

'David Gale' has life



Kevin Spacey maintains his innocence in the "The Life of David Gale."

PHOTO COURTESY OF ZAP2IT.COM

Review by Daniel J. Stasiewski
a&e editor

As far as mysteries go, "The Life of David Gale" is about as surprising as the fortune cookie after Chinese food. Plot elements fall expectedly into place, with the assumption that the twists will make you gasp. Only, there are no bombshells.

"David Gale" does, however, have a purpose and the film succeeds because of it. Though the mystery should be taken as seriously as a prophetic cookie, the straightforward conviction and passion in the death penalty debate keeps "David Gale" alive.

Journalist Bitsy Bloom (Kate Winslet), after spending a week in jail for protecting the sources of her child pornography story, is requested by death row inmate David Gale (Kevin Spacey) to do his first and last interview. Gale, who is set to be killed on Friday for the rape and murder of his fellow anti-death penalty activist Constance Hallaway (Laura Linney), opens his schedule Tuesday through Thursday for three, two-hour interviews. Even though Bloom has here made up about Gale's guilt, she accepts the exclusive and heads to Texas with intern Zack (Gabriel Mann) by her side for protection.

The New York reporters face a mild culture shock when entering the Bible belt town of Huntsville, Texas, especially when a mysterious "cowboy" is constantly, and obviously tailing them. Bloom shrugs off the local's appearances as coincidence and goes on with her investigation.

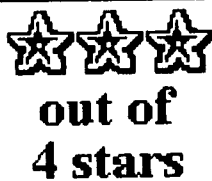
Her first interviews tell a story of a family man and philosophy professor whose dedication to the abolition of the death penalty only fueled his vast ego. Gale has always professed his innocence and admits the interviews are mainly for clearing his name, even if it happens posthumously. As the interviews progress, Bloom uncovers more and more evidence alluding to the man's innocence. Soon, the impartial journalist makes Gale's exoneration her ardent objective.

It's no more than halfway through "The Life of David Gale" when the ending seems patently obvious. Gale's philosophy lecture very early on sets up the rest of the key plot devices for the easy placement, spelling-out the ending quicker than even the most predictable film wants to allow. But the mystery surrounding Gale's incarceration isn't where the concentration lies. The passion of its message is.

Last year, the Denzel Washington starrer "John Q" was blatant propaganda for a national health care system, with more statistics than character development. "Gale" almost falls into the same trap. There is a capital punishment debate between "David Gale" and the Texas Governor that nearly kills the film. Luckily the facts come from a fervent and sturdy Kevin Spacey and not some hospital orderly, so the out-smarting of the bad-guy governor isn't quite as contrived.

Director Alan Parker is able to wrap the film's message in what could have been a short-sighted story enough to elevate the plot past its inevitability and veil the prevailing theme in the motivated characters. With the exception of the flashbacks that flow like scene transitions from the 1960s "Batman" TV show, Parker treats the material with the confidence it deserves. His sincerity is what separates this film from run-of-the-mill thrillers and fanatical political propaganda.

I try to refer to the film's message as ambiguously as possible because "David Gale" is a rare film that raises questions and sparks debate rather than slamming the audience with an overzealous statement. With the strong and deliberate performances from Winslet and Spacey, "The Life of David Gale" maintains a sense of integrity, even if the mystery doesn't hold up.



"The Life of David Gale," directed by Alan Parker, starring Kevin Spacey, Kate Winslet, and Gabriel Mann is currently showing at Tinsletown.

Grammys invade New York; Jones Cleans Up

by Erika Jarvis
staff writer

With the Grammys back in the Big Apple, it proved to be an interesting night for many artists, especially Norah Jones. The 23-year-old pop/jazz artist brought in five awards for her acclaimed debut album "Come Away with Me."

The daughter of sitar legend Ravi Shankar beat out artists such as Britney Spears and the angst teen from Canada, Avril Lavigne, in categories such as Best Pop Vocal Album and Best Female Pop Vocal Performance.

