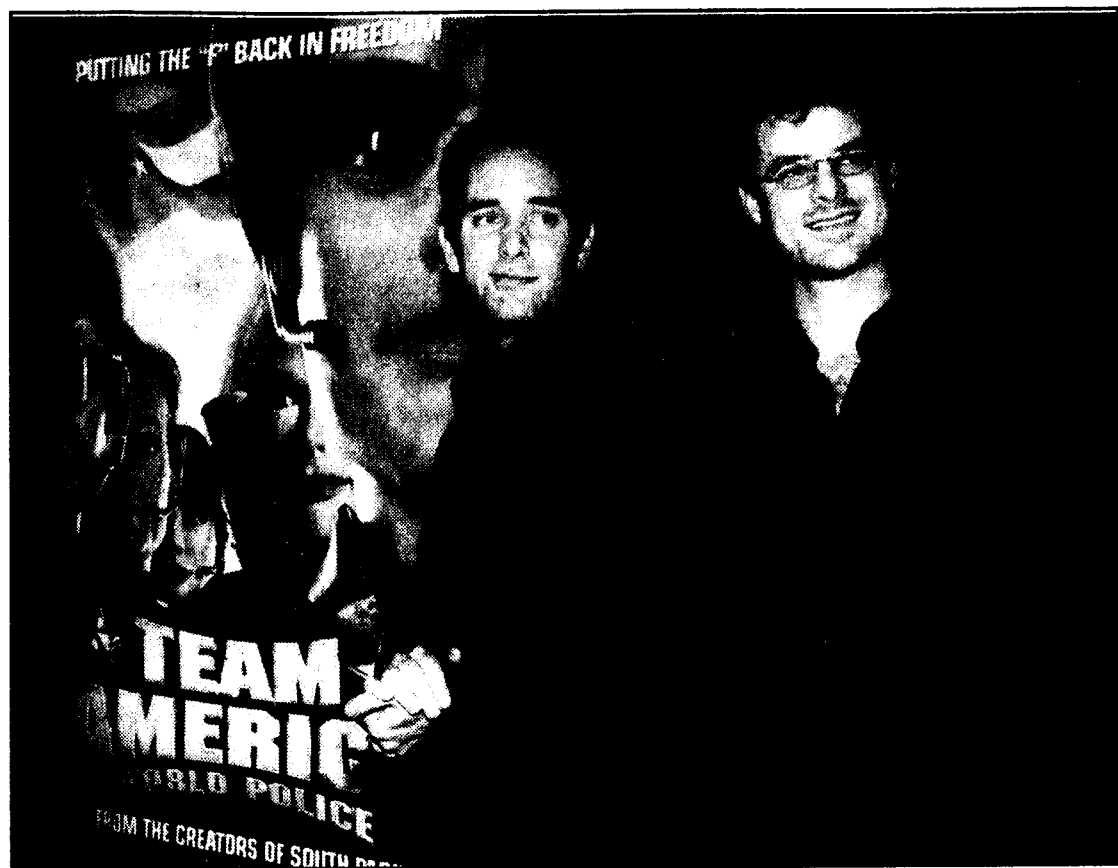


STUDENT LIFE

'Team America' leads crusade against evil



LIONEL HAHN/KRT

Trey Parker and Matt Stone appear at a movie premiere for their new movie, "Team America."

Review by Chris Hvizdak
staff writer

Trey Parker and Matt Stone's "Team America: World Police" truly stands as the finest comedy picture so far this century. The film earns this lofty honor by delivering constant gags of extreme obscenity at a rapid frequency while expertly spoofing the brainless big budget action movie genre. Boasting the participation of the cinematographer from "The Matrix" and the pyrotechnics coordinator from "Terminator 2" and "Independence Day," "Team America" cements itself as an action picture that is built upon comedic pacing any fan of "South Park" or "Family Guy" will be delighted by. Not to be outdone by action, the finely honed humour in "Team America" assaults a scope of subject matter which is equally insensitive to all persons, no matter their race, creed, color, nationality, sexual orientation or political persuasion.

