

Butcher Boy takes audiences on whirlwind adventure

By Nicole Burkholder
For the CapTimes

Neil Jordan's "The Butcher Boy" is a horrifying delight. Jordan captures a spectacular range of emotions that are brewing in a small Irish town in the 1960's. Based on the novel by Patrick McCabe, the movie takes a look at the disturbing adolescence of young Francie Brady, played by newcomer Eamonn Owens.

Francie (Owens) and his best friend Joe (Alan Boyle II) seem like average young lads. Their escapades get them into trouble, but as the movie progresses, trouble is a minor term. Francie is the product of a drunken father (Stephen Rea) disgusted with the world and himself, and a manic depressive mother (Aisling O'Sullivan). Between the two, Francie should obtain a crooked, bitter view of the world. Instead, Francie sees his family as happiness.

The real anger erupts with the prissy Mrs. Nugent, an Irish woman who speaks with a proper British accent and holds herself above the rest of her fellow townspeople. The

evil Mrs. Nugent spreads nasty rumors of the Brady family that they are nothing but degenerate pigs, a central theme in Francie's brain. To add to her wickedness, she is the mother of Phillip (Andrew Fullerton), the only boy to create a rift between blood brothers, Francie and Joe.

The movie departs on a whirlwind adventure of Francie's life narrated by the adult Francie (also played by Stephen Rea). Francie begins by running away to Dublin, only to discover how much he misses his mother. Upon return, he literally walks into her funeral procession only to receive criticism for causing her suicide. Defeated with heartache, Francie acts out on Mrs. Nugent by breaking into her house, smashing anything in sight, vengefully decorating the walls with the word pig, and finally dropping his own excrement in the living room.

This gets him sent to a Catholic boarding school where he continues his obnoxious, yet charming behavior. In school, he decides that he wants to achieve the "Francie Not-A-Bad-Bastard Anymore Brady" award. With his new re-

vival, Francie begins to see apparitions of the Virgin Mary (Sinead O'Connor) based solely on his own fantasies. These visions are a catalyst for a chain of events that get him sent home as a "reformed" boy.

But home is not exactly what he remembered it as. While he was gone, Phillip and Joe became good friends, and worst of all, Joe no longer sees Francie's horrid behavior as amusing as before. This infuriates him even more. On top of this, his father dies, sending him far over the edge. The authorities send Francie to an asylum or garage (because that's where you go when you have a breakdown), but this stint does not last long before he escapes.

Completely disillusioned with the world, Francie returns home, wickedly angered and fiercely ready to take revenge on his enemies. The movie culminates in a hideous scene of murderous gore on his rivals, of which he is again locked up. The end shows Francie all grown up (Rea) now expected to face the world...recovered, and leaves the audience wondering if it really worked this time.

Jordan captures the poverty-

stricken, abused child with a magnificent flavor made up of witty language and a red-faced child. Eamonn Owens is a true gem giving one of the most powerful performances ever seen by a child actor. "The Butcher Boy" mirrors the story of Frank McCourt's "Angela's Ashes", only twisted and perverse.

Rea, a Jordan regular (The Crying Game, Micheal Collins), gives another exemplary performance even though he rarely speaks. He brings full imagery to the movie with his excellent portrayal of the poor, wronged, musician (Francie's father is a failed trumpeter).

Fiona Shaw is equally commendable for her wonderful snobbery evident in her speech, her walk, and her nose stuck up in the air. Her performance is convincing enough to almost justify Francie's tortuous behavior towards her.

Poverty is not the only excuse for the psychotic Francie Brady. Jordan and co-screenwriter Patrick McCabe, give a riveting look at the effects of the communist scares of the time on an impressionable adolescent. Fantasies of A-bombs and Armageddon litter Francie's mind

along with the universal 1960's fear of alien takeovers and the idolatry of gangsters like Al Capone. He constantly speaks with inanimate objects such as religious statues, and they always speak back.

Hoky, upbeat music combined with surreal imagery symbolize the erasure of the boundary between fantasy and reality in young Francie's mind.

All of these components push Francie farther and farther toward an abyss of hate, fear, and violence. His hate turns into a wicked fury with the realization that everyone he loved has left him. Ultimately, he ties Mrs. Nugent to the root of all of his problems, including his parents death, their failed marriage, the end of he and Joe as blood brothers, the communist scare, and the poverty he lives with and among.

