily compared to Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes From A Marriage*. In the title role, Isabelle Huppert proves smolderingly incandescent even if the film as a whole does not fully shine. What does shine in *Gabrielle* is the film's disturbing score by Fabio Vacchi. Reminiscent of Bernard Herrmann's work for Hitchcock, the score loans an anguished and jolting anxiety to the film's depiction of social complacency.

Winning a special jury acting award at the 2005 Venice International Film Festival — after the film itself was assailed with boos after its screening — Huppert maneuvers Chéreau's cumbersome, turn-of-the-century chamber drama with customary aplomb. Shifting from a restricted interiority to a scandalously candid resignation, her portrayal of a wife chafing against her loveless marriage and eager to run away with her lover is a complete pleasure to observe, even if her motivations sometimes seem unclear. The skin beneath her left eye flinches in nervous recognition of distasteful insights. Her nostrils flare as if the atmosphere of her strictured life smells foul. Only Isabelle Huppert can transform nervous tics into communicative acts.

Pascal Gregory, on the other hand, in the role of Gabrielle's

husband Jean, is one-dimensional and overblown. If not for Huppert's subtleties, *Gabrielle* would be a costumed bore. Ambitiously based (perhaps overly so) on Joseph Conrad's *The Return*, the shift from novel to screen is not as successful as it is handsomely-dressed. One of the film's primary problems is an odd decision to project letters and plot developments onscreen as intertitular text. The effect is precious, distracting, and self-conscious. If it is meant to express that strong passions cannot be envoked, silence itself would have succeeded more forcefully.

Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-hsien honestly explained that his use of silent movie intertitles in the central panel of his triptych *Three Times* was due to his inability to capture the language of the period (1911) within the necessary filming schedule, rather than the stylistic flourishes Chéreau felt compelled to flaunt for no sound reason. Whereas Spanish film critic Juan Manuel Freire has suggested that the use of silent movie conventions can serve to emphasize the artifice of intercourses in a society that hides every passion and truth beneath luxurious costumes and furniture, their use in *Gabrielle* proves downright disingenuous.

One of the film's best scenes — capturing the gist of Joseph Conrad's concept of "the return" — is Gabrielle's self-revelation that it would just be "too demanding" to live with the man she loves and was going to run off with. She returns to her husband Jean, not because she loves him, but because she doesn't love him. She is able to come back, face him, and live life as normal because their lack of love makes their interaction automatic and effortless. *✍*

For blogs, interviews, and reviews by Michael Guillén, go to: www.TheEveningClass.blogspot.com

Film Review

Yes, it is as bad as it looks

LITTLE MAN



DIRECTED BY KEENAN IVORY WAYANS
STARRING: MARLON WAYANS,
SHAWN WAYANS, KERRY WASHINGTON,
JOHN WITHERSPOON
90 MINUTES, PG-13

by Peter Sobczynski

I have a theory as to how the new comedy *Little Man* came to fruition. Marlon, Shawn, and Keenan Ivory Wayans popped in the DVD of *The Golden Age of Looney Tunes: Vol. 2*, stumbled upon the 1954 cartoon "Baby Bunny Buggy" — in which a midget criminal disguises himself as an infant to retrieve the stolen loot that accidentally found its way into Bugs' rabbit hole — and thought "Hey, why don't we take this cartoon, stretch it out to 12 times its length, and cram it full of jokes involving rectal thermometers, breast feeding, and various forms of gastric distress?" Lacking any other workable idea, they set about scribbling out just such a screenplay. Perhaps they may have questioned the viability of such a premise, especially since it didn't even make for an especially great Bugs Bunny cartoon, but then again, if people bought *White Chicks*, they'll buy anything.

Calvin (Marlon Wayans) is a midget criminal who has, with the aid of idiot colleague Percy (Tracy Morgan), stolen a diamond for a mob boss (Chazz Palminteri — apparently Christopher Walken was stricken with a brief bout of dignity and common sense). Unfortunately, the cops pursue them almost immediately and Calvin is forced to ditch the diamond inside the purse of rising Chicago businesswoman Vanessa (Kerry Washington). After following Vanessa and husband Darryl (Shawn Wayans) home, Percy and Calvin hit upon the perfect idea — they will dress Calvin up as a baby and leave him on their doorstep in a basket, and when they take him in, he can grab the diamond and sneak out. Of course, for such a plan to work, the couple would have to be dumb enough to not notice the difference between a newborn child and a very short man. Luckily, Darryl and Vanessa are arguably the dumbest people ever characterized in a major motion picture (and their pediatrician is somehow unable to recognize the "infant" is an adult,

despite a full set of adult teeth with evidence of bridgework, tattoos, and a stabbing scar). Darryl has been yearning to be a father and they decide to keep the kid around for a few days to see if he is prepared to handle the responsibility. (I know what you're thinking, but Chicago's Department of Children and Family Services is apparently closed on weekends.) As a result, Calvin is forced to undergo all the indignities of being an infant while trying to escape with the diamond and avoid Vanessa's suspicious father (John Witherspoon) who is convinced that something just isn't right.

like Luis Bunuel or David Lynch — provided, of course, that Bunuel and Lynch were idiots.

