

Tom's Tomfoolery of Cinema

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Hide and Seek **

Twentieth Century Fox presents a film directed by John Polson. Written by Ari Schlossberg. Starring Robert De Niro, Dakota Fanning, Famke Janssen, and Elisabeth Shue. Running time 100 minutes. Rated R (for disturbing images and violence).

Well, the start of the 2005 film season is mediocre at best. John Polson's previous film, the 2002 teen thriller, *Swimfan*, used the standard cliché horror tactics to scare high schoolers. Now Polson uses the same formula with talented actors, not to scare using the film or the story itself, but by making us not want to see another film with these once A-list actors.

The story, as written by Ari

Schlossberg, involves a widower, Dr. David Calloway (De Niro) and his young daughter, Emily (Dakota Fanning), who move far into the New York wilderness to escape the urban lifestyle and try to start their lives over after the suicide of David's wife, Emily's mother. The two start their "new" lives; David is keeping a log of Emily's progression, and Emily is playing with her new imaginary friend, Charlie.

David and Emily are introduced to their next-door neighbors who are in a similar predicament; they just lost their child, who judging by the pictures on the mantle, looks like she passed away from leukemia. As the film progresses, Charlie forces Emily to watch him commit horrific acts, and gets into serious problems with David, who thinks Emily is committing these acts herself as a protest to the loss of her mother. Emily is now on her own, trying to stop Charlie from killing her, or David.

This movie raises a lot of questions. Most movies that do that tend to be good because the process of thinking is involved and usually adds a whole new dimension to the movie afterwards. The problem this movie has is it leaves the audience with unanswered questions that other films would have answered in order to spare a person from a swirling vortex of possibilities. Some unanswered questions will not be shared in this review as to the fact that it will give away plot twists and spoilers.

The film has two things that are solid, a constant change in mood and tension to keep us guessing what is really going on, and the talented acting of Dakota Fanning. However, mood and character changes happen so frequently, we do not have time to fully absorb what we just saw in order for it to logically make sense. Too many things were left out of this final cut. If it was for

timing reasons, which would not make sense considering it is only an hour and forty minutes, then when it comes out on DVD, these scenes should be put in place. If it was the final screenplay, then it is Ari Schlossberg's problem; leaving the audience not in a state of shock, but in a state of confusion. If there is one thing that can be said about this film, it makes us think. It is up to us to determine how much thinking is necessary in order to fully understand what was just seen.

Check out the next Tom's Tomfoolery of Cinema for a review of the new movie *Constantine*, starring Keanu Reeves.



Photo courtesy of www.moviesonline.ca

In the thriller *Hide and Seek*, Robert De Niro stars as Dr. David Calloway, who is trying to start his life over with his daughter Emily after the suicide of his wife.

PBS warns about swear words

By David Bauder
AP Writer

The public broadcaster is distributing "clean" and "raw" versions of next Tuesday's "Frontline" documentary about the Iraq war, titled "A Company of Soldiers," and is warning it can't insure stations against FCC fines stemming from the language.

It's an example of the television's industry's continued un-

certainty about Federal Communications Commission standards for language and content, and a real-life echo of last fall's decision by 66 ABC affiliates not to air the movie "Saving Private Ryan."

"We're upset that we're put in the position of having to make a special circumstance of this and PBS is put in the position of not being able to have viewers see this."

-David Fanning,
PBS producer

By some of PBS's 170 stations in more conservative parts of the country. "Frontline" is produced by Boston's WGBH, which will air the raw version.

Instead, PBS decided to send the clean version out to all of its stations. The raw version will also be made available, but station managers will have to make a special effort to tape it in advance.

PBS is also warning its stations that if they want to put themselves at risk of an FCC fine for language, the system can't insure them, said senior programming executive Jacoba Atlas. To air the raw version, stations must sign a statement acknowledging the financial risk is theirs.

"It's a financial decision," Atlas said. "It's not a decision that reflects on the merit that we think the film has."

Fanning said he wished this was something that PBS could take a stand on, but understood why not.

