

VALENCIA VOICE

Volume 6, Issue

HTTP://VALENCIAVOICE.COM

January 28, 2009

Afternoon of Gothic Horror

By Courtnee Rattigan
Valencia Voice

The room was captivated by the one man standing at the stage in the front of the room. His voice inflections, different tones for characters, and exaggerated pauses held every audience member in the palm of his hand and on the edge of their seats.

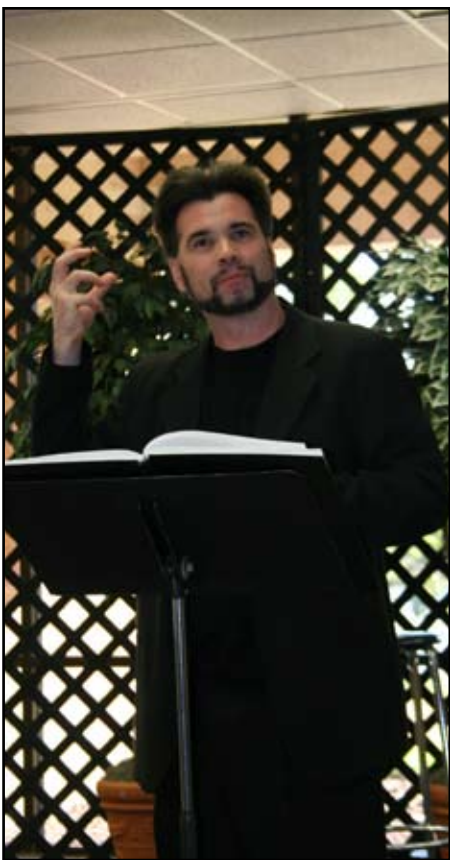
Joshua Kane, a New York City actor, was on West campus Wednesday afternoon performing several readings of Edgar Allan Poe in celebration of the poet's 200th birthday.

Kane started the event by giving a brief description of how he got started in the business of "gothic horror" and one man shows—"perverted grandparents."

According to Kane, his grandparents bought him the complete works of Poe, which he read over and over again. They gave him his inspiration he needed to heavily consider a career in acting.

An English and history double major at

Continued on Page 2



Kyle Beard / Valencia Voice

Joshua Kane reading Poe's 'The Raven'



Theresa Carli / Valencia Voice

Gov. Charlie Crist casually addresses constituents by removing himself from the podium and interacting with the crowd at Valencia Community College's Osceola Campus on Monday Jan. 26, 2009.

Governor addresses VCC town hall

By Brian Cronin
Valencia Voice

Florida Governor Charlie Crist spoke at a town hall meeting to address public concerns on Valencia's Osceola Campus. On Monday night, more than 160 people attended this meeting to address concerns ranging from property taxes, foreclosures, education, and finally to the economy. The crowd was eager to see the Governor and ask their questions but a time constraint allowed for only a few to be heard.

After introductions of the state and local government officials, including Lt. Governor, Jeff Kottkamp, Governor Crist took an informal approach to addressing his constituents. He stepped from behind the podium and walked around the room, illustrating that we are all in it together. His opening comments focused on the unprecedented economic instability Florida residents are all experiencing. He continued to express that even though times are tough and worry is real, the sun will come up in Florida.

Before arriving at Valencia, Crist visited a workforce center in Central Florida to address the growing un-



Theresa Carli / Valencia Voice

Gov. Charlie Crist fields pre-selected audience questions, ranging from social values to the economy, from the podium.

employment rate. He recommended visiting the employ Florida website (<http://www.employflorida.com>) as an aid for all residents. Like many others, he is unhappy with the 8.1% unemployment rate.

Jerry Lee Jackson, a 44-year resident of Kissimmee, was the first to ask a question. He addressed a concern several attendees had regarding property taxes. This is a question from

my mom, her property taxes have gone from \$25,000 to \$50,000, why? Governor Crist replied that property taxes should not be rising due to the passage of Amendment Two last year, and an appeal to the county regarding such raises can be made. This would allow a new appraisal to be made and taxes to be adjusted.

A part time realtor and native to Florida, asked, "What is the state

planning to do to decrease the foreclosure rate?" Crist responded by saying he and other members of the government have asked banks to work out negotiations and free up money so the working class can afford housing. He further asked the public for their help by going to their state senators and representatives to put policy into laws that would specifically address those issues.

The podium was then turned over to the Lieutenant Governor. He fielded an education question from Marion Carrol, a Florida PTA representative, who inquired how the stimulus plan would affect education. He replied by answering, All this has to play out. As an advocate and believer that education is the great equalizer to the economy, he realizes that funding is a critical question.

After addressing a few more questions, the Governor concluded by quoting President Lincoln, "a government of the people, by the people, for the people," Crist expressed that this is the type of government he wants to be a part of by continuing to be invited to local forums granting him the opportunity to interact with the people who elected him to this position.

Florida community colleges feel economic crunch

By Jessica Frelow
Valencia Voice

The inauguration of President Obama brings a wave of expectations for improving general education. Despite nationwide budget cuts, which has greatly impacted Central Florida, there is hope that the new administration can "bail out" education and save schools. With 28 community colleges throughout the state, finding funding is difficult since community colleges are among the last type of schools to be considered for budgeting.

According to Florida's Department of Edu-

cation, over \$1 billion has been issued to community colleges, however, the failing economy has made it troublesome to hire new faculty and to help struggling families keep young adults in school. Financial trouble hasn't negatively impacted the enrollment rate especially at Valencia; over 55,000 students were enrolled for the 2007-08 school year and has significantly increased for the 2008-09 school year.

Funding per full time student decreased \$104 to \$5,117 for the 2008-09 school year. Cuts have effected class schedules hindering students from getting into the classes needed to graduate.

Depending on credentials, Professors' aver-

age annual salary ranges from \$35,000-60,000 and since local tax dollars cannot be used for education the only way to get funding to hire additional instructional faculty is through the state.

Much cannot be done for the faculty but the students do have some benefits. Fortunately, the state has provided programs such as: FL Student Association, FL Work Experience Program, and Bright Futures Program to aid in college costs. With more than 800,000 thousand community college students, over \$5 billion was grossed from the 2007-08 school year in Florida. As more young adults strive to further

their education the demand for funding will rise. Since 1988, budgets increased from the hundred thousands to the billions.

In light of President Obama's term comes promises of education reform, there is new hope that increases in funding and improvements in programs like, No Child Left Behind are likely to be expected. To assist students to pursue higher education, the American Opportunity Tax Credit has proposed to make college more affordable. Changes in the Education Policy will allow for states to get the funding needed and help future generations to get a valued education.

Special feature • The boy who sees sound • Page 4

Kayla Hernandez / Valencia Voice



Visitors crowd Kennedy Boulevard to celebrate the life and works of Zora Neale Hurston



Handout / MCT

‘Zora!’ 20th Anniversary

By Cassie Weinz

The 20th Anniversary of the Zora! Festival continued on strong Friday as enthusiastic participants arrived at local venues eager to learn more about the extraordinary life of a hometown legend, Zora Neale Hurston.

The Enzian Theater presented its guests with a discussion and book signing by author M. Alene Murrell, a relative of Hurston's.

In a large room adorn with brightly upholstered chairs and pop culture memorabilia, a small group gathered to hear Murrell speak on her book, “Zora Neale Hurston In and Around Jacksonville, Florida in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s.”

The guests huddled together exchanging stories of past Zora festivals while they eagerly awaited the arrival of the highly anticipated author.

Enthusied guests got their wish as Murrell entered the room with her family by her side. Almost as soon as she sat down, individuals slowly began to approach Murrell and offer their respects as well as their help to the

Murrell family in terms of setting up for the presentation.

During this time Murrell made polite casual conversations with guests about her love of hats while commenting on the black ruffled feather hat, dressed with a red brooch that she herself was wearing.

Murrell's grandson, Quincy Murrell, began the presentation by, “inviting guests into [his] family's living room,” as he called it.

When Quincy was a boy, he would continually visit his grandmother who would graciously tell him stories about Zora and her wild adventures. That is precisely what the day was filled with. It was an hour and a half special dedicated to the storytellings of Zora.

Murrell recalled to her audience that from the age of 8, she began to remember everything Zora did and everything she said.

The Jacksonville years, which are referred to as the missed years of Zora's life by her family, contain essentials stories of Zora and her best friend, as well as the trouble they managed to get themselves into in and

around Jacksonville.

Zora came to live in Jacksonville with her brother John at the age of 9 after the death of her mother. Despite losing such an important figure at a young age, Zora still maintained a lovely personality. Murrell recalled that she was an, “ideal person...full of life. A free spirit and I always thought that I wanted to be a free spirit.”

She also remembers that Zora had a unique look. Mostly recognized for her bold choice in hats, Zora was filled with other special attributes such as the fact that she was, “such a loveable person. She was a person of interest and you wanted to be near her.”