The loss was not unusual for Spears. She has been nominated in past years, yet always seems to manage to come away from the award show empty handed. This year proved to be no different for the singer.

The new kid on the block, John Mayer, won for Best Male Pop Vocal Performance, beating out veterans Elton John, James Taylor, and Sting. With his song "Your Body is a Wonderland," Mayer managed to win his first Grammy and get a standing ovation after performing his hit song for the crowd. After confessing that he was truly just a 16 year old kid stuck in a moment, he promised the crowd that he would soon try to catch up to the moment that seemed to have happened too quickly for him.

An acceptance speech that was out of the ordinary came from none other than rapper Eminem for his album "The Eminem Show." For his second award of the evening, he opted to list the artists who inspired him to be the shock rapper he is today, instead of thanking those who helped to get him where he is.

Nelly's ever popular strip song "Hot in Herre" scored him a Grammy for Best Rap Male Performance Solo, and his duet with Kelly Rowland and their song "Dilemma" brought in a Grammy for Best Rap/Sung Collaboration.

Sunday night was predicted to be the night of Bruce Springsteen, "The Boss" but, he lost that to Jones. The long time rocker didn't walk away entirely empty handed. Springsteen was awarded with three Grammys, all of which were presented in the pre-televised ceremony. The album, "The Rising" won him an award in Male Rock Vocal Performance, Best Rock Song and Rock Album.

Included in the night's events was a dedication performance to late Bee Gee member Maurice Gibb by pop group 'N Sync, who was nominated for its collaboration with rap Grammy winner Nelly for their song "Girlfriend." The boys did not take home an award; they lost to Gwen Stefani and her boys of No Doubt.

Other winners throughout the night included the rockers from Anaheim. No Doubt, Best Pop Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal for their collaboration on "Hey Baby" with Bounty Killer. It wasn't a sweep this time for Santana like

it was a few years ago, but he did rake in one Grammy for his duet with Michelle Branch and their hit song "The Game of Love." The Latin song with a pop vibe won for Best Pop Collaboration with Vocals.

In the world of country music it was all about the Dixie Chicks, again. Their album



COURTESY OF ROLLINGSTONE.COM Grammy shines on Norah Jones.

"Home" was praised by critics, and their hit cover of the Fleetwood Mac song "Landslide" helped them cross over into mainstream quite successfully. The trio won Best Country Album, and their songs "Long Time Gone" and "Lil' Jack Slade" brought in awards.

The girls from Nashville performed the Stevie Nicks' hit "Landslide" and proved to the crowd that the hype around their album was legit and well deserved.

Speaking of hit songs written by others, Faith Hill can thank Angie Aparo for writing the hit song "Cry" and letting her cover it; she won a Grammy for Best Country Female Performance. Too bad her live performance of the song wasn't worthy of any award, Hill sounded quite off, but her performance was soon forgotten.

Coldplay and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra had a buzz going about Madison Square Garden. The band performed "Politik" off their album "A Rush of Blood to the Head," which won an award for Best Alternative Music Album. The British rockers won two awards Sunday night and proved to the crowd, who awarded them with a standing ovation, the awards were well worth it.

Lavigne was shutout, and her performance of "Sk8er Boi" wasn't the highlight of the night. The highlight has to go to the fact that true talent is back in the music business and that was evident with Jones sweeping the awards with her subtle, light voice and Mayer's quirky performance taking the crowd by surprise. If this is the way the music industry is going, then it appears as if some amazing music is coming our way in the next few years.

TV Premiere of the Week: 'Six Feet Under'



PHOTO COURTESY OF HBO.COM Michael C. Hall and Frances Conroy of "Six Feet Under."

