

# Stiller outshined by 'Polly' cast



Ben Stiller has Jennifer Aniston hanging on his every word.

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by Daniel J. Stasiewski  
a & e editor

"Along Came Polly" shouldn't have the cast that it does have. The comedy is trite and predictable, more suited for the likes of Drew Barrymore, Adam Sandler and Rob Schneider than Alec Baldwin, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Jennifer Aniston. It's formulaic and would be a disposable comedy were it not for the concentration of surprising comedic performances.

"Polly" is not destined to be a classic, nor is it close to being on par with writer John Hamburg's previous Ben Stiller vehicle "Meet the Parents." The only reason this comedy almost works is its stars are so in need of a mainstream cinema boost they play their characters with exuberant jubilation.

The only cast member who's too at home is Stiller, playing the neurotic risk analyst. He's that everyman character whose uphill struggle to find love is obstructed by the supporting cast of lunatics, who again outshine him, and his own issues, the least of which is his volatile irritable bowel syndrome. Stiller plays Rueben Feffer, a newlywed whose cautious lifestyle is disrupted when his wife (Debra Messing) sleeps with a scuba instructor named Claude (Hank Azaria) on the honeymoon.

Rueben is heartbroken and returns to New York without his wife. His lifelong pal Sandy (Philip Seymour Hoffman) tells him the only way to get over her is to get out of his apartment and go to an art exhibit for Sandy's former drug dealer. At the party Rueben reunites with Polly Prince (Jennifer Aniston), a friend from middle school who just moved to the city. They chat for a bit until Sandy "sharts" (when you fart and a little sh\*t comes out), forcing Rueben to leave, but he can't get Polly out of his head.

Eventually, Polly and Rueben go out on a date that ends disastrously when Rueben's IBS acts up. But spicy food isn't the only problem. Polly is indecisive, flighty and spontaneous, everything a risk analyst isn't. The two begin to work it out, until Rueben's wife returns home and Rueben has to choose between the safe bet and the high-risk gamble.

Yeah, "Along Came Polly" does seem pretty mediocre, and it's not much more than that. The "shart" joke is only a variation

of the numerous fart jokes in the film and writer John Hamburg, who also directs this film, doesn't offer anything new. Hamburg relies on the talent of the various stars to make this film funnier than expected.

Hoffman, for example, stands-out because his borderline obnoxious portrayal of a former child star is overacting as it's finest. His "Waiting for Guffman" moments in the Hell's Kitchen Community Theatre production of "Jesus Christ Superstar" are absurd, as are most of his moments on screen, but Hoffman, the serious dramatist, is replaced with an irreverent, comedic star that I've never seen before and would love to see again in more intelligent farce.

Baldwin also makes the most of his short screen time adding gruffness to the silly, cringe-worthy humor. The man is on the verge of a major comeback (Oscar nomination pending) and "Along Came Polly" is the studio money maker that could get him recognized again.

The only real surprise in this hackneyed film is Aniston's performance as the scatter brained Polly. I knew Aniston could do drama after "The Good Girl," but her run-of-the-mill performance in "Bruce Almighty" made me think she would be a one-note comedic actress. She's surprisingly refreshing in a film that is loaded with miserable moments. Though she's tad bit more reserved than Hoffman or Baldwin, it works for her as she is able to atone for Stiller's humdrum performance.

I enjoyed this film more than I may be letting on. I laughed. I laughed a lot, in fact, but that's no reason to ignore that the film's narrative has the underlying message of to kind of give in a bit if you want, but not too much, though you should still maybe take a chance, but not a big chance just a fling chance that may or may not end up good or bad, but let's kiss anyway. The dubious progression is a product of the hodge-podge of plot elements that happens Hamburg forces together like the mismatched pieces of jigsaw puzzle. There's a reason "Along Came Polly" seems like a launching pad for its star; it's so close to the bottom, they can only go up.

☆☆ 1/2  
out of  
4 stars

# Jet takes retro to new level with 'Get Born'

by Greg Smith  
contributing writer

Amid the resurgence of retro-styled, neo-garage bands like The Strokes and The Vines there has been serious doubt as to whether these bands will have any real lasting impact on the world of music.