The duration of the presentation filled the room with the magic of storytelling. Just as Murrell would sit eagerly on the floor as a child and listen to Zora's tales, the present company was much in the same way hanging on every word Murrell felt compelled to share. Once the storytelling came to an end, guests fluttered to Murrell's side to express their thanks for allowing Zora into their lives.

One Woman, by the name of Lugenia Shipp, came all the way down from Connecticut to be apart of the magic that is Zora. Shipp, who attended the festival for the first time, could not contain the excitement she felt as she began to mention that she has been promising herself for 5 years that she would one day attend the Zora festival.

The friend who was there accompanying Shipp has been a regular attendant for 19 years. Shipp began to explain that the two of them have been trying to get a group together for quite some time, “I'm sure when we get back there will be more people who come with us next time” she said. She also stated the enthusiasm she felt for all the speakers she has heard thus far, “though all the speakers have different subjects, they all have the same goal. Reaching out and helping others, that's what it's all about.”

Reaching out was certainly the theme of the day. The Murrell family reached out to tell their stories of their beloved Zora and the audience extended their ears to soak it all in.

Juggling delicate Middle East peace

By Dion Nissenbaum
McClatchy Newspapers

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — President Barack Obama's efforts to stabilize a tenuous cease-fire between Israel and Hamas were jeopardized Tuesday when a roadside bomb planted by Palestinian militants hit an Israeli patrol along the Gaza Strip border, killing one officer and wounding three others.

Israel launched a series of counterstrikes after the explosion, killing a farmer, according to Palestinian medical officials.

The tit-for-tat assaults cast a cloud over the arrival in Cairo, Egypt, of George Mitchell, Obama's Middle East envoy, who's on a mission to cement the 10-day-old cease-fire.

The former U.S. senator heads to Jerusalem on Wednesday with Israeli leaders warning that they'll inflict punishing responses to cease-fire violations.

“Whoever hits us will receive a severe blow,” Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said Tuesday. “We cannot achieve peace unless we are willing to stand determined, ready with the left hand looking for any opening for peace and the right hand on the trigger.”

Gaza residents had anticipated the Israeli retaliation, and braced for more.

Residents in central Gaza said they'd seen small numbers of Israeli tanks and Special Forces units slowly pushing into the isolated Mediterranean strip. Gaza health officials said Israeli forces killed a Palestinian farmer soon after the morning bomb attack. An Israeli airstrike later hit a moped in Khan Younis, injuring a driver who Israeli military officials said had taken part in the morning attack.

No Palestinian group has claimed responsi-

bility for the roadside bomb. Late Tuesday, Palestinian militants released a high-quality video to local journalists showing the explosion and subsequent shootout along the border.

Tuesday's incidents were the most severe test so far of the uneasy cease-fire that took hold when Israel unilaterally ended its three-week military campaign to destabilize Hamas rulers in Gaza and halt persistent Palestinian rocket fire aimed at southern Israel.

Hamas and the other main Palestinian militant groups soon followed the Israeli cease-fire declaration with their own unilateral truce. Since then, Gaza militants have fired no rockets into southern Israel, though they did launch several mortars one day last week.

The Israeli strikes killed more than 1,200 Palestinians during the 22-day military campaign in Gaza, making it the most deadly Israeli operation in Gaza since it seized the Mediterranean strip in the 1967 war.

During the campaign, nine Israeli soldiers were killed in Gaza, and Palestinian rocket fire killed four Israelis in southern Israel.

During the early days of the truce, Israeli naval ships repeatedly fired on fishing boats along the Gaza coast. At least 11 Palestinians were injured by the Israeli shelling, which ended last Friday.

When Israeli leaders announced the unilateral cease-fire, they warned that Gaza would face a painful response if militants resumed their attacks.

Amnon Lipkin Shahak, a former Israeli army chief of staff, told Israel Radio on Tuesday that “there needs to be a painful strike against those responsible” for the bombing.

“We need to make rules that will protect the residents of the south,” he said. “We cannot accept attacks from Gaza.”

Ihab Ghusain, a spokesman for the Hamas-led Interior Ministry in Gaza, said Tuesday that Palestinian militants had every right to launch such attacks because Israel had broken the calm repeatedly with its attacks on Gaza in the past week.

Residents in Gaza have been on edge for days as rumors have swept across the area that Israel was preparing to resume its airstrikes.

Over the weekend, Palestinians cleared out of government offices and security compounds amid rumors that Israel was going to attack. On Sunday, Hamas guards temporarily closed the Rafah crossing with Egypt amid rumors that Israel was preparing to hit the network of adjacent smuggler tunnels, which were a prime focus of airstrikes during the military campaign.

As the violence resumed Tuesday, Israel and Hamas reopened indirect talks in Cairo with Egyptian mediators who are working to solidify the cease-fire. Egypt has been unable to secure a breakthrough in the complex talks.

Israel is seeking assurances that Gaza militants won't resume rocket attacks on Israeli cities and that Egypt will prevent Hamas from using smuggler tunnels to rearm. Israeli negotiators also are looking to secure the release of Gilad Shalit, a young Israeli soldier whom Hamas-led militants captured in 2006.

Hamas is demanding that Israel release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners in return for Shalit's freedom. The Islamist militant group that's running Gaza also wants Israel to open its borders to allow a normal flow of supplies into the Gaza Strip, which is home to 1.5 million Palestinians.

Tuesday's clash came two weeks before Israel's national elections. Polls find former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his conservative Likud Party holding a solid lead over the ruling Kadima Party, led by Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.

Barak and his center-left Labor Party also haven't made any advances that have altered the fundamental dynamics of the campaign.

— MCT Campus

Poe stories brought to life

Continued from cover

the University of Bridgeport, Kane dropped out three months into studying to pursue an acting career.

He started off reciting Poe's poems in college and university libraries which he still does to this day. Kane then shared his history of being in a “macabre” magic show as a teenager and “interning” with the late Vincent Price. At twenty-five, he graduated with both of his degrees.

Starting with “Alone” and reciting several well known poems such as “The Tell Tale Heart” and “The Raven,” Kane performed highly emotional and personalized renditions of the poetry.

In “The Raven,” Kane requested for audience participation by whispering the word “nevermore” at his cue. It “lended breath to the piece,” causing a somewhat eerie effect. The last performance was “Annabel Lee,” the only piece that he started off by singing.

Kane tours the country performing Poe as well as Shakespeare in addition to teaching workshops; he also does a few commercial voiceovers.

After his performance Kane held a free writing workshop: the “Imaginary Tool Kit,” his remedy of how he got through writer's block while in college.

Kane is planning to start producing his own CD recordings of his shows; his website www.joshuakane.com currently has several twenty minute clips of video from previous shows. His upcoming engagements are at a theater in Tampa, as well as the Kravitz Center in West Palm Beach.

Palestinian smugglers back in business

By Dion Nissenbaum
McClatchy Newspapers

RAFAH, Gaza Strip — Abu Nissim rose from the covered tunnel entrance and triumphantly raised a box of Cheer Up chocolate-covered wafers over his head.

“New from the tunnel,” the young Palestinian tunnel digger boasted Thursday as his friends tore open the packages of Egyptian cookies.

One day after the last Israeli soldier left the Gaza Strip after a 26-day military campaign to destabilize the militant Islamist group Hamas and demolish the tunnels used to bring in weapons, Palestinian smugglers _ and tunnel diggers _ were back in business.

Bulldozers rumbled along the border, clearing away tons of earth for new tunnel entrances. Young boys climbed 90 feet down into the ground to recover supplies from storerooms in partially demolished tunnels. Fuel trucks pulled up to makeshift depots to fill up on diesel fuel and liquid propane, which is used for cooking, that’s pumped underground from the Egyptian side of the border.

“We will be like the phoenix rising from the ashes,” Hamas political adviser Ahmed Yousef said as he walked through the rubble of buildings destroyed by airstrikes near the border.

His boast coincided with new warnings from Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.

“For the tunnels, nothing will be as it was before,” Livni said while meeting with European officials in Brussels, Belgium, to discuss efforts to ensure that Hamas isn’t allowed to use the tunnels to smuggle in more weapons. “Things must be clear: Israel reserves the right to react militarily against the tunnels once and for all.”

Israeli airstrikes repeatedly hit the eight-mile stretch along the border that’s filled with as many as 1,300 tunnels, used to smuggle in everything from young brides and lion cubs to rocket-propelled grenades and advanced missiles.

Destroying the tunnels was a central goal of the Israeli military campaign, which Gaza medical officials have said killed around 1,300 Palestinians. Israeli officials estimated that the attacks destroyed 80 percent of the tunnels, and Palestinians agreed that the strikes crippled their smuggling business.

Smugglers along the border said they’d be able to dig out within weeks, if not days, however.

Some tunnels already were back in operation Thursday.

A strong smell of diesel drifted along the border as Mohammed Barhoum stood in front of two makeshift, 8,000-gallon fuel tanks slowly filling with diesel and liquid propane as they were pumped through plastic pipes that stretched 450 yards underground across the border into Egypt.

