

STUDENT LIFE - YEAR IN REVIEW

Students begin 'Working' Lay the Smack Down with 'WWE SmackDown vs. Raw'

By Lacy Buzard
from the April 8 issue

Twenty-five people found their way to the Studio Theatre last night to preview "Working," Behrend's spring production. They were greeted by the acoustic stylings of Jeff Stempka and Patrick Doyle whose versions of classics, such as Jimi Hendrix' "All along the watchtower," enthralled their listeners.

Stempka upped his performance by adding vocals and harmonica strains. He seemed to swallow his lyrics at times, but more than made up for that during the actual production. "He's quite good," said Randy Martell, PSY 06.

The company opened the show with a jazzy rendition of "All the livelong day," which has nothing to do with railroads. From then on the stage was seamlessly transformed from a steel shell of a building to a newsroom and everything in between.

Camille Jones, the show's only non-Behrend performer, lit up the room with her strong stage presence and even stronger vocals. Her vivacious actions brought the audience to attention and never let them go.

An authentic looking steam rose from the stage as mill-workers mock-produced their suitcases. Watch out if you have asthma, though; it could be an issue. Overall, however, it worked its magic by placing the audience within the scene.

The highlight of the show came with the song, "If I could've been." This heart-wrenching song about how laborers have feelings and intelligence that often goes overlooked brought the plight of the working class to life for the audience.

A great surprise came when Tanaz Balaporia opened her mouth solo for the first time in "Millworkers." Nothing short of amazing can describe the way her voice streamed from her diaphragm. She began with a vigor that captivated listeners and kept it up for the remainder of the show.

"I didn't think a college production would be as good as it was," said Andrew Chernauskas, SoftEng 04. "It was incredible."

And so it was. From the supermarket checkout with Amanda Golia to on the road with Aaron Amendola, "Working" is sure to please. The show will run April 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 in the Studio Theatre.

Review by Nick Hammond
from the Nov. 9 issue

THQ's wrestling games are always evolving and changing as it straddles the line between trying to satisfy die-hard wrestling fans and just trying to be a good fighting game. This year's PS2 game is a pretty big step in the right direction as a lot of the big features fans have been clamoring for are finally in the game.

The SmackDown series has always been known for its surprisingly fun, deep story mode - a pseudo-RPG with a WWE theme. This year's big changes is honest-to-goodness voice work from pretty much every wrestler in the game, even Vince McMahon, too, which adds a ton to the authenticity. You're also able to more clearly define your role as a face, a good guy, or heel, a bad guy, and actively use your managers to your advantage during a match; for instance, having her grab a chair for you and distract the ref so you can properly use it. The game also lets you create custom championship belts, which can be transferred from memory card to memory card if you manage to beat the current holder in a match.

Nearly all of the gameplay changes made to this year's game are assorted ways to try to capture the proper flow of a real match. Nowhere is this more exemplified than in the little in-match minigames. At the beginning of a match, you'll frequently find yourself faced with a stare-down contest, a test of strength, or a shoving match. These are all controlled by specifically timed button presses that appear onscreen. In the stare down, you simply have to press X at the right time and you'll get the always important first strike. The meter swings upward to signify power

New Features of "SmackDown vs. Raw."

- Authentic voices
- Stare down contest
- Test of strength
- Custom championship belts
- Define your role

for your shove, and then it swings back downward, challenging you to hit the X button at just the right time for maximum effectiveness. There's also an exact copy of this meter for the ever-popular chop battles you tend to see during real matches, which have been translated here very nicely. As well, you'll encounter a new spanking contest (strictly for the divas, of course). These little games can be turned on or off in the game's options menu, but we didn't find them to be intrusive, and instead thought they added a little more flair to the matches. That's flair meaning "style," not flair meaning Ric Flair. If you want to add a little more Ric Flair to your matches, yes, he is a selectable character.