Unlike boy bands and other assorted Top 40 music, these grungy rockers play their own instruments and write their own tunes, but cynics out there still stand tall and say, "Rock is Dead." Are these bands anything more than a passing fad?

If the new Aussie rock band Jet can somehow be representative of this throwback genre, lets hope it sticks around for a while.

The four-piece, Melbourne-bred band mixes it up on its major-label debut "Get Born." Jet wields rock guitar power and vocals that can make your throat hurt just by listening to half of the album's tracks. The other half supplies musical ease that is delivered quite successfully. The result: a roller coaster of power and emotion, evoking some of the great rock bands of years passed.

Like some tried and true British bands from rock 'n' roll's glory days (AC/DC and The Kinks, to name a couple), Jet consists of a set of brothers, Nic (guitar

and vocals) and Chris Cester (drums and vocals). Backed up by guitarist Cameron Muncey and bassist Mark Wilson. Jet is the most promising of the retro bands to emerge so far. Why, you may ask? The answer lies in the band member's upbringing, when they were steeped in rock 'n' roll music from the beginning, ignoring popular phases like grunge.

"I couldn't stand the stuff (grunge)," said Nic, on the band's Web site. "To me that was real slit your wrists music. It didn't relate to this idea of rock 'n' roll I had in my head. These guys (grunge bands) were taking music somewhere I didn't want to go."

Jet wears its influences openly and proudly on its collective sleeve, bringing out Rolling Stones and Faces-styled rhythms and riffs on "Get Born." The album opens with a bang in "Last Chance" and is followed up by the radio-friendly "Are You Gonna Be My Girl," which, unless you've been hidden away for the last three months, you've probably heard once or twice (the song gained airplay on a TV spot for Apple's iPod). Such a hit certainly came as a surprise to the band, they wrote the tune "Radio Song" about the thought that Jet would probably never get much

mainstream recognition. But with all the airplay and a recent spot on "Saturday Night Live." Jet is, dare I say, flying high.

The album's ninth track, "Cold Hard Bitch," is yet another reminder the Aussie boys can rock with anyone on the scene today. But in sharp contrast to the loud guitars, Jet showcases a couple of beautiful, mellow tracks on the album, featuring Nic Cester's wonderful easy voice, a surprising alternative to his otherwise blazing vocal efforts. "Look What You've Done" and "Come Around Again" show the second dimension of the band, but perhaps the standout track on the album is "Move On," which evokes The Stones' best melodic efforts, tossing in Keith Richards-like riffs near the end of the song for a fantastic climax. Overall, "Get Born" is an extremely solid effort, and one of my personal favorite releases of 2003.

The band continues to gain notoriety throughout the world for its energetic first album, even receiving an offer from The Rolling Stones to open the Australian leg of their tour. With "Get Born," Jet proves that they have the potential to be more than just a passing fad. Maybe rock ain't dead just yet.

# 'The L Word' takes on new taboo

by Erika Jarvis  
a & e editor

creator of the series, Ilene Chaiken, feels that it takes women longer to come out about their sexuality in the entertainment industry.

HBO is wrapping up its final season of "Sex and the City" and Americans are saying a final farewell to Carrie, Samantha, Miranda and Charlotte. Yet as they say goodbye to these girls, Americans are also saying hello to a new crop of ladies.

Showtime has finally decided to make an attempt at what has been such a success for its competitor HBO. They have created their own version of "Sex and the City" yet has put it's own creative spin on their series "The L Word."

This time it's a different city, along with different characters, yet the plot line is still the same; the friendship of these women as they search for love. One big difference separates "Sex and the City" from "The L Word," the letter L not only stands for love but for lesbians.

"The L Word" is capitalizing on the new 'in' thing in society, which is being gay. Never in America has being gay been so cool, from "Will and Grace" to Ellen Degeneres and many other stars coming out to the ever-so fabulous "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" boys.

Not since these shows and stars has it been so accepted to be gay. While the Queer Eye guys have transformed straight men into what women really want, a man who is straight but is cultured, fashionable and cares about his looks.