Like other smugglers along the border, Barhoum said that the Israeli economic blockade of Hamas-led Gaza had forced him to become a smuggler so that he could take care of his family.

Before he launched his fuel-smuggling business last month, Barhoum ran a factory that makes construction blocks, but he said that Israel’s refusal to allow concrete and other supplies into the Gaza Strip had forced him to shut it down.

“If they opened the terminals tomorrow, I would go back to my business,” Barhoum said as his friends filled a Volvo tanker truck with fuel.

Israeli leaders refuse to allow a normal flow of supplies and aid through the coun-



Dion Nissenbaum / MCT

A Palestinian smuggler climbs into the entrance of his partially-destroyed tunnel in Rafah, Gaza Strip

try’s borders and into the Gaza Strip as long as its Hamas rulers stand by the group’s long-standing pledge to destroy Israel.

Abu Ahmed, a 33-year-old tunnel owner who used a pseudonym out of fear of Israeli retaliation, said that the best way for Israel to shut down the tunnels would be to open the borders.

“If they opened the borders all the way, all our work would be canceled,” he said as he took a break from digging out his collapsed tunnel.

Israel is trying to persuade Egypt to take tougher steps to shut down the tunnels. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has rebuffed suggestions that he allow international forces to patrol the border, but Israel hopes to convince him to crack down on the smuggling.

In the midst of the Israeli strikes on the tunnels, the United States agreed to provide more tools to combat smuggling, but it remains unclear when or how the U.S.-Israeli agreement would get up and running.

While the flow of goods into Gaza is a concern for Israeli leaders, their biggest worry is that Hamas will resume smuggling in arms from Egypt.

One seasoned tunnel digger, who also feared being identified, said that Hamas arms tunnels usually were longer, deeper and wider than the ones run by commercial smugglers.

It was unclear how severely the strikes had damaged the Hamas tunnels and how long it would be before they could resume normal operations.

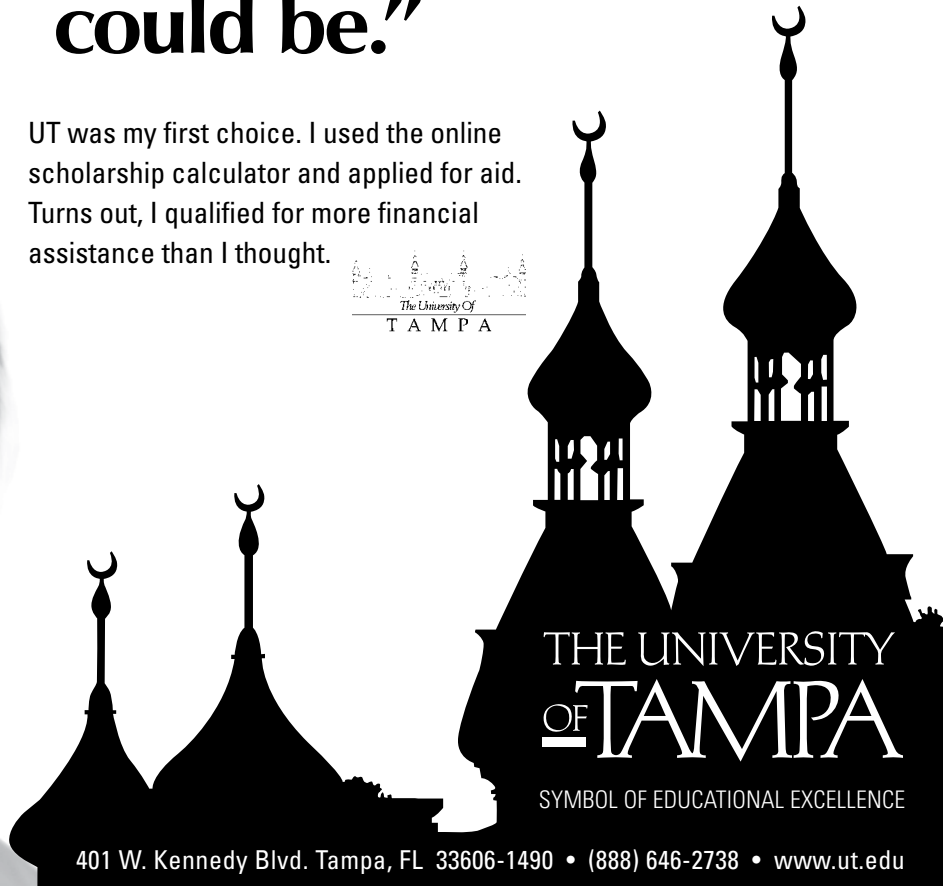
— MCT Campus

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“I was surprised how affordable a University of Tampa education could be.”

UT was my first choice. I used the online scholarship calculator and applied for aid. Turns out, I qualified for more financial assistance than I thought.





Kevin German, Sacramento Bee / MCT

Ben Underwood leans back to listen to his braille instructor John Cox tell him what the math teacher wrote on the front board back on Tuesday, May 2, 2006, in Elk Grove, California.

Blind teen who “sees” sounds fears no death

By Cynthia Hubert
McClatchy Newspapers

SACRAMENTO, Calif. -- Time is growing short for the boy who “sees” with sound.

Ben Underwood, the blind teenager who has dazzled people all over the world with his ability to navigate using a tongue-clicking skill called echolocation, is getting weaker day by day.

The cancer that took his eyes when he was a toddler has returned with a vengeance, invading his brain and his spinal cord. Ben's legs no longer are strong enough to support him, and his mother must carry him up and down the stairs of their Elk Grove, Calif., home. The teenager who traveled the globe the past two years giving inspirational speeches and impressing people with his ability to get around in a world he cannot see, spends most of his time these days in a hospital bed in the living room, sleeping, praying and listening to music.

Ben is under the care of hospice nurses, and he understands what that means. But he insists he is not afraid of dying, even at the tender age of 16. One day soon, he told his mother, Aquanetta Gordon, he simply will go to sleep and wake up in heaven.

“He is such a strong kid. He never complains,” Gordon said on a recent day, as Ben slept nearby under a fuzzy blue blanket. “I am the one who cries. The idea of having to bury my baby? I’m not sure how to do this.”

Ben's doctors said he could have weeks, or

months, to live. But whenever the end comes, he will have left a powerful imprint.

Since The (Sacramento) Bee published his story in May 2006, Ben has been featured in magazines, newspapers and television programs from Japan to Great Britain. He gave an inspirational speech to some 10,000 people at a Christian conference in Hawaii and has become an Internet sensation. He has chatted with Oprah Winfrey and danced with Ellen DeGeneres on national TV. He has become friends with the iconic musician Stevie Wonder, who celebrated his 16th birthday with him and slipped into town quietly again last week for a visit.

“Ben is an extraordinary young man who has inspired literally millions of people,” said his doctor, Kaiser Permanente pediatric oncologist Kent Jolly. “He has fought a heroic battle.”

Blind since he was a toddler, when a cancer called retinoblastoma took both of his eyes, Ben adapted remarkably well. He taught himself to reach places safely by counting steps and by using his keen senses of hearing, smell and touch. Gordon insisted that her son attend mainstream schools and be treated no differently from his classmates. She encouraged him to take risks.

When he got older, Ben taught himself to identify objects by making clicking noises with his tongue, creating sound waves that he uses to identify objects and get around. The skill, called echolocation, is commonly seen in bats and dolphins but rarely documented

in humans.

Thanks to his spirit and his incredible navigational skills, Ben has been able to take part in all of the rituals and activities of childhood and adolescence.

He has attended mainstream schools, most recently Sheldon High, and has refused to use a white cane identifying him as blind. He's played basketball, practiced karate, skated and ridden a bike through his Elk Grove neighborhood, clicking his tongue and listening for sound waves that tell him whether he is facing a brick wall, a metal car or other obstacles. He's learned to type 60 words per minute and text message his friends.

He's played video games by memorizing scenarios and identifying sounds that characters make before they move or strike.

Jolly and Ben's pediatric ophthalmologist, James Ruben, said they have never met anyone quite like him.

“It's extraordinary that Aquanetta has raised him without treating him as if he was disabled, and Ben has risen to the challenge,” Jolly said. “He's never been allowed to cut corners or take it easy or feel sorry for himself.”

Ben's cancer was in check until 2007, when he developed a tumor in his sinus cavity. Intensive chemotherapy, radiation treatments and experimental measures have failed to cure it, Jolly said.

The teen continues to get radiation treatments that keep him more comfortable, but the effects are temporary, said Jolly. Ben dis-

likes taking pain medication, but gets some relief when his mother gently massages his head and shoulders.

Her son is aware that his time is running out, Gordon said, and he accepts his situation, though he has not talked much about it. “After the doctor told us what was going on, I asked Ben, ‘Are you afraid to die? Are you scared? Do you need me to hold you?’” she said. He told her that he had no fear, and that he looks forward to seeing her in heaven.