You might enjoy this film if you don't require actual humor in your comedies, or if you simply want to peep inside the freak show to see if it really is as bad as it looks. *Little Man* is so desperate for laughs that it brings in Rob Schneider towards the end — and he winds up being the funniest thing in it. It even fails in its baser attempts at humor — while it is inevitable that a toy rocket will hit someone in the crotch, did the victim really need to



Marlon Wayans is a midget criminal posing as a baby in *Little Man*

Little Man is a film that tries to base an entire screenplay on one joke — and then subverts even that premise with an execution so sloppy and inept that even the little girl sitting behind me was naming off things that didn't make sense to her. The visual effects in *Little Man* are so atrocious that they make the waxwork-like makeup of *White Chicks* look seamless by comparison. The camera tricks and effects intended to make Marlon Wayans look 30 inches tall are never even remotely convincing. This doesn't help when the entire film depends on the idea that everyone believes Calvin to be something that he doesn't come close to resembling. At times, the disconnect between the concept and the execution is so pronounced that *Little Man* begins to feel like the work of surrealists

stand perfectly still while waiting for the projectile to be launched at him, even though he knows exactly where it is headed? The balance of the film is little more than a collection of painful slapstick and even more painful sentiment, with an ending that so blatantly rips off *Home Alone* that John Hughes could sue them for millions — if, that is, he could bring himself to admit to having watched it. *✍*

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.

FILMS YOU OUGHT TO SEE but will you?

ET's new weekly feature on outstanding indie films in search of distribution



Josh Alexander

BACKSEAT



(3 out of 4 stars)

DIRECTED BY BRUCE VAN DUSEN

STARRING: ROB BOGUE,
JOSH ALEXANDER

81 MINUTES, NOT RATED

by Jonathan W. Hickman

Ever heard of a WOBIC? A WOBIC is a person who can only communicate through the web or web based gadgets. *Backseat* is a feature film filled with tons of weird and clever references like WOBIC (Web Only Based Interactive Communicator). It is also a story about "coming of age, late."

Ben and Colton are best friends. When we meet Ben (Rob Bogue), he is having sex with his girlfriend who demands that he rape her. Ben doesn't know how to react. When we meet Colton (Josh Alexander), he's auditioning for a film role and the casting director asks if he can see his body. When Colton removes all his clothes, he's asked why he's not wearing any underwear. We're wondering the same thing.

In time, *Backseat* becomes a road picture of sorts as Ben and Colton travel to Albany and on to Canada in hopes of meeting Donald Sutherland. Why they are taking this trip isn't clear, and frankly it doesn't matter. To make the trip, Ben borrows a car from a relative. The car is some kind of indescribably colored giant station wagon that doesn't even have a working cigarette lighter from which to power Ben's cell phone. Modern technology is given a backseat early in the film so that Ben and Colton can carry on timeless conversation. They talk about their lives, women, and Colton's odd goal involving Mr. Sutherland.

To complicate matters, Colton has been asked by a friend to bring a package across the border into

Canada. The package contains a large amount of cocaine. Why one would want to smuggle drugs into Canada is left an open question. But the drug subplot does give the film some funny moments — for example, when the Pablo Escobar-wannabe Colton tries to make a deal with a hotel night clerk for a better room in exchange for a piece of the action

on the drug deal. Colton is in over his head, and after one successful party, things begin to grow dangerously dark. But *Backseat* never goes bleak, managing to skirt cliché enough to conclude with flair.

The bright cast includes a funny turn by Mark Rosenthal as Ben's cryptic cousin "Henry" who prefers to be called "Hank." Hank's buddy, Frankie, is the WOBIC Will Janowitz (*The Sopranos'* Fin), who speaks only through the use of web-linked devices. At first, Frankie is a clever character a la Silent Bob, but before long he starts talking, thus weakening the whole WOBIC concept. Although this is explained, I was sorry the WOBIC would have to be explored further in another movie.

Backseat is directed by Bruce Van Dusen whose previous narrative feature, *Cold Feet*, was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance in 1985. Since that time Van Dusen has plied his talents on commercials, specializing in those that tell stories. Being away from narrative moviemaking for so long might have helped Van Dusen craft *Backseat* with what he describes as a "raw or found filmmaking" feel. And, working with writer and star Alexander, who is a generation younger, provided a combination of perspec-

tives, creating a throwback-looking take on modern issues. The focus here is on Generation X today, but the film is comfortably approached in the structure of a classic American road picture where two men are running away from something and finding something else. Along the way, the hope is that they will find solutions to the problems they wanted to leave behind. But *Backseat* is a film that's smart enough to know that solutions don't always reveal themselves in one weekend.

Backseat seems to aim for *Five Easy Pieces* in places, and the overt references threaten to distract from the narrative. But more often than not, the angle explored here feels honest and original. Van Dusen's gritty visual style adds great texture (much of it shot by Van Dusen himself on 16mm from the backseat of the old clunker vehicle). And writer and star Alexander is in tune with what America's late-twenty and thirty-somethings want to see: a pulpy road pic with pop culture hipness galore. Alexander could not have made the film without Van Dusen and I think Van Dusen wouldn't have returned to feature film directing without quality coaxing from Alexander.

At times purposely pretentious and at other times dead on, *Backseat* will resonate with the somewhat forgotten Generation X, and appeal to those outside that demographic with its unique visual style and universal themes. Strong performances and a moody soundtrack make *Backseat* the kind of raw indie film that is likely to find an audience if given a chance. *B*

Backseat's producer's rep is
Melanie Backer

MelBacker@earthlink.net

Contact Jonathan W. Hickman at
Jonathan@Einsiders.com



Rob Bogue and Aubrey Dollar take direction from Bruce Van Dusen

Now playing...