The story focuses on the aforementioned "Team America," a group of highly trained anti-terrorism commandos which traverse the world eradicating evil doers while inadvertently destroying landmarks and making enemies for America in the process. Through the course of the picture, Team America must contend with WMD wielding terrorists originating from the middle east and Chechnya, North Korean President Kim-Johng III and a cadre of anti-war Hollywood personalities which have banded together under the "Film Actors Guild" (which is frequently referred to by an acronym).

Although the film does not offer criticism or support of specific American politicians, it does weave together its heavy handed attacks on war opposing movie stars and imperialistically overbearing American militarism in a succinct "anatomical ideology" that is remarkably insightful and, depending upon your views, chilling in respect to its accuracy. Although the film could be criticized by some for lack of an ideological standpoint outside of the "anatomical" one I have already mentioned, I find that to be Parker's true genius; it is what the film does not include that makes it so relevant. Al-

though there are exceptions, most mindless big budget action movies have no carefully constructed ethos and neither do many politicians or movie stars who jump into war or whom oppose it. Above all it is crucial to recognize that this film is truly an "equal opportunity offender" and has no partisan sway, one way or the other.

Politics aside, "Team America" is fantastic film offering a hard edge alternative to the usual slate of lighter comedies offered up year in and year out. A true mark of progress for director Trey Parker, Team America builds off of the comedic model he established with promise in "Cannibal: The Musical," refined in "Orgazmo" and perfected with "South Park: Bigger, Longer and Uncut." Expect an abundance of violent and sexual humour, parody tunes sung by the director himself and a host of absurd gags designed to cast their subject matter in a light of eternal stupidity. The true strength of the film lies in its comedy over characters mentality, whereby everything else that composes the film is second to the humour. Unlike most contemporary comedies there are very few, if any, "valleys" in Team America but rather we are treated to constant and extreme "peaks" of comedic brilliance. This is something only rivaled in cinema by pictures like the Zucker Brothers "Airplane!" and in television by Seth McFarlane's "Family Guy" as well as David Cross and Bob Odenkirk's "Mr. Show."

If you've adopted the attitude over the last few years of South Park that the boys only crank out a few good episodes per season ("Lemmiwinks" and "Special Olympics" come to my mind). I can assure you that in relation to Parker's other movies, this is definitely a good one. Better than "South Park: The Movie?" No, but for me, "Team America" falls within a hair's width of equaling it. Cheap laughs or not, I stress that this is one of a very small number of movies that has kept me, a person weaned on Carlin, Kinnison and Monty Python from an early age, bursting with glee throughout. It should also be noted that "Team America" is made not with people or cell animation but completely with marionettes.

Save a cowboy, ride a horse

By Andrew McLachlan
staff writer

Are you a big fan of horses? The Equestrian Team is looking for you. The Behrend Equestrian Team is forming and looking for new members of the team. Founded in Fall 2003, the Equestrian Team was formed by a few students who wanted to take their liking of horseback riding and turn it into a club at Behrend. Last year, in their very first competition, 3 students took home places, including Lindsey Snyder MKRTG 07, who went home with a first place finish in novice equitation on the flat.

Snyder believes there is a lot of upside to the team this year.

"I think the team looks very good this year. We have only had three shows so far, but our members usually place within the top six places in the classes," said Snyder.

Snyder also thinks that the club could catch on. "I don't see why it wouldn't catch on. We have a lot of fun, travel to different schools, hang out with each other, ride together and most importantly we have gained new friendships with the other members."

This year the squad will be competing in the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (IHSA), which is known for excellent competition. Lew Trumble, coach of the Equestrian Team, isn't too worried about the competition.

"The girls on the team are working very hard at their riding, plus several of the girls have placed well in the last couple weeks at our shows at main campus and at Pitt," said Trumble.

