

## The J-Lo Down

A new film, a new album--a new Jennifer Lopez

by Susan John  
staff writer

Jennifer Lopez has a double identity lately. By day, she is the sweet movie star of romantic comedies, but by night she is the funky songstress with a flare for a little danger. Image really is everything. But just who is "J-Lo" and will she last?

Lopez was born on July 24, 1970, and raised in the Bronx. She started her career dancing her way through musicals and music videos. She danced on Broadway and even appeared in videos such as Puff Daddy and the Family's "Been Around the World" and Janet Jackson's "That's the Way Love Goes." She landed her big break when she nailed the role of Selena Quintanella in the movie *Selena*. With that movie, based on the life history of the slain Tejano singer, Lopez began making a salary of one million dollars, which earned her the spot of being the highest paid Latina actress in history. After her performance in *Selena*, she was nominated for Best Performance as an actress in a motion picture, comedy/musical in the 1998 Golden Globe Awards.



At top right, Jennifer Lopez sings as Selena Quintanella in the film biography of the slain singer's life. Above, the Jennifer Lopez *Rolling Stone* cover.

As Lopez's career was blasting off like a rocket, her marriage to Ojani Noa in February of 1997 was at an all time "Lo" and ended in divorce. Since then, she has been seen at Sean "Puff Daddy" Combs' side numerous times. In December of 1999, Lopez accompanied Puffy to a nightclub.

During that eventful night, both Lopez and Puffy were arrested for having connections with the shooting that took place that very night at the club. She was dismissed on all counts, but he is still facing charges. Despite the controversy, Lopez and Puffy were attached at the hip at many of the big events in Hollywood before the recently-crowned diva announced plans on dismissing Puffy.

The topic is so touchy, in fact, that Lopez's recent stint on *Saturday Night Live* came with restrictions. Material related to Combs and the impending trial were strictly off limits. Lopez did spoof girl groups in a sketch based on MTV's "Cribs."

Currently Lopez stars with Matthew McConaughey in the box office hit *The Wedding Planner*. In the movie, Lopez is so wrapped up in her job as a wedding coordinator that she herself does not have time for love. She meets a man, and it is com-



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pletely love at first sight, but as luck, or should I say love, would have it, he is the fiance of her current client.

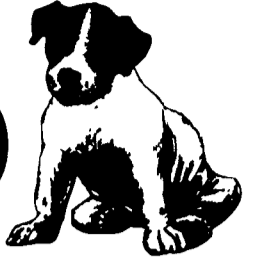
The release of *The Wedding Planner* came at a very critical time. The movie had to not only compete with all the other films currently out, but it also had to compete with the Super Bowl. To much surprise, nothing could compete with this box office hit, and the Super Bowl did not have much of an effect on the film's success. It even bumped the two-week number one hit *Save the Last Dance* down to the number two spot.

Lopez is definitely going all out with her talents. Besides starring in movies, she just released her new album *J-Lo*. It has also reached number one. This release made her the very first person to have a number one album and a number one movie consecutively.

Singer, actress, girlfriend of alleged felons, one thing is for sure--Jennifer Lopez certainly isn't lacking exposure. It remains to be seen, however, just how well her various images can withstand it.

## Sic' Em FIDO

by Deanna Symoski



## "I'm not dead yet!" Dodging the cannibals of pop culture

Two M&Ms are standing in a room with horrified expressions on their faces. The camera cuts to a third M&M lying crack-shelled and woozy in the arms of a toddler whose face is covered with chocolate. He is eating Crispy M&M.

Ordinarily, that commercial would be a little off-color, but not overly disturbing. In the wake of *Hannibal*, however, I'm freaked.

I don't know if the M&M ad is intentionally reflecting the most talked-about scene in recent film history, or if this is just my overactive imagination getting the best of me. I can't help but see the connection, however, between Crispy M&M and Ray Liotta. And even if it's just mere coincidence, this example is a clear one of just how much of an impact gore and violence can make on a person.

I have yet to see *Hannibal*, and given the content, I may not even shell out the \$6.75. But I know about that scene at the dinner table, and whether or not I check out the film, the image it conjures will always be imbedded in my psyche. And to anyone who thinks that this sort of thing doesn't affect people, let me just say that the mere idea of it is now causing me to think of innocent M&M commercials as suspect.

Recently I wrote about the responsibility of all parties to guide children through television viewing. I cited the parents' responsibility as well as the industry's. This is not a revision of that editorial where I blame solely an industry with questionable standards. This is an editorial that questions the necessity of cannibalistic images in mainstream pop culture. It also serves to express my fear over how far the envelope will someday be pushed.

The issue isn't so much the actual scene, which from what I hear, borders on the humorous with its far-fetched absurdity. The issue, at least for me, is the image overactive imaginations such as mine will interpret the scene as, because as I listened to a morning radio show describe it, the mental picture I got far exceeded a simple R rating.

And perhaps this opens the Pandora's box for an issue that has really yet to be examined--marketing. Word of mouth is what is selling this film, because promoters know nothing they can show you will be as good as what you expect to see. To that end, they talk about the scene--or encourage others to talk about it for them--and expect you to go running off to see it for yourself. The fact that \$70 million-worth of you wanted to see something so base is another editorial.

For now I want to focus on the people who didn't want to, or because of age couldn't, go see *Hannibal*. Our minds are still wrestling with that dinner image. While you can turn the channel when the preview comes on, you can't shake the image you got when you overheard the lady at the bank talking about the film. And while I am having no trouble sleeping at night, it obviously has colored the way I interpret M&M commercials. I am curious about how it has affected others. They may say it hasn't, but I am certain that it will. It may not cause anyone to start eating their classmates or coworkers, but it might show up in more subtle, unobtrusive ways. It may do little more than intrude on a passing thought now and then, but even that means it matters. For me, my days of eating M&M's without guilt are over.