Pixar's latest Cars recently surpassed \$200 million domestic box office

Art School Confidential ★ ★ (R)
Terry Zwigoff and Daniel Clowes (*Ghost World*) reunite to lesser effect in this story of a young man who goes to art school to become the world's greatest painter only to find that techniques for survival are best learned outside the classroom. Max Minghella as Jerome broods attractively but John Malkovich as Professor Sandiford steals the picture as a failed artist/frustrated instructor more intrigued by Jerome's youthful looks than his potential talent. (MG)
Academy 6

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

Brick ★ ★ 1/2 (R)
While managing to overcome its gimmicky "High School Noir" description, writer/director Rian Johnson's *Brick* is more ambitious than successful. The film deserves credit for committing to a tone so fervently and sticking with it, but its self-imposed limitations are ultimately too confining. As the cool, unflappable protagonist, Brendan, Joseph Gordon-Levitt (*Mysterious Skin*) continues to impress and Johnson's cryptic James Ellroy meets *Heathers* dialogue is great fun to listen to even when it's not entirely possible to decipher. *Brick*, with its convoluted for the sake of being convoluted plot, may not be remembered as a great crime movie, but it should go down as the most interesting style-over-substance experiment this year. (WC)
Laemmle Fairfax

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 Theatres Magic Johnson Theatre, Pacific's The Grove 14, Pacific's Culver Stadium 12, Mann Glendale Exchange 10, AMC Loews Universal Imax, AMC Theatres Burbank, AMC Theatres Burbank Town Center 8, AMC Theatres Santa Monica 7, AMC Theatres, Century City 15, Pacific's Culver Stadium 12, National Amusements The Bridge: cinema de lux

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)
ArLight Cinemas Hollywood, AMC Theatres Magic Johnson Theatre, The Grove, Mann Glendale Exchange 10, AMC Loews Universal Studios IMAX Theater, Pacific's Paseo 14, Pacific's Culver Stadium 12, AMC Theatres Burbank, AMC Theaters Burbank Town Center 8, National Amusements The Bridge: cinema de lux, AMC Loews Universal Studios and IMAX Theater

Cidade Baixa (Lower City) ★ ★ ★ (R)
Deco (Lázaro Ramos) and Naldinho (Wagner Moura) are best friends who co-own a cargo boat in Brazil's Salvador de Bahia. They both fall for a sultry prostitute named Karinna (Alice Braga), and their friendship is jeopardized. She loves them both and can't choose. Ramos, Moura, and Braga are a triumphant triumvirate in this unapologetically erotic love story. (MG)

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 didn'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)
Mann Beverly Center Cinema, Academy 6, Mann Festival Westwood, Regency Valley Plaza, Mann Criterion

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)
Laemmle Grand, Five Star Theatres Los Feliz 3, ArLight Cinemas Hollywood, AMC Theatres Magic Johnson Theatre, The Grove, Mann Glendale Marketplace 4, Laemmle One Colorado, AMC Loews Universal Studios and IMAX Theater, Pacific's Paseo 14, Pacific's Culver Stadium 12, AMC Theatres Burbank

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 Theatres Magic Johnson Theatre, Mann Glendale Exchange 10, Mann Beverly Center Cinema, AMC Loews Universal Studios and IMAX Theater, AMC Theatres Burbank, Regency Valley Plaza

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. Holofcener 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

Garfield: A Tail of Two Kitties ★ (PG)
In the *Garfield* sequel, the sarcastic feline (voiced again by Bill Murray) crashes his owner Jon Arbuckle's (Breckin Meyer) romantic getaway with his girlfriend (Jennifer Love Hewitt) in the United Kingdom. Garfield gets the royal treatment when he switches places with Prince, a royal cat with his own estate. Trouble arises when Lord Dargis aims to claim the same piece of property, which he is in line to inherit. (JC)
Mann Beverly Center, Mann Culver Plaza

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 enough to overcome the odds. (JH)
Laemmle's One Colorado, Landmark NuWiltshire Theatre

Ice Age 2: The Meltdown ★ ★ ★ (PG)
As far as sequels go, *The Meltdown* is better than most. But like most sequels, it's not as good as its predecessor. The humor is aimed more at kids, while the story progresses at a slow pace that will test the patience of more mature moviegoers. Sid the sloth is even more annoying than he was in the first film and Diego the saber-toothed tiger doesn't seem to have enough to do this time around. (SM)
Regency Valley Plaza

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)
Five Star Theatres Los Feliz 3, ArLight Cinemas Hollywood, Mann Glendale Exchange 10, Laemmle Playhouse 7, AMC Theatres Burbank Town Center 6, AMC Theatres Century City 15, AMC Theatres Santa Anita 16, Laemmle Monica

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)
Mann Beverly Center Cinema, 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)
Mann Glendale Exchange 10, Mann Beverly Center Cinema, Academy 6, AMC Theatres Burbank

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, Associated Press)
Laemmle Sunset 5, Laemmle Playhouse 7, Laemmle Monica, Laemmle Town Center

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

Mini's First Time ★ ★ ★ (R)
Alec Baldwin excels in this predictable neo-neo-noir, derived from films like *Malice* and *The Last Seduction* rather than the classics that defined the genre. Title character is Baldwin's stepdaughter (Nikki Reed) who first beds him, then enlists him in a plot to do-away with her desperate housewife mother (Carrie Anne Moss). When the detective



Sung Kang in Tokyo Drift



KASEY ROGERS (aka) LAURA ELLIOT Died July 6, 2006

By Rusty White



Actress Kasey Rogers died at age 79. Ms. Rogers had battled cancer for a number of years and had suffered a stroke. I had the pleasure of interviewing Ms. Rogers last year at the Memphis Film Festival along with her business partner Mark Wood. At the time, Ms. Rogers had difficulty speaking due to a recent throat surgery. She was a bit reluctant to talk at length with me because she wanted to use her limited speaking resources for the fans who had come to see her. Mark Wood was nice enough to talk for her as she nodded her approval at what he said or stopped to correct him the one time he had a fact a little bit off. I admired her spunk and tenacity that day as I watched her speak to the fans in as loud a voice as she could muster. She spoke of working with Hitchcock on his classic *Strangers on a Train* as well as her recurring role as Louise Tate on the hit TV series *Bewitched*. She and Mr. Wood were promoting a *Bewitched* cookbook they had written. Ms. Rogers also spoke of her hopes of launching a cooking show on TV. She looked great despite her illness. I found Ms. Rogers's example com-