"I'm not upset about PBS," he said. "We're upset that we're put in the position of having to make a special circumstance of this and PBS is put in the position of not being able to have viewers see this."

Since station managers were only informed of this on Thursday, Atlas said she had no count on how many stations would air each version.

Next Wednesday, PBS is re-airing the HBO movie "Dirty War," about a terrorist attack in London, and will alter a scene to avoid showing the front of a nude woman being scrubbed down after a fictional chemical attack.

30th anniversary of 'SNL' prompts documentary

By Larry McShane
AP Writer

Lorne Michaels just referred to it as "The Show," even before it was a show.

"Saturday Night Live" was Michaels' baby from its birth in 1975. And now, with his child marking its 30th birthday, NBC is airing a two-hour documentary about the show's first five classic years, the era when its cast was "the Beatles of comedy," as Dana Carvey says near the documentary's start.

"Live from New York: The First 5 Years of Saturday Night Live," which airs 9 p.m. EST Sunday, is no cut-and-paste collection of clips.

Instead, writer-director-producer Kenneth Bowser delivers

a documentary that mixes classic bits with extensive interviews, peering into the madness behind those 90 minutes of magic that started Saturdays at 11:30 p.m.

It's not altogether new territory. "SNL" was already the subject of several books, including the acclaimed oral history done in 2002 by The Washington Post's Tom Shales and co-author James Andrew Miller.

But there's still plenty worthwhile, from long-unseen musical clips to stories from guest hosts such as Steve Martin to tales of Dan Aykroyd entering a pitch meeting with a chain saw - and then cranking it up. There are new interviews, offering brutal honesty.

Michaels recalls his first meeting with John Belushi: "He told me he didn't do television. We didn't hit

it off." Eric Idle remembers the comedy team of Al Franken and Tom Davis: "They were always whacked out of their skulls." Garrett Morris, the lone black cast member, poignantly recounts his outsider status: "Fifty percent was my fault."

The documentary places the show in the context of the times: Vietnam, Nixon, drugs. And it illustrates the groundbreaking attitude brought by its original cast, "The Not Ready for Prime Time Players."

"We had a chance," explains Chevy Chase, "to parody and take down television."

Though they didn't entirely succeed, they had plenty of successes - and a few funny failures. On opening night, announcer Don Pardo botched the cast's introduction. "The 'Not for Ready Prime Time Players,'" the familiar voice intoned.

The show's lair on the 17th floor of NBC's Rockefeller Center headquarters was more dorm room than office, with cast members and writers moving in. "A huge playpen," says Monty Python's Idle, a host from the early years.

The skits that made the show a phenomenon are included: Chase's racially charged job interview with guest host Richard Pryor, Aykroyd's memorable "Jane, you ignorant slut," Belushi in various modes of Samurai.

And there are some long-forgotten, edgy skits. Burt Reynolds, as a Roman centurion on the make, approaches Laraine Newman with this come-on: "I couldn't help not notice that you're very svelte. What's your name?"

"Anorexia," she shoots back.

The documentary touches on drug abuse and the pitfalls of celebrity. Cocaine, Aykroyd says, was "affecting the work, the performances and the quality of the scripts."

There's a rare clip from Bill Murray's 1975 screen test, when he failed to make the cut for season one. After he replaced Chase, the show's first break-out star, Murray began receiving hate mail. He quickly proved a more than able replacement.

The musical clips evidence the days before the Ashlee Simpsons of the world took the "SNL" stage, with performances by Patti Smith, the Band, Randy Newman, Ray Charles and others included.

Quibbles? Murray and Jane Curtain don't participate. Both are missed. There must be guest hosts with better tales to tell than Penny Marshall. And the segment on "SNL" romances could have been replaced by something on Andy Kaufman, one of the show's early guests and great innovators.

In the end, as the documentary makes clear, fame and money took everything apart. Cast members traveled with entourages, hired limousines, worked behind closed doors. When the Rolling Stones showed up to play in season four, it was more a signal of trouble than success.