The point is that now this image is out there and sinking into our collective character. And if this is now, what will we all be wrestling with next year when a director dares to top it? So this is what some consider mild. Fine. Something else will inevitably come along that outdoes it. Are we to consider that mild, and the next scene after that. Things like this build. *Hannibal* wouldn't exist if *Silence of the Lambs* hadn't come before it. And *Lambs* wouldn't exist without the films that came before it, which were probably considered tame by today's standards, but in their prime were appalling.

So we live in a culture where nothing is that bad, because it always gets worse. The problem is that worse is never considered that bad either. Read this again next year when your stomachs are hard enough to withstand worse, and your heads don't think it's that bad.

(And incidentally, if that M&M ad isn't just a coincidence--score one for advertising.)



## Spring Movie Preview

### The Mexican

(March 2)  
Starring: Julia Roberts, Brad Pitt, James Gandolfini

Pitt, an oafish runner for the mob, is sent to Mexico to retrieve an antique (and cursed) gun. Roberts is his girlfriend who is kidnapped to ensure he does a good job. The two megastars don't share much screen time, which means the struggle for on-screen superiority should be kept to a minimum.

### 15 Minutes

(March 9)  
Starring: Robert DeNiro, Edward Burns, Kelsey Grammar, Melina Kanakaredes

Some NBC stars and DeNiro? Actually, the premise has been a long time coming, and may just be a timely look at fame in a celebrity-obsessed culture. A couple of maniacs ravage Manhattan with violence, all while taping their exploits in order to get famous. DeNiro plays the homicide detective on their trail, and Burns is an arson investigator brought on to help save the city.

### Along Came a Spider

(April 6)  
Starring: Morgan Freeman, Monica Potter, Michael Wincott

A prequel to 1997's *Kiss the Girls*, but Ashley Judd is nowhere to be found. That's because this is a different film. Morgan Freeman is back as Det. Alex Cross, but this time he is joined by a Secret Service agent (Potter) to investigate the kidnapping of a congressman's daughter. Less bleak than the original film, *Spider* creators say they want to avoid all the usual serial killer cliches.

### Say It Isn't So

(March 23)  
Starring: Heather Graham, Chris Klein, Orlando Jones, Sally Field

The Farrelly brothers are back, but this time the love affair isn't doomed because of faulty zippers or split personalities. No, Gilly (Klein) and Jo (Graham) are led to believe they are brother and sister. When it turns out to be a lie, Gilly must keep Jo from marrying the wrong guy.

### Kingdom Come

(April 27)  
Starring: Whoopi Goldberg, LL Cool J, Vivica A. Fox, Anthony Anderson

Doug McHenry's first film since 1994's *Jason's Lyric* is an ensemble of a rapper, a comedian and some of the best talent in town. In this dramedy, the Slocumb family is reunited after the death of the cranky patriarch, and spends a weekend arguing and forgiving. The film is based on David Dean Bottrell and Jessie Jones' play, *Dearly Departed*.

### Someone Like You

(March 30)  
Starring: Ashley Judd, Greg Kinnear, Hugh Jackman, Marisa Tomei

Judd is a sassy Manhattanite who gets love lessons from her X-traordinary roommate Jackman after getting the boot from boyfriend Kinnear. Jennifer Aniston was originally pictured in Judd's role, but Judd, hoping to break into Roberts and Ryan status, petitioned heavily.

### Freddy Got Fingered

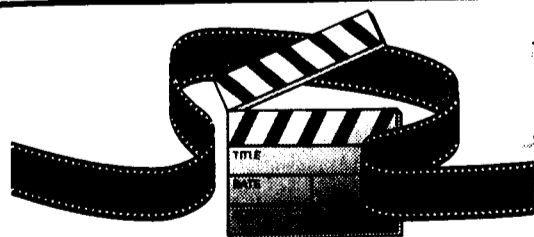
(April 20)  
Starring: Tom Green, Rip Torn, Marisa Coughlan, Anthony Michael Hall

Green, who co-wrote and directed the film, is a twenty-something slacker who refuses to move out of his parent's basement. That is basically it, but Green claims that this isn't just a medium for his usual antics, such as humping dead mooses. "Don't ge me wrong" Green says, "I hump a lot of dead animals in the movie, but there's a story, too." Also, did we mention the nerdy kid from *The Breakfast Club* is in this...man!

### Blow

(April 6)  
Starring: Johnny Depp, Penelope Cruz, Ray Liotta, Paul Reubens

Ted Demme has been addicted to the thought of making a biopic about infamous cocaine smuggler George Jung for six years. With influences from *Boogie Nights* and *Goodfellas*, this ought to be good.



## New Releases

### Movies

3000 Miles to Graceland  
Monkeybone  
Chocolat  
Feb. 23

### Video\*

Center Stage  
Lady and the Tramp II: Scamp's Adventure  
Love and Basketball

### Music\*

J. Andrews  
Cappadonna  
The Dave Matthews Band  
Silkk The Shocker

### DVD\*

The Contender  
Fantasticks  
Lost Souls  
The Original Kings of Comedy  
Lady and the Tramp II: Scamp's Adventure

\*Release Date: 2/27



Lady and the Tramp  
on the Wonderful World of Disney,  
Sunday at 7 p.m.  
on ABC.