forting and inspiring on a personal level in light of my daughter's battle to walk following her accident. Kasey Rogers also acted under the name of Laura Elliot. She changed her name from Casey Rogers to Laura Elliot while under contract to Paramount. When she left Paramount and began working in TV, she switched back to Casey Rogers except she switched the first letter of Casey to a "K." As Laura Elliot she played Farley Granger's conniving ex-wife in Hitchcock's masterpiece *Strangers On a Train*. She had one of the most memorable death scenes in any Hitchcock film. Her character wore thick glasses. She met her fate on a fairground at night. Robert Walker lights a cigarette lighter, which illuminates his reflection in her glasses. The glasses fall to the ground as Walker then strangles her. Hitchcock depicted the murder reflected in the glasses as they lay on the ground. It was one of his great set pieces and a brilliant example of the type of cinema Hitchcock was capable of producing. Ms. Rogers talked with me about shooting that scene. She stated that she was on a soundstage. Hitchcock had a concave mirror several feet in diameter set up. She had to fall a number of times before Hitchcock was satisfied. Apparently he wanted her to defy gravity and float to the floor. She eventually floated to the floor and into film history. Ms. Rogers appeared in over 70 films and TV series during her career. She appeared in such feature films as *Samson and Delilah*, *Two Lost Worlds*, *Union Station*, and *When Worlds Collide*. She appeared in nearly every major TV show during the 1950's and 60's before retiring from acting. She was a regular on the soap opera *Peyton Place* for two years during the 1960's. In addition to her acting, Ms. Rogers became a pioneer in woman's motocross racing while in her 40's!

Hi there! If you discover a mistake that needs to be corrected or have a tip for a film industry obituary that I have overlooked please feel free to contact me. I would appreciate it if you would send links to news articles confirming any tips. Also, with all of the computer viruses out there, please do not send e-mails with attachments. I automatically delete those. You can contact me at "Rusty@einsiders.com." Thanks!

Road to Guantanamo ★ ★ ★ (R)
Based on a true story of three men of Middle Eastern descent wrongly imprisoned for 2 years, Guantanamo 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 shortsighted propaganda piece created solely for the purpose of eliciting knee jerk reactions. In the end, 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). (WC) Laemmle 1 Colorado, Laemmle Fairfax

A Scanner Darkly ★ ★ ★ (R)
An almost-animated, pitch-black meditation on perception, paranoia and identity. Keanu Reeves stars as Bob Arctor, a drug-addicted undercover cop all but permanently ensconced in a second identity as "Fred" (created by a "scramble suit," a hologram of sorts that masks his identity) ordered to spy on his own alter ego and his friends. 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, Bob/Fred's situation keeps us interested in his plight, wondering if he can stop himself from drowning. (AB)
Los Feliz 3, ArcLight Cinerama Dome, ArcLight Cinemas Hollywood, The Grove, Mann Glendale Exchange 10, Pacific Paseo 14, Mann Culver Plaza, AMC Theatres Burbank Town Center 6, The Bridge, Century City 15, Laemmle Monica

assigned to case turns out to yet another well-known actor (Luke Wilson), it's only a matter of time before fate catches up with Baldwin, or Reed, or both. (JC)
ArcLight Cinemas Hollywood, Laemmle Playhouse 7, Pacific Sherman Oaks 5, Mann Criterion

La Moustache ★ ★ ★ (NR)
A simple argument over facial hair between Marc Thiriez (Vincent Lindon) and his wife Agnes (Emmanuelle Devos) leads to a crisis of identity and existence when Marc shaves off his moustache. Marc is continually told that things he once held dear — his friends, his father, even his moustache — have never existed. As Marc tries to escape from his crisis, the plot becomes as fragile as his reality, ending with suspense and ambiguity, while still full of symbolism. (JC)
Laemmle One Colorado, Laemmle Music Hall

Little Man 1/2 star (R)
Please see full length review p. 14. University Village 3, AMC Theatres Magic Johnson Theatre, The Grove, Mann Glendale Exchange 10, AMC Loews Universal Studios and IMAX Theater, Mann Culver Plaza, AMC Theatres Burbank, AMC Theatres Burbank Town Center 6, AMC Theatres Burbank Town Center 8

The Lost City ★ (R) Star/director Andy Garcia gives a pale impersonation of Bogey's Rick in *Casablanca*, as a nightclub impresario in this glacially slow dirge. Film's worth is limited to Waldemar Kalinowski's production design, the architectural styles that were prevalent in 1950s Havana, and costume design by Deborah Scott. If you want to see a better movie about Castro's takeover of Cuba in 1958, rent the Sydney Pollack-Robert Redford Havana (1990). (TM)
Academy 6

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 Theatres Magic Johnson Theatre, Pacific's The Grove 14, Mann Glendale Exchange 10, Laemmle One Colorado Cinemas, AMC Loews Universal Studios and AMC Loews Universal Studios and IMAX Theater, Pacific Paseo 14, AMC Theatres Burbank, AMC Theatres Burbank Town Center

The Ob in Ohio ★ ★ 1/2 (R) Please see full length review p.12. Laemmle Sunset 5 Theatre, Laemmle One Colorado Cinemas, Landmark Westside Pavilion

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 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) Mann Beverly Center Cinema

Only Human ★ ★ ★ (R)
What should have been a standard trip home to Spain for television reporter Leni (Marian Aguilera) becomes a bit tense when she announces to her Jewish family that her new boyfriend Rafi (Guillermo Toledo) is Palestinian. It also doesn't help that Leni's family is a bit on the quirky side, with an overly anxious mother Gloria (Norma Aleandro), boisterous father Ernesto (Mario Martin), and awkwardly straight brother David (Fernando Ramallo). Worse still, Rafi is prone to embarrassing situations. (JC) Laemmle One Colorado, Laemmle Royal, Laemmle Town Center