The third season of HBO's "groundbreaking" series "Six Feet Under" kicks off Sunday. In the first episode, the Fishers await the return of Nate Jr., who underwent intensive brain surgery. In the meantime, Nate's brother David and his boyfriend Keith go into couples therapy to mend their ailing relationship. Ruth's obsession with her granddaughter Maya begins to take over her life. Nate's sister Claire finds the crematory worker, Phil, to be more interesting than school, while the new partner of Fisher & Diaz (formerly Fisher & Sons) makes it known that he's not going to be silent. -- D.S.

"Six Feet Under," premieres Sunday at 9p.m. on HBO with an encore presentations Monday at 10 p.m. on HBO2.

Here are two filthy words: George Carlin

by Ryan Russell
staff writer

Instead of the 2,443 filthy words advertised on one of Carlin's posters, the original list started in 1972 with seven words. It has grown into a full-fledged book, as of 2003.

Carlin's performance at the Warner Theater on Saturday covered many of the newest additions to the ever growing list, including words like f***** and p***** and the most popular new word y*****. In case you didn't notice, the words previously mentioned are censored.

This article was to be a review of Carlin's recent concert in Erie; however, the previous paragraph brings up a valid question. How can a person cover a Carlin concert, where the language is so foul-mouthed that the Supreme Court in 1978, ruled the list of filthy words "indecent," allowing it to be banned from radio and television?

The answer, in a nutshell, is that it's almost impossible. Otherwise, the few following paragraphs would contain such journalistic gems as "then Carlin proceeded to rip into over-bearing parents, telling them to "go out and take a ***** and put it ***** and then he talked about the policeman who towed his car, calling him a ***** and hoping that the cop would fall onto

***** and, as a result, never be able to eat donuts again." Obviously, this is not very funny, unless you enjoy Anna Nicole Smith's show or Jay Leno.

So, a blatant rundown of the concert is useless, unless I want to get expelled from this snow-infested, 68 guy-1 girl ratio, pothole-filled college. Wait a minute...

As Carlin pointed out within the first few minutes of his recent concert, he doesn't do transitional material. With that out of the way, Carlin is arguably the funniest comic of the last 2,003 years. Without him, there would be no Chris Rock, no Jimmy Kimmel, and no Andrew "Dice" Clay. But is there really any Andrew "Dice" Clay anymore, anyway?

Carlin has released more than 15 comedy albums, two best-selling books, "Braindroppings" and "Napalm & Sillyputty." He has taped numerous HBO comedy specials, and has been featured in many notable movies such as "Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure", "Dogma" and the upcoming "Jersey Girls" as Ben Affleck's father. He has also won four Grammys for his work, which is four more than Fred Durst will ever win, "agreement" of war or not.

As Carlin stated on his website, GeorgeCarlin.com, he has always drawn his comedy from three main



Comedian George Carlin.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE CARLIN.COM

veins. The first is the English language, which was the inspiration for the seven filthy words. The second is the "little world," with topics like food, pets who could be named "Peaches" driving, the bathroom, and other various things that everyone deals with every day whether they know it or not, like plows that bury snow five feet high in front of a person's apartment. The third area Carlin draws comedy from is the "big world," talking about wars, race, religion, and his idea to putting prisoners on an island with guns, drugs, and food, and then watch what happens on Pay-Per-View. Many of these topics were covered

in Carlin's concert and he was in rare form for a man who is 65 years old. He covered a good deal of the material from his most recent HBO special, "Complaints and Grievances," so for a good idea what Carlin is about, tune into HBO on March 6, at 3:15 a.m. or on March 29, at 2:35 a.m. to catch an hour of the funniest comedy ever heard.

As for the rest of the new material you simply had to be there to believe what he was saying; and much like a press conference for a Michael Jackson/Mike Tyson reality-TV show, you were often laughing too hard to hear what was being said.

Carlin has been on the road doing stand-up comedy for longer than many of us have been alive, and hopefully he will be doing it for another 20 years. I would highly recommend going to see him live in concert, but if that isn't possible, one of his HBO specials should be required viewing for anyone who thinks they have a sense of humor. If you don't have HBO then I advise buying one of his CD's legitimately, or downloading one from Kazaa.