“He's totally at peace,” Gordon said. “My strength comes from him.”

In recent weeks, as Ben has become weaker, his many friends have been spending long hours at his bedside.

They rub his hands and feet, fluff his pillows and play his choice of music on the stereo in the living room. Some of his favorite tunes are songs from a gospel rap CD that he created. The project is not quite finished. Maybe Stevie Wonder will take up the task, Gordon mused.

“Ben has always been a kid I could rely on,” said Gordon, who has four other children, ages 13 and up. “Always responsible. Always taking care of business.”

“I only get him for moment. I won't get to see him get married or have a family or go to college.

“But Ben's life wasn't just for me. It was to share with the world. Now Ben is dying in a graceful way. That's part of his purpose, too.”

— MCT Campus

Triple victory for 'Push' at Sundance



Mariah Carey arrives at Universal City Walk to sign CD's from her new album E=MC2, at Universal City, California, April 17, 2008.

By Kenneth Turan
Los Angeles Times

“Push: Based on the novel by Sapphire” scored a rare triple victory at the Sundance Film Festival on Saturday night, winning the grand jury prize and the audience award for drama, as well as a special jury prize for acting.

Directed by Lee Daniels, best known for producing the Oscar-winning “Monster’s Ball,” and adapted by Damien Pearl from the 1997 novel, “Push” tells the raw, nightmarish story of a 16-year-old pregnant girl who tries to escape from the domination of her terrifying mother (played by Mo’Nique, who won an acting prize) and make something of her life.

Taking the grand jury prize for documentary was Ondi Timoner’s “We Live in Public,” about a renegade artist who did just that, while the world documentary prize went to Kim Longinotto’s “Rough Aunties,” about a South African organiza-

tion that works with sexually abused children.

Havana Marking’s “Afghan Star,” a look at an “American Idol”-type TV program in Kabul, was the only documentary to win two prizes, taking the world documentary audience award and the world documentary directing nod.

Four other films, all dramas, took home a pair of prizes apiece, starting with Lone Scherfig’s captivating “An Education,” about a British high school girl meeting an older man, which earned both the world drama audience award and the world drama cinematography award for John de Borman. Two other world drama films received two awards apiece, including Sebastian Silva’s “The Maid,” from Chile, which received the world dramatic prize and a special world drama jury prize for acting for star Catalina Saavedra. The other world double winner was Oliver Hirschbiegel’s “Five Minutes of Heaven,” starring Liam Neeson and James Nesbit. Screenwriter Guy Hibbert constructed an intense what-if narrative about what might have transpired if two individuals, involved in different ways with a murder that actually took place in Northern Ireland in 1975, happened to meet decades after the event. Hirschbiegel won the world drama directing award, Hibbert the world drama screenwriting nod.

The only film in the dramatic competition to win two awards was writer-director Cary Joji Fukunaga’s effective “Sin Nombre,” about the intersecting lives of a Guatemalan teenager fleeing to the U.S. and a Mexican gang member. Already set for distribution by Focus Features, the film won the dramatic directing award and the excellence in cinematography award for Adriano Goldman.

Because the quality of U.S. documentaries was so high, another five won deserved awards.

“The Cove,” a muckraking doc by Louie Psihoyos that plays like a thriller and follows pro-dolphin activists as they try to expose slaughter in Japan, won the audience award.

“El General,” made with assurance by documentary directing award winner Natalia Almada and beautifully shot by Chuy Chavez, persuasively examines the long shadow the past casts over the present by looking into the connections between the director and her great-grandfather, revolutionary general and Mexican President Plutarco Elias Calles.

Sergio,” director Greg Barker’s moving examination of the life and death of top U.N. diplomat Sergio Vieira de Mello, took the editing prize for Karen Schmeer.

“The September Issue,” directed by the veteran R.J. Cutler, won the documentary cinematography award for Bob Richman’s ability to gain access to the Kremlin of fashion, the offices of Vogue Magazine, and its editor-in-chief Anna Wintour.

“Good Hair,” which earned a special jury prize for director Jeff Stilson, makes the most of comedian Chris Rock as he turns an investigation into the nature of African American hair into a window into contemporary black culture as well as quite a funny film.

A trio of worthy world documentaries also took home awards.

“Burma VJ,” which captured the world editing award for Janus Billeskov Jansen and Thomas Papapetros, features riveting footage smuggled out repressive Myanmar.

“Big River Man” won the world cinematography award for director John Maringouin for its examination of the exploits of the overweight Slovenian who is the world’s most famous endurance swimmer.

“Tibet in Song,” directed by Ngawang Choephel, won a world special jury prize by linking Tibetan music to that land’s quest to preserve its cultural identity.

On the dramatic side, The Waldo Salt screenwriting award went to Nicholas Jasenovec and Charlyne Yi for “Paper Heart,” a special jury prize for spirit of independence went to Lynn Shelton’s “Humpday,” and a world cinema special jury prize for originality went to France’s “Louise--Michel.”

Though it didn’t win anything, one of Sundance’s most haunting films was the Japanese science-fiction drama with a most unusual title, “The Clone Returns Home,” written and directed by Kanji Nakajima. A mysterious and mystical story, both deeply human and futuristic, this tale of attempts to clone an astronaut held audiences rapt even when they couldn’t quite understand what was going on.

Over on the Slamdance Film Festival side of town, awards were given out as well. The grand jury award for narrative went to “A Quiet Little Marriage,” and the audience award was given to “Punching the Clown.”

— LATWP News Service



Martin Gee, San Jose Mercury News / MCT

New site aims to enhance networking

By Brier Dudley
The Seattle Times

SEATTLE — Here’s a way to start leveraging your social network.

FriendlyFavor, a Seattle “social-media utility” that launched this month, offers a system for tapping into your network of friends, family and acquaintances.

It’s designed to complement social-networking services such as Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn.

Started by Seattle-area tech veterans Scott Larson and Jeff Patton, FriendlyFavor calls itself an “all-purpose request tool” designed to help people “more efficiently leverage their trusted networks of friends, family, and colleagues for help with referrals, recommendations, advice and other favors or requests.”

The service delivers, archives and manages requests for registered users. It can also be used to build tailored contact lists, including lists where sensitive favors — such as requests for a baby-sitter — can be handled and narrowly targeted.

FriendlyFavor can also be used to broadcast “favors” being offered by users, such as extra tickets to an event or services.

The five-person company was started in 2007 and raised \$500,000 from angel investors affiliated with companies including Microsoft, Google and Amazon.com.

It’s expecting to make money from targeted ads, licensing its platform and commissions on “thank you gifts” purchased at Amazon.com and other sites.

— MCT Campus

Opinion: And the Academy Award should go to...



Robert Downey Jr. played Kirk Lazarus, an intense, three-time Oscar-winning actor in 2008's “Tropic Thunder”

by Frank Tobin

It’s that glamorous, sparkly, suspended disbelief, time of year again. Yes, that time of year where we forget, especially this year, about the failing economy, the trillions in

debt spending that our great grandchildren are going take to their graves, and all the other overly negative, horribly real troubles that we deal with on a daily basis. That’s right, it’s Oscar time!

Perhaps not providing as critical an analysis as TMZ, or ETV, the Voice would like to elect to make some bold predictions for a few key categories; specifically in Best Supporting Actor and Supporting Actress, and of course the industry standards such as Best Actor/Actress, and Best Movie.

Without further ado: Best Supporting Actor.

Now, in this section we have some tricky nominees. Well, one tricky nominee: Heath Ledger. Our natural inclination would be to give him the posthumous nod because of the events, and untimely death, surrounding his captivating performance as the iconic villain The Joker. But in doing that, you would be doing a great disservice to the other fine men who provided outstanding performances in their individual movies.

For example, Robert Downey Jr. in “Tropic Thunder.” You heard that right, a once down-and-out alcoholic, who received a second chance after his dead-on depiction of Tony Stark in “Iron-Man,” gave an Oscar worthy performance with his role as a “black man” in the best comedy of 2008.

However, without going into said critical

TMZ-like analysis, as warned about earlier, let’s just go ahead and give Ledger the award. Yes, it may be easy, but even if he were alive today to see the labor of his hard work, he would still be deserving of the honor. Remember, they almost gave Johnny Depp an Oscar for his role as Jack Sparrow; very similar, except The Joker was infinitely cooler.

With that settled, let’s take a polite glance at the starlets of the supporting role.

Another relatively solid performance that should be focused on revolves around an exotic dancer. In “the Wrestler,” we follow, go figure, a wrestler. Mickey Rourke, as Randy, faces the end of this career, and he looks to reconcile with his estranged daughter, Stephanie (played, with far too much sulkiness, by Evan Rachel Wood), and woos the stripper he has long had a crush on, a flinty vixen whose stage name is Cassidy. (She’s played by Marisa Tomei, who manages to present us with a moving, three-dimensional character, despite the fact that the picture gives her little to do.)