Over The Hedge ★ ★ ★ (PG) This 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 Beverly Center Cinema, Regency Valley Plaza

Peaceful Warrior ★ (PG-13)
When college gymnast Dan Millman (Scott Mechlowicz) suffers a serious injury, the limitations of his abilities seem irreversible. That is until he meets Socrates (Nick Nolte) a strange man who can channel different levels of physical and mental power. Along with a young lady named Joy (Amy Smart), the two help Dan to become a "peaceful warrior" and find his place in the world. (JC) Mann Beverly Center, Academy 6

Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest ★ ★ ★ (PG-13)
A relatively entertaining film often hobbled by a rambling screenplay and a running time about thirty minutes longer than necessary. The real selling point is the magnificently fruity Johnny Depp as Captain Jack Sparrow. In *Dead Man's Chest* 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. 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. (PS)
Laemmle Grande, University Village 3, Five Star Theatres Vista Theatre, AMC Theatres Magic Johnson Theatre, Pacific's The Grove 14, Mann Glendale Marketplace 4, El Capitan, Mann Glendale Exchange 10, Laemmle One Colorado Cinemas, AMC Loews Universal Studios and IMAX

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)
ArcLight Cinemas Hollywood, Mann Beverly Center Cinema, Laemmle Playhouse 7, Mann Criterion

Sisters In Law ★ ★ ★ ★ (NR)
In Kim Longinotto's absorbing documentary, State Prosecutor Vera Ngassa and Court President Beatrice Ntuba are the Cameroon "sisters" who bravely administer justice in their small community, changing attitudes towards spousal abuse. The law is enforced with wisdom, wit and fierce compassion and will have you cheering the sentences of the convicted. (MG)
Laemmle Fairfax

Strangers with Candy ★ (R)
Roughly four times the length of a normal episode, *Candy* unfortunately does not contain a similar multiple

CAPSULE AUTHORS:

- JC – Julian Camillieri
- WC – Warren Curry
- JG – Janos Gereben
- MG – Michael Guillén
- JH – Jonathan W. Hickman
- EL – Eric Lurio
- SM – Scott Mantz
- TM – Tony Medley
- SS – Steven Snyder
- PS – Peter Sobczynski



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Column

Getting your groovy on

60's style Mods and Rockers Fest returns to the Egyptian



Jacqueline Bisset and Michael Crawford in *The Knack* (1965)



Development Hell with
Brad Schreiber

Say what you will about the sixties and the eye-popping, multi-colored, face-painted, flower-strewn visual madness of its clothes and culture. Nowhere in that movement did you find pierced lips or baggy pants worn so low, you look like you should be auditioning for a circus.

The American Cinematheque has outdone itself with this year's Mods and Rockers Film Festival, being presented from July 13 to August 31 at both the Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood and the Aero Theatre in Santa Monica (www.ModsandRockers.com). With 50 rock-related films representing the fifty years between 1956 and 2006, Mods and Rockers prides itself on its selection of freak-out splendor from both the classics and rarely seen cinema in the largest rock and roll film festival ever shown in the U.S.

Certainly, one can look forward to a block of Elvis Presley films, Nic Roeg's freakadelic *Performance* with Mick Jagger, pleasurable concert classics like *Woodstock* and *Gimme Shelter* and *Monterey Pop*. But you can add to that the Martin Scorsese TV series on Bob Dylan *No Direction Home*, and a brand new doc on The Police called *Everyone Stares: The Police Inside Out*. Drummer Stewart Copeland ran his Super-8 camera for hours and hours and culled this ultimate inside look at The Police's vertiginous rise and its effect on band members, Sting, Copeland, and Andy Summers.

This writer can never resist attending those Mods and Rockers flicks that simply will not be found on DVD, VHS, Beta or any damn where else. M&R '06 has bragging rights to *Privilege* (1967) directed by Peter Watkins. Here, pretty boy pop sensation Paul Jones (Manfred Mann's lead singer) is manipulated by Church and State to sway the behavior of his adoring fans until supermodel Jean Shrimpton, as his girlfriend, convinces him to fight the forces of societal mind control.

No mind-altering substances will be needed for *The Pied Piper* (1972), a seriously trippier effort than French New Wave director Jacques Demy's *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. Here, Donovan is hired by perverse baron Donald Pleasence to rid a medieval town of rats, in a pop musical that includes John Hurt and takes on science, religion and disease in its own counterculture way.

It will be a veritable bummer, man, if you fail to catch *Pulp* (1972), Mike Hodges' eccentric black comedy and follow-up to his *Get Carter*. Here, Michael Caine plays Guy Strange, a pulp writer in Mallorca who winds up getting hired by ex-Hollywood mobster (Mickey Rooney) to ghostwrite his autobiography and wanders through a mind-blowing landscape of sight gags like background corpses.

