

NEWS

National and world news in brief

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Bicycle sales soar

NEW YORK: Sales of bicycles are skyrocketing now that gas have seemingly stabilized at their currently high prices.
"For bicycles, high gasoline prices are a good thing," says Tim Blumenthal, executive director of the national coalition of biking retailers and suppliers, Bikes Belong.
It is estimated that nearly 20 million bicycles will be sold this year, easily outselling previous years' numbers and nearing the industry's best times during the 1970s.
AAA spokesman Geoff Sundstrom agrees. He says, "AAA is beginning to think that consumers may finally have tired of expensive gasoline." The agency has also noted in past reports that the American people are finding new ways to get where they want to go without using as much gasoline, through the use of public transportation and fuel-efficient vehicles.
New government reports seem to mirror this conclusion, showing that overall U.S. fuel demand has dropped three percent in the last month compared to last year.

U.S. military personnel to be reimbursed for personal armor purchases

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon, under stiff pressure from Congressional forces, has instituted a plan to reimburse troops on active duty in Iraq and Afghanistan who bought armor to protect themselves when it wasn't made available by the military.
These new guidelines come almost a year after Congress passed a bill requiring the Department of Defense to do so, and more than six months after its final deadline. "The Pentagon's leadership has done everything in its power to stop this measure from being implemented," said Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT).
Items that may be reimbursed by the government include body armor, protective goggles and helmets, but the cost of these items may not exceed \$1,100 and it only covers purchases made between September 10, 2001 and August 1, 2004. However, new legislative bills have been under consideration for extending the time periods involved and moving the decision-making power of reimbursement out of Secretary Rumsfeld's office to military officers in the field.

Colorado man defends home with sword

LONE TREE, Colorado: A man, woken up in the middle of the night by burglars, attempted to defend his home by grabbing a samurai sword and confronting them.
Reports from the man's girlfriend indicated that the burglars were in the process of leaving the house when her boyfriend got out of bed, took up his weapon, and went off in pursuit.
Upon catching up to them outside his front door, he brandished his sword in challenge to the three men who had entered his house. One of the burglars, who was armed with a pistol, just turned around and shot him in the leg as the rest of them continued their escape.
Many of the man's neighbors were alarmed at the casual nature of the burglar's violence. "It's scary. Maybe they were trying to get into my house and my dogs scared them off. I don't know," said a neighbor identified only as Robin.
The man is currently recovering from his wound in a local hospital and is reportedly in stable condition.

British author and minister claims Harry Potter is gay

LONDON: Reverend Graham Taylor, a well-known author and Anglican priest, was escorted from the Penair School premises in England after making disparaging remarks and calling into question the literary hero's sexual orientation.
"As for Harry Potter, well, he's not the only gay in the village," Taylor said before a crowd of 12-year-old students and their teachers.
Taylor, who wrote a competing novel called "Shadowmancer" in the same genre, also decried J.K. Rowling's villains as "wimps."
Teachers at the school were overall very unimpressed by Taylor before he was removed from the school. "The remarks that were made were thought by the staff to be offensive and were well below the standards that we expect of responsible and thoughtful adults working in our school," an official release from the school proclaimed.
Taylor said he was unaware that his remarks would be offensive. "I didn't set out to offend. I'm a priest and I'm very careful about not offending people."

Hurricane Stan slams into Central America

GUATEMALA CITY, Guatemala: Rescue efforts continue after a devastating blow by a hurricane in Central America on Wednesday.
Hurricane Stan, a Category 1 storm on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale, caused widespread devastation in mostly poorer areas along the coast. At least 79 people have been confirmed dead as rescue workers struggle to help those in need.
The hurricane, which has dumped unusual amounts of rain into the areas it has crossed, has been stalled by regional weather conditions and continues to saturate the area, complicating efforts to rebuild.
"They are desperate. The situation is extremely difficult in all of Central America," said Mexican President Vicente Fox. The Mexican Air Force is assisting efforts by delivering tons of food and emergency medical supplies to the hardest-hit areas.
Many people, however, fear that the worst is yet to come. With all the rain, many predict that serious flooding is not far behind. Several thousand people have been evacuated from areas that are at the highest risk.



Source: CNN.com

Foreign Film Series: Austrian film gets positive reviews

By Earl Gordon
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In life, as a butterfly's wings flutter in one part of the world, a tsunami is created in another. This is the basic principle of Barbara Albert's film "Bose Zellen" (also known as Free Radicals). It depicts one person's life and shows how it influences others, whether the experience is positive or negative.
The plot of the movie revolves around Manu, a young woman whose ironic fate has unique consequences for several people, including family and strangers. Towards the beginning of the film, Albert illustrates a very brief tragic scene. A plane experiences technical difficulties and crashes, leaving Manu as the sole survivor. Almost immediately after, Albert fast forwards the picture six years into the future. Manu's luck takes a turn for the worse as she is killed by drunk teenagers in a car collision.
Several subplots emerge after Manu's death. Her husband, Andreas, rekindles his affair with her best friend Andrea, who happens to be her daughter's teacher. Her brother begins an awkward relationship with an African girl who works in a department store and her sister sleeps around trying to find love. Through everything, the characters all display their loneliness and desperation to be with someone.
As the story progresses, secrets are revealed as Manu's family and the teenagers involved in the car crash each examine their lives. Albert uses both graphic and sexual images to display depressing moments and poor choices made by a few of her characters such as Manu's best friend, Andrea and her

sister Gerlinde. She also incorporates a lot of symbolism to display a very depressing environment for her characters. In order to do this, she uses stormy elements, night, time dark colored scenes. There are also suggestive insights into people's actions and minds. For example, after her sister finishes an intimate scene, she goes directly to the fridge for milk to "purify" herself.
The movie is very realistic, not just in the way it deals with authentic problems, but in the way it is captured. Scenes such as the plane crash place the audience in the character's shoes. One scene in particular really makes the movie stand out. In a nightclub, the camera focuses on Andrea dancing. The cameras move every direction she does. The more she drinks, the more violent her movements and those of the cameras become. It becomes dizzying to a point where you believe that you've actually been out partying.
Some of the supporting characters in the movie have weak dialogue and are not introduced properly. The viewers do not get any insight into their lives, such as the teenager who is tormented by her drunk driving classmates. Albert adds a very questionable musical score to certain scenes with the less developed characters to try to build them up. She uses a lot of American music such as "Take On Me," "San Francisco," and "Nights in White Satin."
Overall, the movie is very well done for a young director. It creates a powerful message while also making a point. Barbara Albert has proven herself to be in contention as one of the world's best directors.

Classifieds

"The precepts of the law are these: to live honestly, to injure no one, and to give every man his due."
— Justinian I, Byzantine emperor (483-565)

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