Her presence, which lends the movie a much needed, softly delivered, female touch compliments Rourke’s own Oscar worthy acting job. Without her this movie might fall under its own testosterone-filled weight. Tomei? You get another Oscar. Congrats.

As far as Best Actor goes, it might be too simple to just let Brad Pitt run away with

it for his performance as Benjamin Button from the F. Scott Fitzgerald short story, made feature film, “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.” Special consideration should be given to the actor who not only had more to lose, but also had the steepest climb back to the top of the elite Hollywood heap: Mickey Rourke.

Rourke provides us both a sympathetic character, and a realistic character. Someone we love to root for, but at the same time chastise for his decisions. Easy win.

Moving right along to the final, yet most important category (wouldn’t it be fantastic if the actually awards’ ceremony was this decisive and fact-paced?): Best Movie.

“Milk,” the story of California’s first openly gay elected official, Harvey Milk (played by Sean Penn), a San Francisco supervisor who was assassinated along with Mayor George Moscone by San Francisco Supervisor Dan White (it’s not a spoiler when it’s actual American history).

This film gets the nod for both its timeliness (we as a people just so very ignorantly voted down gay rights bills in multiple states) and its sheer perfection from the writing, directing, and acting standpoints. Does that not make the “best movie?”

And there you have it, bold Oscar predictions. Now to see how very wrong we may be come February. Enjoy.

Lisa Lopes, Ciara release new albums



Eye Legacy

Artist: Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes
Label: Mass Appeal Entertainment
Release Date: January 27, 2008

By Emiliana White
Valencia Voice

Almost seven years after her death in 2002, Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes' voice reigns on throw the memorial release of "Eye Legacy." Consisting of songs recorded prior to her demise and featuring vocals from the likes of Missy Elliott, Chamillionaire, TLC and others, the posthumous album is set to tell the story of Lopes' life and creativity like

it has never been told.

Tracks such as "In the life," featuring R&B crooner Bobby Valentino, and "Legendary" details the trials and tribulations of the late rapper's life setting the tone for the emotionally driven songs that follow while those of "Block Party," featuring Lil' Mama, and "Bounce," featuring Chamillionaire and Bone Crusher, and the bonus track "Crank It," featuring Lopes' sister Reigndrop Lopes, pop out as the albums only club bangers.

Notable songs such as the spiritually based "Listen" and anthem for the lost and abused "Let It go," featuring Wayne Morris of Boyz II Men, reveals the lost potential of this female version of Common.

Listening to the tracks that make up "Eye

Legacy" it is easy to understand the path that Lopes was looking to take her career into as she stepped out of the shadows of TLC and built her own image.

"Eye Legacy," though it starts off to a rocky start, holds up to its desired mission of keeping Lopes' voice, talent and legacy

**"Let me live live,
 Let me live,
 In inside inside intelligence,
 Say say say say what you gotta say,
 Always asking you will be amazed"
 - L.I.S.A**

alive for her past and future fans to remember and embrace.

Fantasy Ride

Artist: Ciara
Label: Sony/Laface
Release Date: January 27, 2008

by Emiliana White
Valencia Voice

Ciara releases her third studio album "Fantasy Ride" Tuesday after months of keeping the details of the album's creation under tight secrecy.

With production from T-pain, Polow da Don, The Dream and others as well as guest appearances by top headliners such as Chris Brown, Ludacris, Young Jeezy, Missy Elliott along with her two noted producers T-pain and The Dream, the 3-disc album is set to

separate the singer-songwriter from her female counterparts.

However, if the two previously released singles are meant to be evidence of her originality, Ciara may not be able to make her case with this one.

Released as a promo single, the T-pain produced and featured track "Go Girl" uses the same overly used and horribly popular audio tuned effect to alter the songstress' vocals and to provide the song with a futuristic appeal.

Yes, the song is perfect for the clubs but it could have been recorded by anyone. Noth-

ing particularly makes it extraordinary.

The actual official single "Never, Ever," featuring Young Jeezy and produced by Polow da Don, though catchy does not affirm Ciara as a force to be reckoned with.

The love ballad that copies selected lines from the 1972 single "If You Don't Know Me by Now" by Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes simply shows that Ciara is still in dire need of vocal training if she's going to record songs that require a varied vocal range.

Besides the practically chosen singles, "Fantasy Ride" follows the steps of Beyonce and Garth Brooks in the terms of introduc-

ing an alter ego of Ciara named "Super C" showing that the creativity of her image makers is extreme low.

Perhaps the only original aspect of this album is the fact that it's broken up into three-disc consisting of the slow jam filled Groove City, dirty south crunk inspired Crunktown and the up-tempo house mix Kingdome of Dance.

With three-disc full of eclectically mixed songs, hopefully the album will be better than it appears to be.

Back in the day: Classic gaming returns on DS

By Frank Tobin
Valencia Voice

Thrown back in time to the 1980's, (was it really that long ago?) you are turned into a young boy and forced to play video games by an evil self-proclaimed "Game Master," Game Master Arino.

Doesn't sound too bad...

The story in Nintendo DS game gets even more B-rate, which is not at all a bad thing.

Game Master Arino will test your gaming skills by throwing various challenges at you in a wide-variety of retro games including shooters, racing, action and even an epic role-playing game.

Your only way to return to the present day is to defeat him in every retro game

challenge he throws at you.

But you are not alone in your quest. Armed with access to gaming magazines, cheat codes can be found to warp to later levels, receive unlimited continues or even become invincible (like the good old days).

A young Arino is at your side to keep you company during your challenges, quite amused at the fact that he grows up to be so evil in the future to be the cause of your current predicament.

Test your skills with the awesomeness (a little lingo for you 80's challenged younglings) of the 8-bit era and prevent the retro games from exacting their revenge.

An original game based on the popular Japanese GAME CENTER CX TV series, "Retro Game Challenge" reinvents how classic games are played by having the play-

er complete short challenges in a wide-variety of games to keep the game play fresh and rewarding.

Specific challenges in shooters, racing, action and a role-playing game are integrated into the story, while the in-game magazines offer cheat codes as well as fake 80's news stories paying tribute to the rich history of the gaming industry.

The graphics are a highlight, seeing as they're chunky, blocky, and primitive. (You mean, they aren't "Gears of War" realistic and bloody?) In other words, absolutely perfect for not only the game, but also for any nostalgia nut out there who refuses to forget their roots.

Once you beat all of the challenges on a given game, it's unlocked, allowing you to play it whenever you like.

The games are definitely infused with tons of retro appeal, but more importantly they're a blast to play in their own right.

Even if you're not old enough to remember blowing into the circuitry of the cartridges to make them "work" (yes, before CDs and DVDs, there were only hard plastic circuit boards that held our favorite games), Retro Game Challenge is a winner in the game play department.

Simply put, this game is a gooey love letter to the NES (Nintendo Entertainment System, circa 1984) era, giving said nostalgia junkies and fans of classic game play, plenty to chew on.

Whether it's 80's nostalgia for the seasoned gamer or experiencing classic 8-bit game play for the first time, Retro Game Challenge has something for everyone.

Brendan Fraser helps put the heart in 'InkHeart'

By Ann Hornaday
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The makers of "Inkheart" would like to put J.K. Rowling's wizards-in-training on notice: They will see their Dumbledores and raise them one Dustfinger.

Potter, you've been served.

"Inkheart," Iain Softley's vivid, super-serious, sometimes lurid adaptation of the young people's novel by Cornelia Funke, manages a neat trick of indirection. Filmgoers may attend this fantasy adventure, which stars Brendan Fraser and Eliza Hope Bennett, thinking that they will be captivated by the characters they play, a bookbinder and his 12-year-old daughter. Instead, "Inkheart" is completely dominated by its ensemble of supporting players, including the marvelous Paul Bettany as the quasi-villainous fire juggler Dustfinger, and Helen Mirren delivering a droll portrayal of a dotty bibliophile with fabulous design sense.

Indeed, the aesthetics of "Inkheart" are part of what make it such a surprisingly enjoyable experience to watch. Traveling from a picturesque town in Switzerland to a magnificent villa in northern Italy, this is a movie that often moves with dizzying speed, but always with a rich sense of visual detail. And

that's not a luxury but a necessity in bringing "Inkheart's" outlandishly convoluted story to convincing life. Fraser plays Mortimer "Mo" Folchart, who as the movie opens is reading "Little Red Riding Hood" to his baby daughter when he suddenly conjures an actual red cape. Mo, it turns out, is a "silvertongue," who can make stories come to literal life just by reading them aloud.

Twelve years later, Mo and his daughter, Meggie (Bennett), are traveling to a remote Swiss town in search of vintage books for Mo to repair, but also to aid him in his search for an obscure novel called "Inkheart." It seems he was reading the story to Meggie back when she was a toddler and things went desperately awry, a disastrous turn of events that comes fully to light in fits and starts throughout the movie. One clue to what happened lies with Dustfinger, a literally and figuratively smoldering fire juggler who appears suddenly in Switzerland and becomes, if not an ally, then a broodingly colorful companion on Mo and Meggie's search for the elusive book.