The venerable, daffy yet suave

Brit humorist Martin Lewis is always a welcome staple of M&R, introducing films with an incomparably wacky élan. This year, he will be presenting on Saturdays and Sundays at 6 PM, July 15-30, a free one-hour show he calls *Great Exploitations: An Audience with Martin Lewis*. Indeed, as rock raconteur, Lewis will dazzle with tales of his work with such names as The Beatles, The Who, Sex Pistols, Eric Burdon, Bob Geldof, and on and on. Lewis, who promises to reveal how he actually wrote four songs for The Beatles when he was 14 years old, sums up: "Come the sixties, such was the desire to be explorers, to explore the realm of what you could achieve in a three minute popular song or in the realm of a ninety minute movie that that spirit took people into uncharted territory." In a current world where, as Lewis contends, artistic risk is not generally encouraged. There is no shame in looking back reverently at a time when it was. ✍



Andy Summers, Sting and Stuart Copeland

You can totally get into this writer's headspace, if you know where we're coming from, by visiting the Brad Schreiber Homepage at www.brashcyber.com or Storytech Literary Consulting at www.thewriters-journey.com

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. (PS)

Laemmle Sunset 5 Theatre, Laemmle Playhouse 7, Landmark Nu-Wilshire, Laemmle Town Center Theatre

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)

Laemmle Grande, University Village, Five Star Theatres Los Feliz 3, AMC Theatres Magic Johnson Theatre, The Grove, Mann Glendale Exchange 10, Landmark Rialto Theatre, IMAX, Pacific Paseo 14, AMC Theatres Burbank

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 Theatres Magic Johnson Theatre, Mann Beverly Center Cinema, AMC Universal IMAX, National Amusements The Bridge: cinema de lux, Regency Valley Plaza

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)

Laemmle Sunset 5 Theatre, Laemmle One Colorado Cinemas, Mann National

Water (PG-13) ★★ ★ 1/2

An unflinching look at the life of a widow in 1930's India. A window, 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 Theater

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*. (SS)

ArcLight Cinemas Hollywood, Laemmle Playhouse 7, Landmark Nu-Wilshire, Laemmle Town Center Theatre

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 (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)

Mann Beverly Center Cinema, Mann Culver Plaza, AMC Theatres Burbank

You, Me and Dupree ★ 1/2 (PG-13) Please see full length review p. 11s.

Laemmle Grand, ArcLight Cinemas Hollywood, AMC Theatres Magic Johnson Theatre, The Grove, Mann Glendale Marketplace 4, Laemmle One Colorado Cinemas, AMC Loews Universal Studios and IMAX Theater, Pacific's Paseo 14, AMC Theatres Burbank

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 8.25 **PHIX**







Astrological forecasts for women ONLY

by Lady Katsura and Suki Yaki



Capricorn (December 22 – January 20)

Pluto is passing through Uranus, which means it's time for a change. We suggest you get a new name, new IDs, and a new cell #. Then, hop in your car and head East – don't stop until you see a town with a population of 500 or less. This is where you'll find your destiny and a devoted redneck named Rick.

Aquarius (January 21 – February 18)

We know you made a promise to yourself to be more forgiving and stop over-reacting, but the situation with your roommate has gone from "use" to "abuse." The next time she cancels movie night to go tongue-wrestle some loser, tell her you are breaking-up with her as a friend. Your lease is up in five months, that's not too long to go without speaking to someone.

Pisces (February 19- March 19)

You may have enjoyed the last three months of letting your 12-year-old neighbor watch you dress, undress, and other activities we're too embarrassed to mention. But our psychic sensors tell us he purchased a web camera today. Time to get some curtains.

Aries (March 20 – April 19)

Your plants need watering, your smoke detectors have no batteries, and the milk you put in your coffee this morning went bad four days ago. We searched the stars for something more interesting to tell you, but your life is incredibly dull right now, and it looks to stay that way until Labor Day at least. Sorry.

Taurus (April 20- May 20)

Your instincts are dead-on about your Tai Chi teacher and his invitation to private lessons next Tuesday night. Say no unless you're ready to try some positions that aren't on the syllabus.

Gemini (May 21 – June 20)

That's two weeks in a row that you didn't take our advice. It's fine if you want to express your independence. But don't come crawling back to us when you find out the Psychic Friends Hotline is actually a hoax! We're the only proven psychic astrologers in town, and you can take that to the bank! Bitch.

Cancer (June 21 – July 20)

We know you're disappointed that your new office crush has declined your lunch invitation eight times in the past six working days. But that doesn't mean he wouldn't say yes to dinner. Find a creative way to ask him, like a gift of two-dozen helium balloons delivered to his cubicle by singing telegram.

Leo (July 21 – August 20)

You may be unemployed, you may be unmotivated, you may even be depressed, but there are other food groups besides milk and cereal. If you have to eat the same thing three meals a day, why not try raw celery with peanut butter, Fig Newtons, or hardboiled eggs?

Virgo (August 21 – September 20)

You're *not* being a hypochondriac. That cough should have gone away by now, that mole does look cancerous, and you do have less mobility in your left pinky finger than in your right one. If you don't want to see the same doctor who said your mild heart attack was only indigestion, you can always request a new one.

Libra (September 21 – October 22)

The stars are sending scrambled signals this week. Due to the haziness of our vision, we won't tell you anything that would get you unnecessarily alarmed. But if you want to error on side of safety, please avoid dark allies, train tracks, boats, cliff sides, tall people, and dogs with names that start with the letter S.

Scorpio (October 23 – November 21)

Time to break up with your homophobic boyfriend. How a guy could be so obsessed with what other men do with their genitals, and yet have no clue what to do with his own, is beyond our psychic comprehension.

Sagittarius (November 22 – December 21)

Okay, it's been 20 years since your last confession. Don't you think it's time to come clean about your crime of passion, the patchy cover up, and the fact that an innocent person got pinned with the blame? If you can't tell your priest, the least you could do is sell the movie rights. 🐾

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:

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

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

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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SUDOKU CONTEST!

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To hell with cheap people!



by Tina Kim

Anxiety comes in many forms, work, kids, family, or bills. For me, it's going out to eat with a bunch of people **I do not know**. Not because I do not know them. It's because I do not want to end up **PAYING** for the cheap person in the group. There are cheap people everywhere I go and nothing shows it more than when the bill comes at the end of the night.