Trumble also went on to say that the team is still looking for more members of the squad. If you are interested in joining the Equestrian team, either contact Coach Trumble or any member of the squad at their website, www.clubs.psu.edu/bd/equestrian/

Hard-working Christopher Walken tries a new role

By Glenn Lovell
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

SAN FRANCISCO - Christopher Walken works a lot. As best he can figure, he has made "about a hundred movies" since appearing in "Annie Hall" and "The Deer Hunter" in the late '70s. That's an astounding number, given that the average Hollywood star makes one film, possibly two, every 18 months or so.

"Work? It's my favorite thing to do, and I don't really have anything else that I do," says Walken, 61, during a stopover in San Francisco to talk up "Around the Bend," an oddball reunion picture in which, for the first time, he plays a grandfather - with an unsavory past, of course.

"I don't have kids, I don't have hobbies," continues the actor, who commutes between movie sets and homes in New York and Connecticut. "And I don't play golf. A lot of actors play golf. It's amazing how many actors play golf."

Here, Walken's voice trails off, as it does frequently during our conversation. Is this an affectation, that studied insouciance that has caused him to be typed as dangerous crazies ("At Close Range," "True Romance") and comic crazies ("Mouse Hunt," "The Stepford Wives")? Or is it something more, a hint of wistfulness for the road not taken?

Before you start feeling sorry for the guy, consider this: He's having a blast. He loves the monetary rewards and adoration that come with being Hollywood's most in-demand character actor. This afternoon he shares a story about an airport baggage handler who turned out to be a huge fan.

Of Walken's psychologically damaged Vietnam vet in "The Deer Hunter," which brought the supporting-actor Oscar in 1978? Or maybe of his broken father in "Catch Me If You Can," which brought another Oscar nomination in 2002?

Walken smiles that slow, mischievous smile. (Fans of The Continental, his serial seducer on "Saturday Night Live," will know it only too well.)

"No, no - this guy was shouting, 'Frank White! Frank White!'" Walken recalls. "That's the character I played in 'King of New York.'

They don't talk about 'Deer Hunter'; they talk about this little crime movie, and it was really off-the-cuff stuff where we literally said, 'What are you going to say next? All right, then I'll say this.' That usually doesn't work, but we had Laurence Fishburne, Wesley Snipes and David Caruso, and it was good."

Other memorably quirky Walken performances fuel "Pulp Fiction," "At Close Range," "Batman Returns," "The Dead Zone" and, of course, "True Romance," where his sadistic crime boss shares the screen with another great scene-stealer, Dennis Hopper. The pair went to dinner after work. Hopper: "We did a good scene today." Walken: "Yes, I know."

But to have the kind of career Walken has had (he went from character roles to leads in "Dead Zone" and "Dogs of War," then back to character parts), you have to love what you do.

"I do enjoy my work - I tend to be someone who enjoys himself," he says. "The fact is, when you get to be my age and you've been around as long as I have, if people don't recognize you, come up and say hello, you start to worry."

Walken attributes his work ethic to his father, who was a baker in Queens, N.Y. They were close, unlike two generations of fathers and sons in "Around the Bend," which finds Michael Caine playing Walken's dad.

"I'm probably the way I am because of my father," the actor says. "He went to his bakery seven days a week. He loved baking; he couldn't get enough of it."

Despite an ornery, anti-social streak, Walken's character in the new film turns out to be a relatively nice guy. Ditto his characters in "Man on Fire" and "Catch Me If You Can." Is this the dawning of a kinder, gentler Walken?

"Could be," he replies. "But it also has something to do with age. I'm now at the place where I'm starting to play fathers and uncles - and, in this case, a grandfather."

Worse, a grandfather who's dying of kidney failure. Hence, the gray-green cast to his skin.

"I saw the movie and I thought, 'Geez, you look terrible.'"

He pauses, beams, then concedes, "But it's a big juicy part. It's a leading part. And I don't do that a lot."



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