That search takes them to the home of Meggie's vinegary great-aunt Elinor (Mirren), who lives alone in a vast lakeside villa in Italy with a library to die for. In fact, the three actually almost do die for it when a troop of henchmen arrive to pillage the place, burn

Elinor's beloved tomes and take the family back to their boss, Capricorn (Andy Serkis). Once they reach the malevolent Capricorn's fortresslike kingdom, Mo, Meggie and Elinor are imprisoned — alongside a ticking crocodile, a unicorn and a flotilla of flying monkeys.

They're all characters who have been "read out" of books by Capricorn's own silvertongue, whose stuttering recitations result in people arriving with the writing of their native books inscribed on their skin. These eerie tattoos are just a few of the arresting visual touches that make "Inkheart" such an appealing sensory experience, full of imaginative creatures, vibrant colors and rich textures from the pair of Chuck Taylors given to a young character plucked from "One Thousand and One Arabian Nights" to the film's harrowing climax, which plays like a boho-goth wedding staged by Albert Speer.

The plot of "Inkheart" is so bursting and busy that it's occasionally impossible to follow, although fans of the book will no doubt complain that too much has been left out. But even when the sledding gets tough, Bettany provides the film's true north. His performance, as a tortured character desperate to be read back into his book so he can return to his wife (played in a cameo by Bettany's real-life spouse, Jennifer Con-

nelly), is nothing short of a revelation. In a movie that could easily be tossed quickly aside as a pleasant but disposable piece of tween entertainment, Bettany commits an act of serious acting, imbuing Dustfinger with generous doses of angst, sensitivity and dour humor (purely incidentally and this is for all the moms out there he looks pretty good with his shirt off, too).

With several scenes of intense peril and a subtle emotional undercurrent of danger and desire, "Inkheart" might qualify as "Twilight" for a slightly younger generation (or maybe "Bedtime Stories" for a slightly older one).

Surely its dark themes, furious action and often frightening scenes won't be particularly suitable for youngsters under 12. (Even Bennett, now 16, looks and acts much older than the 12-year-old she plays in the movie.) But for the young teens in its demographic wheelhouse, "Inkheart" packs a welcome amount of entertainment value, creating a genuinely original world of enchantment when that territory has otherwise been colonized by the imperial forces of Hogwarts and Middle Earth.

"Inkheart" (106 minutes) is rated PG for fantasy adventure action, some scary moments and brief profanity.

— MCT Campus



Warner Bros. / MCT

Walt Kowalski (Clint Eastwood, from left), Thao (Bee Vang), Vu (Brooke Chia Thao), Grandma (Chee Thao) and Sue (Ahney Her) in Warner Bros. Pictures' and Village Roadshow Pictures' drama "Gran Torino."

Eastwood reigns supreme in 'Gran Torino'

By Frank Tobin

Amidst a recent plethora of horribly mediocre movies (save for "The Dark Knight"), a shining light of superb writing (rare in this industry) and tremendous acting prowess, by an icon of the silver screen, bursts out of the Hollywood chum-bucket.

There are no bending bullets, no poorly conceived slap-stick, pop-culture references, no car chases (though there is a beautiful 1972 Gran Torino), and no teeny-bopper, sappy romantic emo-Vampires.

Instead we get Walt Kowalski; a racist, Korean War vet, who loses his wife at the end of his life, and who has seen horrors beyond measure; a broken man, a survivor, a real man, a man who finishes what he starts.

In "Gran Torino," Clint Eastwood makes

a triumphant return to the business end of the camera, behind which he has made a remarkable career with such modern-day classics as "Million Dollar Baby" and "Unforgiven."

The transformation that occurs within, and without, Walt is a marvelous blend of cultural shock and old school traditional "manning-up." Living in a desecrated, gang-ridden Detroit neighborhood, Walt begins the story with a profound, deep-seeded hatred for the Hmong immigrants who have moved next door. As time goes on, he discovers the history of their heritage, and their, albeit unwanted, connections to the family's gang member associations. The bond that forms between Walt and this family is both wonderful, and spiritual.

Walt finds himself alone in a changing world; a man from a forgotten time, with

morals derived from the bitter-sweet embrace of looking down the barrel of an M-1 Garand Rifle. Throughout the course of the story he befriends a young boy named Thao; a typical teenager rife with teen angst and insecurity.

Drawn against his will into the life of Thao's family, Kowalski is soon taking steps to protect them from the gangsters that infest their neighborhood.

Cantankerous in his demeanor, but honorable in his intentions, Eastwood conveys a character that has been seen before, by Eastwood himself no less (Dirty Harry comes to mind immediately), but still retains a fresh appeal, and demands your attention from start to finish. It's not like Eastwood hasn't been doing this sort of thing for more than 50 years, and doing it extremely well no less (four Oscars, another

100 wins & 58 nominations).

The ending, while still a touch predictable, resonates with you, and shows that not only are all people capable of salvation, but that Eastwood still has a lot of magic, even for a 78 year old, for making quality pictures in an age where computer generated superheroes are the norm, and spoof-movies are nothing like they used to be (how hard is it to emulate "Airplane!" properly... do your homework film students, and learn your roots).

This is a man's movie and should be required viewing for every overly emotional momma's boy, and the fathers who failed them, in our society. Take notes kids, you're about to be schooled by the best of the best: The Man with No Name (Eastwood's character from "The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly.")



Lakeshore Entertainment/MCT

Bill Nighy and Rhona Mitra star in Screen Gems' action thriller "Underworld: Rise of the Lycans."

'Underworld 3' entertains but lacks in originality

By Piel Thach

Having not seen the first or second installment of the Underworld series, I easily caught up with the plot told throughout the prequel, Underworld 3: Rise of the Lycans. This episode explains the origin of how the series began. Unfortunately, the storyline traces a Romeo and Juliet story which is predictable and simple. What kept the momentum of the film going were the bloody battles between monstrous supernatural werewolves named Lycans and a dark Vampire kingdom known as Death Dealers.

Taking place during the dark ages, the secret love between Lycan leader, Lucian (Michael Sheen) and Sonja (Rhona Mitra), daughter of the Vampire King unravels and erupts a war. This forbidden love sparked a rebellion from the enslaved werewolves fighting against the dominant Vampires. For the one hour and thirty two minutes

this theme was repetitive, a war fought between two different classes while Lucian and Sonja fought for each others love. Being the third film, I would expect the story to have more complexities to it. Than again, prequels are known to be not as interesting or well put together as the first or second film.

A positive is the large amount of action displayed through out the film. The core entertainment came from watching Lycans, who can transform from humans to werewolves battle Vampires equipped with majestic swords and arrows. The dark and gothic vibe gave it a realistic feel as well. Any man can appreciate realistic gory battles and action packed war scenes.

Though some scenes were exciting, due to lack of originality and content I wouldn't recommend spending the ten dollars. If you're not a fan of the series, I'd make it a Blockbuster night.

Your Voice: Television becomes learning tool

Watching television proves to be educational as well

By Adam Fishman
Valencia Voice

Have you ever tried to justify sitting in front of the television for hours on end? You say to yourself, "I should be doing homework, exercising, or reading that book my professor asked me to look at, what was it again?"

Then you're procrastination takes over. "I can do it tomorrow, or I'll start it right after this episode of That 70's Show." You tell yourself, "CSI is imperative in furthering my knowledge towards my Criminal Justice degree."

Who are you kidding? Those are the lamest excuses since "my dog ate my...", well, you know. What if watching a substantial amount of your Sony 65-inch television was a good thing?

Good news couch junkies, overdosing on MTV or the Discovery Channel may be productive after all.

In a Business Week study conducted May 25th, 2008, researchers surveyed 1,051 college students about their viewing habits.

"Electronic media is a central focus of many students' lives, helping them to manage schedules, relax, and fall asleep," researchers stated.

"TV also contains educational benefits and can teach positive behaviors," researchers stated.

Wait a minute, watching MTV's The Real World, or Fox's (God forgive me when I say this) American Idol, can teach positive behavior and contains educational benefits?

Researchers concluded students watch on average two hours of television programming per day.

Students watch TV during meals, while studying, and before sleep. So, how do you know if you're really watching too much of The Biggest Loser or Jerry Springer?

You probably watch too much TV if: you've seen every rerun, when mealtimes are planned around your favorite pro-

grams, you have pale pasty skin, you get pissed off when the phone rings during a show, you're always looking for the remote, or you can't imagine life without a TV.

Guilty? It's ok; the local Yellow Pages contain numbers to some great therapists.

If you do find yourself watching TV more than two hours per day, in order for your viewing to be productive, watch programs that are beneficial in expanding your brain power.