When I go out to eat, I always make sure I have enough money, or that I at least have my credit card. And if I can't afford to eat at an expensive place, I just tell them sorry, I can't afford it. It's that simple, plain, and easy. I used to think this was the case with most people. **Boy, was I wrong.**

When I was in Seattle, a co-worker asked me out to eat and *when the bill came*, she told me she didn't have any money. **WHAT?!** She was the one who asked me to go out and eat with her. Makes no sense. I told her I only had enough cash to pay my bill and tip. Thus she takes my cash and writes a check for the exact amount of the bill, **with no tip**, meaning she *pocketed the tip* for herself. And all along she had her checkbook. So why did she say she didn't have any money? She obviously wanted me to pay for her. **Urgh!**

Then when I moved to New York, I thought, yeah, New York City. These people are going to be class. **Wrong.** In fact they are even worse. For instance, I knew this one girl who walks around with her designer sunglasses, purse, and shoes. She comes from a rich family. She asked me to go eat breakfast at some buffet. Hey at a buffet, you pay in advance. So I said yes. I get in line with this petite girl and she is loading up her tray. 12 pieces of toast, two pounds of cheese, and four boxes of cereal. We go and sit down. Now, I know for a fact this girl cannot eat all that. So I ask her, "Why did you get so much food?"

She replies, "Oh I am so hungry." She then proceeds to take a few bites of toast. Next she grabs a load of napkins and low and behold

she starts making sandwiches and wrapping them in napkins and putting them in her purse. **Geesb, how embarrassing.** Talk about low class. I mean if she was starving, broke, or had to feed her kids, I would understand. This girl is ridiculous. Needless to say, I never talked to her again.

Another situation that happened to me was when someone invited me to a birthday dinner at a restaurant. I get there, there were no gifts. This guy just made a reservation so that everyone can eat and say happy birthday. Everyone ordered up a storm and divided the bill among the group. I got ripped off. I only had a salad. That was all I could afford. However, what could I do? **I had to pay \$40.00.** That was the most expensive salad I had ever eaten.

Whether it's eating with one person or a group, why is it that I seem to be around cheap people? Here are the top three tricks cheap people do:

1. They order up a storm and when the bill comes they split it equally among the group.
2. They order up a storm and say, "Sorry but I have to leave early. I left my share of the money here." They discreetly put some money under a napkin. Then by the time someone collects it and realizes it is only **five bucks**, that **CHEAPO** is long gone to Timbucktwo.
3. They order up a storm and say, "Oh I don't have cash. Why doesn't everyone give me their cash and I'll just put it on my (insert airline here) credit card. So this person is racking up airline miles, *pocketing the tip*, and **not paying for their food.**

You will never know what kind of a person someone is until you eat with them at a restaurant. So to avoid anxiety when the bill comes at a group dinner, I have a new rule. I am going to be the one who leaves the table first and announce, "Here is my \$30.00 for my appetizer and drink." That way everyone knows I paid for **exactly what I ordered** with tip and I won't be there to see who the cheap people are. **Ps**

See video clips of Tina Kim's stand-up performances at:
www.TinaKim.com
 For more info on Tina Kim, MySpace page at:
www.myspace.com/TKcomic
 (no buffons please)

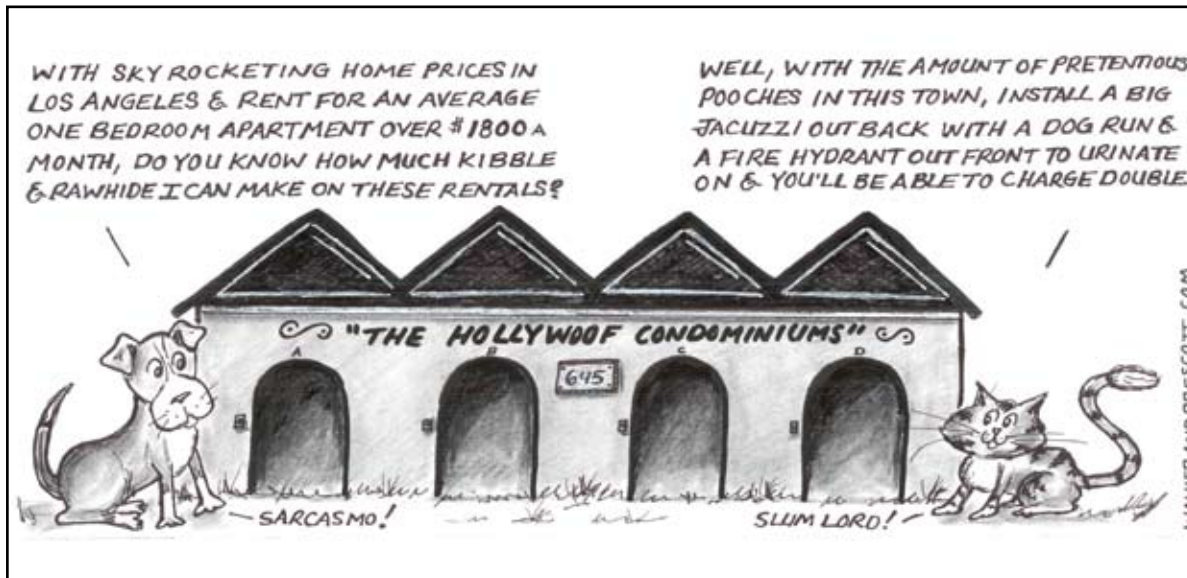
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by Mark Darcourt