"The Butcher Boy" is a masterpiece of humor and the grotesque wrapped into a 109 minute package. Vastly different from Jordan's previous historical docu-dramas (Michael Collins, In the Name of the Father), "The Butcher Boy" triumphs on its own.

Pepsi One

Pepsi's new soft drink certainly isn't the one

Soda pushed for money, not taste

By Stephanie Weyant
For The CapTimes

Was Pepsi One created by the same genius that created Crystal Pepsi in 1992? Pepsi One advertisements say, "Great Cola Taste Only One Calorie." Maybe Pepsi should rethink the slogan. As I took my first sip of Pepsi One, I expected it to taste like Pepsi, but I was terribly mistaken. "Great Diet Cola Taste Only One Calorie" would be closer to the truth.

In a Pepsi press release on June 30, just before the product was to come out, Phil Marineau, the President and CEO of Pepsi-Cola North America, said, "Pepsi One will redefine the image of diet colas and revolutionize the entire soft drink market."

Now let's be realistic for a moment. This is coming from the same company that thought Crystal Pepsi would be a huge success. This is

also coming from a company that plans to spend millions on an advertising campaign to sell this product.

Also according to the press release, Pepsi One was, "Created specifically for the U.S. market, it delivers the ideal offering for consumers who want it all -- great cola taste with only one calorie."

Pepsi forgot to mention that the key ingredient in Pepsi One, Sunett, cuts their costs by as much as 40 percent because it is 200 times sweeter than sugar. The United States is a country based on business and advertising; even our soft drinks represent this. Pepsi is a business, just like any other. They are trying to make money. Pepsi's campaign might work if you are watching your weight. If not stay clear, and I don't mean crystal clear.

Pepsi One is the first U.S. cola to use Sunett mixed with aspartame. Sunett was approved for soft drinks

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on July 6, 1998, by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Sunett was created by Hoechst AG, so what took so long for the FDA to approve it? In 1996 a consumer advocacy group urged the FDA to ban Sunett because of the results of early studies involving lab rats. The FDA now allows Sunett in over 4,000 products such as sugarless gum and instant pudding. The FDA has concluded that it is safe and does not promote tooth decay.

Mixing Sunett with aspartame makes drinks taste sweeter without the aftertaste that most diet drinks have. I must admit that Pepsi One tastes better than Diet Pepsi, but if you are not counting calories go for the real thing: plain old Classic Coca-Cola.

R.E.M. Up

'Up' doesn't go there

By Jeremiah Sensenig
For The CapTimes

"Up" does not seem to be an appropriate name for this album. After digging out old R.E.M. albums and listening to them carefully I noticed a gradual decline in quality. While "Document" and "Out of Time" seem to be works of art, the last few albums are lackluster.

The album is not all bad. The highlight comes on track 11, "Daysleeper", the first single release from Up. "Daysleeper" manages to capture some of the old R.E.M. style. A band should not try to do the same thing on every album, but at the same time if it isn't broke don't try to fix it; just ask the Rolling Stones about that philosophy.

Many of the songs are slow and melancholy. While listening to a majority of the album one feels hopelessly trapped in an atmosphere of a candle lit room. Up does seem to be an album crafted for the lonely and depressed, which seems to be in R.E.M. fashion.

This album tends to carry on where "Adventures in Hi-Fi" (the

band's last album) left off. The slow dreary songs leave me wondering what direction the band is heading.

An interview with R.E.M. in the early 1990s revealed the band's idea to play a huge farewell concert on New Year's Eve 1999, and then break up. At that point the band was on fire and the idea of them breaking up would not have been accepted by the fans. Lately it seems that they should have gotten out while they were ahead, like Seinfeld.

No one will deny that the band has musical and lyrical talent. In fact Peter Buck's side project, Tuatara, made a very experimental and enjoyable jazz album. It seems though that when R.E.M. gets together their egos get in the way and whatever they do will automatically be good for the people. Unfortunately this is not the case.

To say the least, R.E.M.'s latest effort is disappointing. The album has some interesting tracks, but after listening to the whole thing through I felt sleepy and a little suicidal. Some energetic tunes would help awaken whatever it was that made R.E.M. great.