For example, channels such as National Geographic, Discovery Channel, or The Learning Channel contain programs that can help stimulate your mind.

View them for two hours or more per day, and you will probably know a lot more than what you learned in a semester of algebra.

In a 2007 Kaiser Family Foundation study, researchers conducted interviews on approximately 5,000 households. Families whose children did not watch any sort of reality TV were performing better in school than children who watched an hour or more of reality TV per day.

"Reality shows deaden the minds of our future and stimulate nothing but negativity," one researcher stated.

Enact common sense when going about your daily routines. Don't let TV become a distraction in your life, plan school activities such as studying and homework outside of TV land, not during it.

If you find yourself watching more than two hours of programming per day, dedicate the majority of your viewing time to productive shows.

If you absolutely cannot miss Lost, go ahead and watch it for that hour, but follow-up with four hours of The History Channel. Positive learning can take place from your television, the programs are out there. It's up to you to decide whether you will use it to your advantage or not.

There is one exception to all of this; football on Sunday's of course.



The cast for ABC's TV show 'Lost'. Lost is now in its fifth season, where opening numbers dropped to a staggering 26 percent.

Our Voice: 'Lost' loses ratings to reality TV

By Frank Tobin
Valencia Voice

Mythological undertones, metaphysical theorems, and time-traveling bunnies; thus is the magic of ABC's hit show "Lost," now entering its fifth season. After season 4, where they had to rush some of the ground-breaking reveals, "Lost" triumphantly returns... to its lowest season-opening numbers ever.

Say that again, no one could hear you over the incessant nonsense bellowing out of the bowels of the juggernaut that is the dreaded reality TV.

The two-hour Season 5 launch of the island thriller delivered an average of 11.4 million total viewers, according to data from Nielsen Media Research.

In adults, ages 18 to 49, "Lost" averaged a 5.0 rating, its worst season opener ever and down a rather large 26% compared with last year. In maybe the most troubling sign for ABC, the premiere lost (no pun intended) viewers every half-hour it was on.

What is wrong with you people? Would you rather be watching said asinine reality TV?

The answer to those inquiries is simple: decline in interest.

Every show will see a decrease in viewers, or popularity, when it lasts over 3 seasons, according to a survey done by ABC, where they asked 100 males and 100 females about their taste in television fiction.

As an objective observer of said study, it can be surmised that, perhaps, the average viewer is simply becoming less inclined

to lose themselves (another horrible pun) in the story.

"Lost" is in its 5th season, this decline in viewership was inevitable. Not to mention it has the most complicated, intricate and intelligent plotline on network TV, which makes it difficult for casual viewers to stay in-tune. Casual viewers usually prefer the brainless entertainment along the lines of "American Idol," and that's unfortunately how TV has been for a while.

Compare the ratings, and demographics: According to the iTunes store website, "American Idol" rakes in +26% among Adults 18-34 years old (19.6 million); and +26% among Total Viewers (29.3 million); whereas, in the same survey by iTunes, "Lost" procures a paltry 9.3 million viewers among the same demographic.

What this says, is that the American public school system is failing our children (sic).

Not in the slightest, but it does point to a growing concern that perhaps reality TV isn't on its way out the proverbial back-door of mediocrity like so many have predicted in the coming months, now that the writer's strike as abated.

If the current trend is any indication, America will also continue to become increasingly dumber thanks to said intelligence-reducing drudge.

With any luck, young people ages 18-34 will have done to them a collective, creative, and highly metaphorical, enema that will clean out their insistence on watching such unmitigated garbage.

"Lost" will prevail... hopefully.

Your Voice: Why watching too much TV is bad



Michael Becker / Courtesy Fox Broadcasting Co./MCT
Randy Jackson, from left, Kara DioGuardi, Paula Abdul and Simon Cowell judge the competition on "American Idol," which premiered January 13, 2009 on FOX.

By: Kenny Wagner
Valencia Voice

For some people February 17, 2009 will be just another rudimentary day, business as usual, but, for a lucky few this date will mark the day they redeemed their lives and ended the hypnotic spell cast on them by their television sets. February 17 is of course the date television stations around the country will end their analogue broadcasts and air exclusively in digital.

I admire those individuals who are unwilling or unmotivated to replace their televisions or purchase a converter box and allow their televisions to turn into a blank cube. If more people were willing to follow suit (myself included) we could all achieve a new kind of social consciousness that doesn't revolve around technology.

More often than not, we get far too caught up in the romantic qualities of television shows, the drama and melodrama, the over acted emotions of characters and the poorly written drivel of the writing staff. The WGA writer's strike in 2007 was the best thing to happen to this country since the "New Deal."

Perhaps, if we are unwilling as individuals to overt our gazes from the idiot box when the digital transition occurs, then we can come together as a group and de-

cide for ourselves to abstain from television, even if it's for a week. In the mean time I'm sure you can and will Tivo all of your favorite shows and catch up later.

Perhaps Valencia's own SGA can take a stand and declare a month long moratorium on television viewing for February. They should also point out how trivial T.V. is and encourage individuals to get out of the house, watch a film with artistic value and substance, or god-forbid read a book. Who really cares about Kaleigh from Dallas who drove 400 miles to New Orleans in a beat up Dodge Neon to audition for American Idol only to be called a fat talentless cow by Simon Cowell for the fifth season in a row, anyway?

According to Anne E. Cunningham in her paper entitled "What Reading Does for the Mind" 68.3 words per 1,000 in a newspaper are words most people do not use on a regular basis, are slightly more sophisticated than one might have in their vocabulary. In your average children's book 30.9 per 1,000 words are "rare" and in your average television show 22.7 words per 1,000 are "rare."

So, hopefully, we can actually come to some sort of agreement all together and finally end our mindless gazing at the televisions and find something more productive and interesting to occupy our time, on Feb. 17 I say, let the television screens go blank!

What is your favorite TV show for this season?

What's new on TV this week

By Chuck Barney
Contra Costa Times
(MCT)

TUESDAY: You just never really know what's going to go down on "Scrubs." In tonight's episode, J.D. tries to teach a lesson in compassion €" with the help of "Sesame Street" creatures Elmo, Grover and Oscar the Grouch. 9 p.m., ABC.

WEDNESDAY: The bizarre adventures continue on "Lost" as Desmond seeks a woman who might be able to help Faraday stop the island's erratic movements through time. For the record, we just hate it when islands move erratically through time. 9 p.m., ABC.

THURSDAY: Let the food fight begin as chef Gordon Ramsay returns for a fifth season of "Hell's Kitchen." Tonight, the show introduces us to 16 new contestants who will have, well, heck to pay. 9 p.m., Fox.

THURSDAY: Another reason to avoid revisiting your old high school days: On "Supernatural," Sam and Dean return to campus where people are turning up dead. So much for the homecoming celebration. 9 p.m., The CW.

FRIDAY: It's not too late to join the boosters club for "Friday Night Lights," one of the best dramas around. Tonight, Dillon Panthers' fans are pressuring Coach Taylor to switch to a new quarterback (Jeremy Sumpter). But we're still pledging our allegiance to adorable Matt Saracen. 9 p.m., NBC.

SATURDAY: Everyone knows that the ads are often the best things about watching the big game. On "Super Bowl's Greatest Commercials," Jim Nantz and Daisy Fuentes look at 10 of the best commercials of past seasons, and viewers name their all-time champ. 8 p.m., CBS.

Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.



"The new season of Lost is pretty cool. I've been catching up on it. There's a lot of suspense and I love figuring things out."

—T.J. Cole



"I'm not really into watching TV. I'm more into the news. TV is more corrupted today."

—Jeannie Bradley



"House. The main character is a very sarcastic person and you usually don't get that with doctors."

— Nalini Mohammed



"I like to watch House. I study Biology and I like the main character's ideas."

— Sam Al Khatib



"Lost because the characters are going back to the island. It also has to do with time travel."

—Shiva Ramcoobair



"I like Grey's Anatomy, but I don't have time to watch it this semester."

—Natalia Soberanes



"I like to watch Grey's Anatomy, that's the only prime time show I watch. Most of the time I just watch movies."

— Rachel Richardson



"I like watching America's Next Top Model because it's interesting."

—Johanna Lherisson

Photos by Collin Dever/ Valencia Voice

Contacts

Advisor
Ken Carpenter
kcarpenter2@atlas.valenciacc.edu

Directors of Design
Robert Navaille
rnavaille@valenciavoicedotcom

Kyle Beard
kbeard@valenciavoicedotcom

Director of Sales
Jackie Minto
jminto@valenciavoicedotcom

News Editor
Trey McConnell
tmcconnell@valenciavoicedotcom

Sports Editor
Alex Barrett
abarrett@valenciavoicedotcom

Opinion Editor
Shaneece Dixon
sdixon@valenciavoicedotcom

Features Editors
Ebony Chance
echance@valenciavoicedotcom

Olivia Pullinger
opullinger@valenciavoicedotcom

Omshante Lee
olee@valenciavoicedotcom

Emiliana White
ewhite@valenciavoicedotcom

Copy Editors
Ashley Bland
abland@valenciavoicedotcom

Leah Reidenbach
lreidenbach@valenciavoicedotcom

Editor / Valencia Voice Interactive
Adam Butterfield
abutterfield@valenciavoicedotcom

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What was your New Year's Resolution?