Walker and Prescott.com

by Drew-Michael



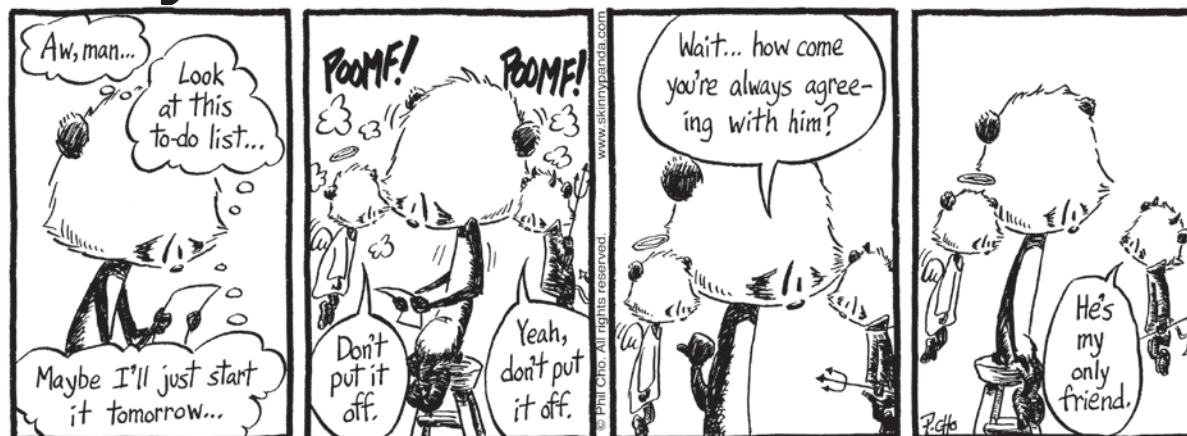
Nirvana

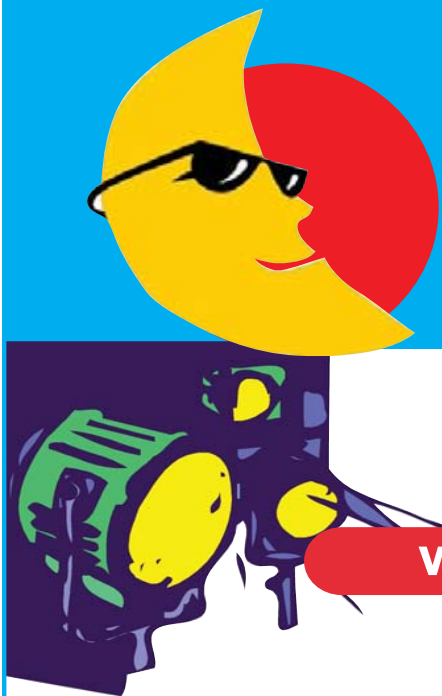
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WHAT: Eight-week stand-up class that ends with a showcase at a comedy club.
WHEN: Monday nights (July 17th- September 13th) or Tuesday nights (July 18th- September 12th). Exact dates at www.standupcomedyclass.com
For more information please visit www.Standupcomedyclass.com or call (323) 251-1286

DISCOUNT FOR INFO LIST!
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Saturday, July 15, 11am-5pm
Hollywood Production Center
1149 N Gower St
Hollywood, CA 90038
SAN DIEGO, CA
Thursday, July 27th, 7:30pm-10:30pm & Friday, July 28th, 1pm-6pm
Downtown Johnny Brown's
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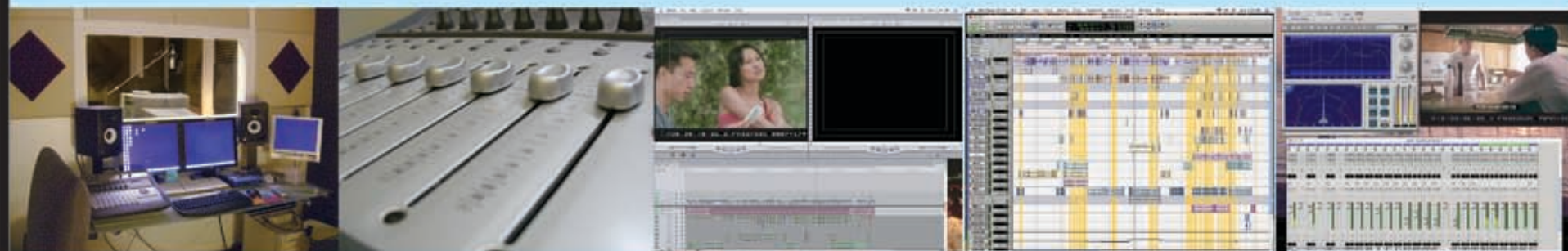
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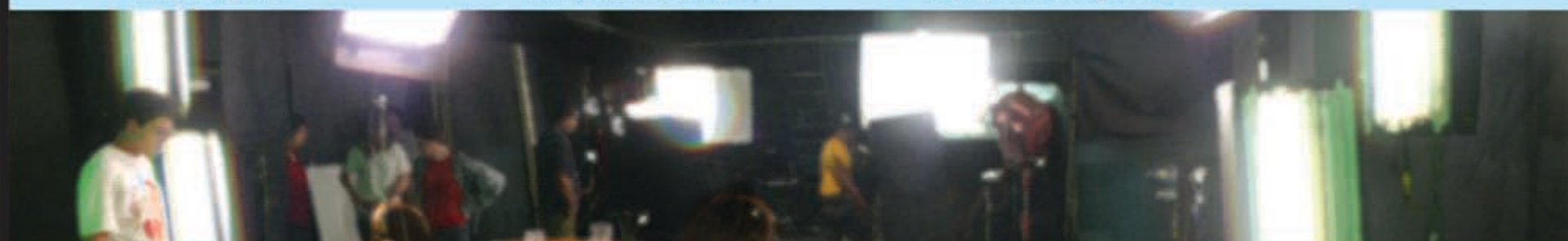
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