But even the end of this era was greeted with a sly grin by some on the staff. "I remember seeing the girl I was with getting hit on by Keith Richards, and that's when I knew," recalls Jim Signorelli, who did many of the show's early parodies of commercials.

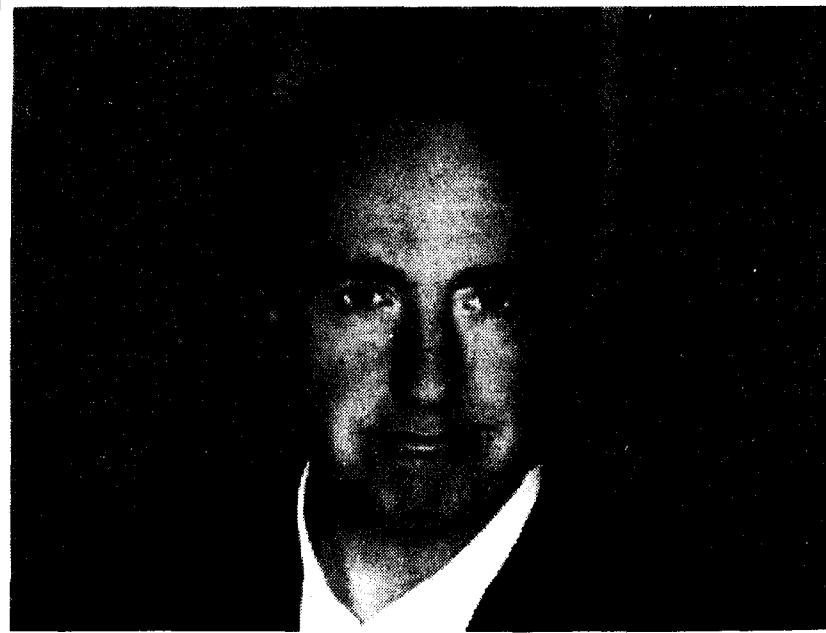


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Lorne Michaels, producer of "Saturday Night Live," has been the show's guiding force since its beginning in 1975.

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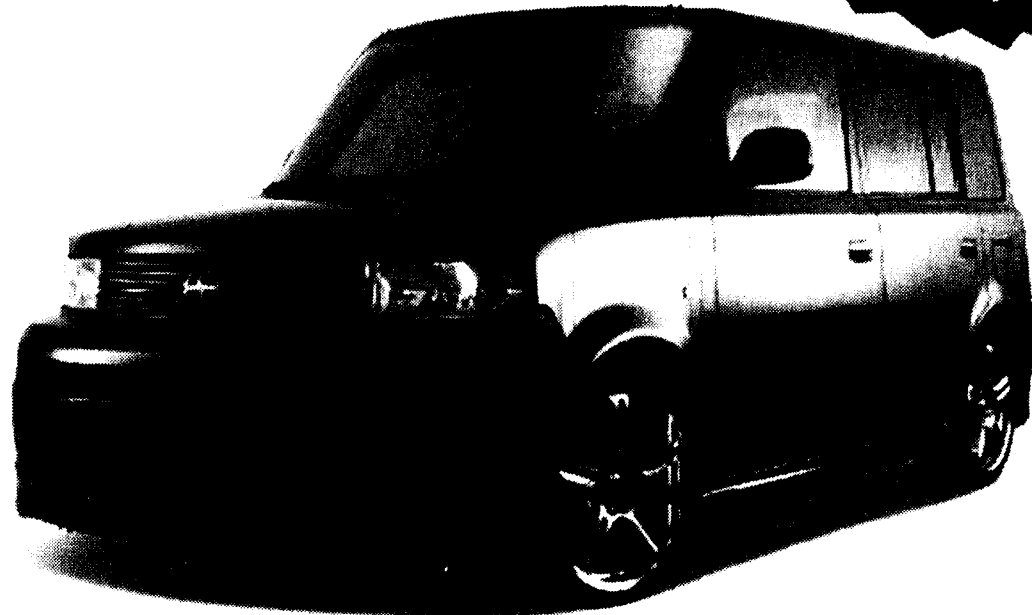
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