The next big thing is, of course, head-to-head online play, though you can't bring the belts online (yet). The fighting engine handles a lot like that of the last game with some tweaks to the grappling system, but the presentation and feature set is the best THQ has yet to offer.

'Ladder 49' ablaze with heroism

Review by Annie Sevin
from the Oct. 8 issue

Director Jay Russell ("Tuck Everlasting," "My Dog Skip") delivers a fiery masterpiece with "Ladder 49." This day-in-the-life film debuted last Friday and quickly became a must-see movie. It follows the life of Baltimore firefighter Jack Morrison (Joaquin Phoenix) and his experiences as a firefighter and a family man.

The movie begins at the end with an extremely large warehouse fire. Morrison becomes trapped in the building when the twelfth story floor gives way. Throughout the film, the audience is thrown between the warehouse fire and Morrison's life as he passes in and out of consciousness.

The story itself is very endearing. The audience is meant to fall in love with Morrison and Captain Mike Kennedy (John Travolta). That task is well accomplished thanks to an awesome cast and amusing male-bonding rituals. The chemistry between all the characters was perfect, and that's what really sells this movie. Without the chemistry, the life threatening drama and provocative ending, this movie would've flopped.

The cinematography in "Ladder 49" is absolutely astounding. The overhead aerial shots were beautifully done. The astronomical explosions during the fire scenes were incredible (and loud). Some of the firefighting scenes were so intense and thunderous that the theater floor actually shook. On top of that the heart-pounding rescue

scenes made the audience jump out of their seats.

The film balanced out with some less intense moments as well. The firefighters played pranks on each other throughout the film. There were also some romantic moments between Morrison and his wife Linda (Jacinda Barrett) that were scripted well.

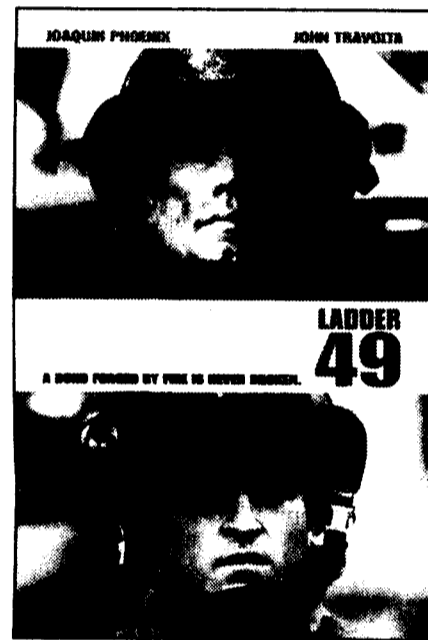
The musical element of "Ladder 49" was excellent compared to most films. The soundtrack matched beautifully with the emotional impact of the scenes. The music really drew the audience into the movie; it definitely enhanced the quality of this film.

It's hard to find anything negative about Russell's film. Perhaps it's not the most original storyline ever created - it is slightly reminiscent of "Armageddon" (Michael Bay 1998). However, it's an exceptionally good portrayal of the struggles of being a firefighter. Not to mention the fact that it is a painful reminder of all the lives lost on September 11th. It does provide some insight to what the FDNY went through that day, and everyday. It also reminds us of the reasons that we salute and respect firefighters.

This film also slightly portrays Hollywood-heroics, inasmuch as the audience thinks they know how the characters will respond in certain situations. However, the unexpected twists turn it into a believable story about everyday heroes.

"Ladder 49" is a film that you can really lose yourself in. It's one of the few that makes the audience forget they're actually watching a

film; it seems more like watching



TOUCHSTONE PICTURES
John Travolta and Joaquin Phoenix star in 'Ladder 49,' a story about firefighter's lives and jobs.

everything happen from a street corner.

Another reason this film seems so convincing is that it was shot on location. A Maryland native has informed me that the scenes in which the city of Baltimore was visible were authentic. The fires too were genuine, even local residents thought they were real. So kudos to Russell and crew for not trying to fool anyone with fake Hollywood sets.