By Omshantee Lee
Valencia Voice

As January comes to an end the newness of the year settles in, so does reality. With the Winter holidays behind us, many have found that the festivities of the season has left more to remember than just Christmas gifts alone.

They have also left bulging waistlines and tight fitting clothes.

The weight gained by millions of Americans each year prompted by your typical Thanksgiving and Christmas meals can cause real damage in both the issues of health and self-esteem.

In addition to the excessive consumption of the carbohydrates that are found in most traditional holiday foods like breads, potatoes, and pastries, individuals are less likely to engage in athletic routines. As the temperature drops, so does outdoor activity. Morning strolls are replaced with more resting time, as would-be walkers sleep in to catch the morning

news.

Neighborhood basketball courts are left deserted as its prior inhabitants neglect their late afternoon games, to stay in the warmth of their homes instead.

The combination of more food intake and less calories being burned result in an overall decline in health and fitness.

Apart from physical factors, emotional and mental issues are major components to this decline as well. Stress caused by rigorous holiday shopping, spending, and traveling contribute to a significant amount of anxiety.

Studies show that stress is directly related to weight-gain.

Inspiring commercials advertising discounted packages for memberships at almost any gym one can think of flood television screens everywhere.

One is constantly reminded that the summer months will be approaching, bringing sunny beach days and cut off shorts along with them. Hesitantly, one must come to the realization that all of their holiday eating mischief will soon

be exposed.

Every January, millions of people commit to self-improving New Year's resolutions, but somewhere along the way, their dedication easily wavers.

"I think I had a New Year's resolution but I forgot what it was," says Alex Carlson, west campus student, while he holds a cigarette. "I think it was to quit smoking but obviously that didn't work out." Whether it be to build stronger relationships, or to receive better grades, many look at the new year as an opportunity to make significant changes in their lives.

So why is it that the achievement of these various personal goals are rarely met?

Although some are focused on their goals to quit smoking or to save money, sticking with a diet is challenging to many individuals; young people in particular.

With tight schedules that include academics as well as financial responsibilities, the average college student finds it difficult to fit breakfast in before an early morning class, let alone commit to an intense work out routine.



"My New Year's resolution was to finish my degree. I'm going to graduate this semester so its going well."

—Jose Suarez



"I didn't have any New Year's resolutions because I didn't think I would be able to keep any. I already get good exercise, I already eat well and I'm comfortable with my body so I don't want to lose weight."

—Chelsea Rokus



"My New Year's resolution was to have a better attitude towards life. I have been having a better attitude lately."

—Marie Joseph



"My New Year's resolution was to not have a New Year's resolution because it always ends up going wrong."

—Teree Douglas



"My New Year's resolution is to become a better student, and I've been working on my procrastination."

—Eveline Joahim



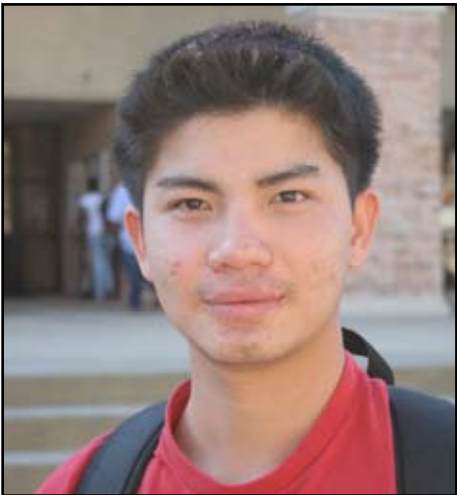
I think I had a New Year's resolution but I forgot what it was. I think it was to quit smoking, but obviously that didn't work out."

—Alex Carlson



"My resolution was to quit smoking and to drink less liquor. I have almost quit smoking cigarettes, and I have stopped drinking liquor."

—Johnathan Muszynski



"My resolution was to save money and to get a new job."

—Tommy Lee

Say a prayer for the NFL in 2009

By Alex Barrett
Valencia Voice

This NFL season may forever be known for many things; Miami's improbable playoff run after last season's 1 win outing. The Detroit Lions, finally becoming as bad on paper as we knew they were on the field. New and stoic coaches patrolling the sidelines. Possibly, and hopefully, the end of Adam Jones' career. But there's one thing that I will always remember this particular NFL season for—and that's the horrifically blown calls. It started early, and never looked back - and affected almost all of the officiating crews; even those tagged for being the elite flag-tossers of the league. The first of many, an early meeting between Denver and San Diego, was most likely the sorest spot of Ed

Hochuli's lengthy career. With one minute and change remaining in the 4th quarter, an otherwise decorated official of over 10 years was involved in the worst call of his career, and it was only exacerbated by the fact that it changed the outcome of the game. Even after reviewing a clear Jay Cutler fumble call on the sidelines, Hochuli returned to the field, ruled an incomplete pass, and Cutler capitalized; scoring the go-ahead touchdown after what was sure to be a clincher for the San Diego defense.

While this was a huge call in the game, it was proven to be instrumental all the way to the last game of the season, where the Chargers had to play the Broncos in a rematch to decide who went to the post-season. Had the Chargers been the benefit of a correct call, the game could have been used to rest starters

for San Diego's playoff push.

Speaking of the playoffs, you would think that the zebras would taper it down and make sure calls were right to the best of their abilities, right?

Then you can't overlook the Titans playoff game against the Ravens, where bad calls ran rampant.

Now, Tennessee lost this game because of their 3 turnovers in the redzone. But it wasn't helped by the fact that an obvious forward pass call was botched on third-and-long, allowing the Ravens to run out the clock instead of facing a punt situation, which would have given the Titans ample time to drive for a score. Even in the Eagles game, a streaking Kevin Curtis was tangled up intentionally, and tripped. No flags were thrown for pass interference against the Cardinals. Curtis al-

most made the catch to spite, but the no-call erased an almost 70 yard gain through the air. None of these were tough calls to make, every single one of them were reviewed, and still were called incorrectly. Unfortunately, referees aren't super-soldiers, they are going to get just as many calls wrong as they are right, but this clearly needs to be addressed by the NFL's competition committee in the off-season. And with Jeff Fisher's Titans on the receiving end of one of these erroneous calls, you can bet the Committee head (Fisher) will bring the problems to light as soon as possible. So let's say a prayer for the next NFL season, hoping for better, more accurate calls from veteran officiating crews; especially in game-changing scenarios - and just maybe, a better vision plan from the NFL benefits package.

Obama supports BCS playoff system

By Brian Cronin
Valencia Voice

College football's playoff scenario, or lack thereof, has been addressed and challenged for years, but there has never been enough people arguing to change the current system.

Right now, a complex formula is used to decide the rankings of teams in BCS contention, and looks at vectors such as strength of schedule, record, and how badly teams have been beaten, or beaten others.

The problem, as many argue, is that there should be a playoff, where teams decide their fate rather than a computer. President Barack Obama supports the institution of a playoff system in the Bowl

Championship Series (BCS); a playoff system in college football that would allow the top teams to truly compete regardless of what division they belong to collegiately.

The BCS Presidential Oversight Committee neglects to believe that anything is wrong with the current selection of bowl candidates; while a majority of the college viewing audience believe that a playoff needs to be put into place for a champion to be crowned.

As President, Obama will attempt use his influence to have a playoff system used in collegiate football.

Obama made his opinion clear at his appearance on Monday Night Football, November 12, 2008, one of the biggest stages for American sports fans.

"I think it's about time we had playoffs

in college football. I'm fed up with these computer rankings and this, that, and the other. Get eight teams—the top eight teams, right at the end. You got a playoff. Decide on a national champion."

Days later in an interview with 60 Minutes, Obama also stated, "...I will use influence as president to create such a system."

With all of President Obama's involvement on this matter, the situation looks bleak.

BCS Presidential Oversight Committee has the final say. They have discussed the future of postseason football on numerous occasions, and believe that it would not be in the best interest of the sport to have a playoff.

The committee sights time constraints

due to playoff brackets and schooling interruptions as reasons to abandon a playoff scenario, though contributors have found ways to fit a new playoff tree into the same amount of weeks currently used for BCS bowl games.

Continuing with a computer ranking system, in many fans eyes, will only lead to a show down of BCS picks, instead of a real showmanship of the best of the best in collegiate football.

Also, many believe that the BCS Committee has only their interests in mind, as a decaying system may ultimately lead heads of the committee, as well as employees to loss of jobs due to a playoff shift.

Only time will tell if President Obama will be able to swing the opinions of his colleagues to change to a playoff system.

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