Since these boys have come out there has been a "gay" bandwagon and it seems that everyone wants to jump on. Even straight men take pride in looking good. They even have created the term "metrosexual" for straight men that appear to look gay (look to Ben Affleck and David Beckham for good examples). Homosexual males are everyone in society now and it has become quite the norm.

So why has it taken so long to create a show about lesbians? It seems that the

While Showtime already has its critically acclaimed "Queer as Folk" show that features gay men and women in the city of Pittsburgh and tracks their love lives, they still want to continue to tackle the taboo world of homosexuality. A show strictly about lesbians has never been done before, unless you count those "late night" movies on Cinemax (skin-a-max), and Showtime feels that Americans are ready to embrace the other gender in homosexuality.

"The L Word" showcases lesbians of all kinds. These women are successful, ambitious and searching for the same thing as anyone else, love. Not all of the women in "The L Word" are lesbians and that is what makes it so real. Chaiken created the show based loosely upon her friends and that is the basis of the show's appeal.

Don't turn to "The L Word" looking for the stereotypical lesbians. These women are beautiful, and not in the least bit "butchy." Showtime is breaking down a lot of barriers and stereotypes with this show and that might open up the eyes of some Americans. Also, don't flip it on in hopes of catching some steamy bedroom scenes. That isn't what the show is about.

Turn on "The L Word" with an open mind and learn something about a different culture. It's already received high acclaim and even if this show doesn't last long on the bandwagon of homosexuality it will have at least open some viewers eyes. So say goodbye to learning about Manolo Blahniks and Jimmy Choo shoes--these ladies are setting out to teach Americans something new.

"The L Word" is on every Sunday night at 10 p.m. on Showtime

# A&E Gossip

## Hey, aren't you ... ?

Art Garfunkle's name is back in the news and it's not for his singing. Garfunkle's limo was pulled over in upstate New York for speeding on Saturday and the police officer got two surprises.

Not only did he get to meet the famous singer he also got to charge the singer for possession of marijuana. Garfunkle will receive a fine up to \$100 and has a court date to attend at the end of the month.

Looks like quite the hefty fine. Let's hope Garfunkle can afford it. His last tour only made \$56 million, so that \$100 fine might be a tough squeeze for him.

## It's official ... and way over due

The duo famously known as Bennifer has broken up. Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck have confirmed their breakup.

This is long overdue since the couple postponed their engagement back in September and the critically-slammed "Gigli" flopped at the box office.

Reps for both have decided not to say anything about either celebrity but it has been reported that J.Lo has been seen around with her ex P. Diddy. Looks like he can buy her love after all.

## Will you marry me?

It has been reported that Ashton Kutcher is looking to get married and that he's popping the question to his girlfriend Demi Moore. Moore, who's 15 years Kutcher's elder and has done the marriage thing before, has been dating Kutcher for only a few months. Kutcher denied the rumors on "The Late Show with David Letterman."

# Arts & Entertainment Highlights

## Top 40 Singles

- "Hey Ya!" Outkast
- "The Way You Move" Outkast featuring Sleepy Brown
- "Someday" Nickelback
- "It's My Life" No Doubt
- "Suga Suga" Baby Bash featuring Frankie J
- "Here Without You" 3 Doors Down
- "Milkshake" Kelis
- "Standup" Ludacris featuring Shawana
- "With You" Jessica Simpson
- "Slow Jamz" Twista featuring Keyne West and Jamie Foxx

\*\*According to Billboard.com\*\*

## Album Releases on Jan. 27

Al Green--"Absolute Best"

\*\*It's not looking too good in the world of music right now! Look next week for more albums\*\*

## New Movie Releases

**The Butterfly Effect--** Ashton Kutcher and Amy Smart  
**Win a Date with Tad Hamilton!--** Kate Bosworth, Topher Grace

## DVD Releases on Jan. 27

**Thirteen--**Evan Rachel Wood  
**Le Divorce--**Kate Hudson, Naomi Watts  
**Alison in Wonderland--** remastered