"Ladder 49" is an awesome film exploding with things we love most about life. It's intense, it's funny, it's a pyromaniacs dream and the acting is brilliant.

Week recap in music

Review by Sean Mihlo
from the April 1 issue

Stephen Malkmus to Release Third Album, Tour Select Cities, Have a Baby

It's been six long years since Lo-Fi pioneers "Pavement" broke up and two years since ex-vocalist Stephen Malkmus released his second solo effort, "Pig Lib."

Just last year, Matador Records re-released a digitally re-mastered version of "Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain" with nearly 40 extra tracks and vividly stunning linear notes. This year, however, Matador will concentrate on promoting the new Malkmus album, "Face the Truth," which is set to drop in the U.S. on May 24. For those who live outside the States, the album will be released in Europe via Domino on May 23. The first single from "Face the Truth" called "Post-Paint Boy," is currently available for download on iTunes.

After the release of "Face the Truth," Malkmus will begin a short tour in which he will bless audiences across America with his witty lyrics and possibly some older material.

As of today, only a handful of dates have been scheduled, most likely due to Malkmus' pending fatherhood. There are some empty spaces in between the tour dates, but hopefully a few more shows will appear within the upcoming weeks. Mark your calendars, for Malkmus will make only one appearance near us on June 9 at the Beachland Ballroom in Cleveland.

The Raveonettes Are Back, or Pretty in Black

Swedish duo The Raveonettes are set to release their second full-length, "Pretty in Black," on April 26, via Columbia. Their major-label debut, "Chain Gang of Love," garnered critical acclaim for its distortion-heavy rock and roll sound; it even produced the hit single and K-mart commercial backtrack "That Great Love Sound."

On "Pretty in Black," though, the duo strays from the feedback that overwhelmed its predecessor and focuses more on molding songs that drip pure pop. Besides finding a new sound, The Raves decided to pick up a new member, Anders Christensen, who will replace Sharin Foo on bass, allowing her to shift focus from instrument to

vocals.

Co-produced by Richard Gottehrer, who's produced albums by the Go-Go's and Blondie, lends his legendary talents to Pretty in Black, while singer, lyricist and guitarist Sune Wagner finishes off the production duties. The Raves even pay tribute to Gottehrer by recording a version of "My Boyfriend's Back," originally recorded by The Angels in 1963 and co-written by Gottehrer. Maureen Tucker from The Velvet Underground, Suicide's Alan Vega and '60s girl-group pioneer Ronnie Spector also contribute to "Pretty in Black." "Love in a Trashcan," the album's first single, was released to radio stations in March.

Meanwhile, the band is currently in the midst of touring England, Greece, Canada and the United States. The Raveonettes will also delight fans at this year's Coachella festival in California. Autolux will support The Raveonettes in the US.

The Dandy Warhols Finish and Name Album, Announce Single, Get High, Chill

Portland's favorite shoegazer/psychedelic/new wave band, The Dandy Warhols, have announced the title of their fifth effort for Capitol Records via their website. Named after their home studio in Portland, "Odditorium or Warlords of Mars" is currently being mastered and is expected to be released by summer. The Dandies also confirmed that "Smoke It" will be the first single taken from "Odditorium;" a video for the track was shot in February. The Dandies' last album, 2003's "Welcome to the Monkey House," debuted in the number 2 slot on Billboard's Heatseekers chart.

Whether or not the band will tour this summer in support of Odditorium is still up in the air. Besides an appearance this past January at a benefit concert in Portland, the Dandies haven't played a show in the US since September of 2003.

In addition to a possible tour, MTV.com is reporting that a DVD of a live performance from 2004 in Australia is also under construction. The DVD is set to be released sometime this month. MTV.com also says that lead singer Courtney Taylor-Taylor is preparing to shoot a film based on a script he's written, "One Model Nation," in the fall.

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