

Tom's Tomfoolery of Cinema

By Thomas LeClair
Film Critic
tjl191@psu.edu

Be Cool **

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer presents a film directed by F. Gary Gray. Written by Peter Steinfeld, based on the novel by Elmore Leonard. Starring John Travolta, Uma Thurman, Harvey Keitel, Vince Vaughn, The Rock and Cedric the Entertainer. Running time 112 minutes. Rated PG-13 (for violence, sensuality, and language, including sexual references).

This is one of those standard movies that do nothing to make people think, does nothing to invoke emotions, yet after watching it, there is a feeling that we have been entertained. The movie in and of itself makes fun of the film industry, poking fun at about sequels, and how musicians should not stoop to appear in films. This, however, is just a backdrop to one of the most outrageous plots for a movie. John Travolta plays Chili Palmer, a shylock that returns to the world of schmoozing and

coolness to get what he wants. Uma Thurman plays Edie Athens, the widow of the president and founder of BTL records. Palmer and Athens work together to start the career of Linda Moon, a singer under management by Raji (Vince Vaughn) and under a five-year contract owned by Nick Carr (Harvey Keitel). At the time of Mr. Athens' death, BTL Records owed a music producer, "Sin" LaSalle (Cedric the Entertainer) over 300,000 dollars. LaSalle gives Palmer and Athens one week to come up with the money or their lives will be terminated.

This is a sequel to the 1995 film, Get Shorty, a film that had Chili Palmer on a mission to collect money from a producer in Los Angeles. The problem is that it starts off giving a scenario in a manner that does not flow with the style and character of Chili Palmer.

This film tries way too hard to be funny, especially in scenes with Raji. Raji is a dork who thinks he is cool, thus in his attempt to "be cool," he still comes off as a dork. He has absolutely nothing to work with, no "definitive" character for him to develop. The same can be said for The Rock and

Andre 3000. Don't get me wrong, those two had some hilarious moments, but it was not so much because of their acting as it was the timing of the gags they did. The Rock plays a homosexual bodyguard who drops his guard every time flattery and promises about an acting career enter his ear. His best scene is when he "monologues" in front of Palmer. Andre 3000 plays one of the gang members of LaSalle whose timing was excellent, but his character was a let down.

Meanwhile Harvey Keitel must have a stipulation in his contract because he plays a role that Harvey Keitel would play. He is more cliché than the film industry jokes and references that run rampant in this film.

This movie was a let down in some respects. Elmore Leonard has had films based off his work that were truly incredible, Get Shorty being one of them, and more famous, Jackie Brown. Be Cool, however, is full of characters that cannot be related to and jokes that are not there for plot development, but because the director thought it would "be cool" to be there.



Photo courtesy of Google Images

In *Be Cool*, John Travolta, left, plays Chili Palmer, a shylock who tries his hand at the music industry. Uma Thurman - and a trigger-happy gangster, Dabu, played by Andre 3000 (far right).

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Schwartz encourages students to break the rules

By Kathryn Herr
Editor in Chief
kah928@psu.edu

Bonnie Nelson Schwartz spoke to students about her experiences in an interdisciplinary career in communications on Wednesday at 2 p.m. in the Morrison Gallery. Schwartz has worked in theater, television, film, and concerts in Washington D.C., New York and London.

"There are no rules anymore; you can and must do what you want to do," said Schwartz.

Schwartz began her career in theater in Massachusetts, where she developed a lifelong love affair with theater and all the ideals of raw acting.

After a short career in acting and producing for theater, Schwartz entered the television field by persuading a television show producer that she could do the casting for the show. During this experience, Schwartz found that theater acting and television acting were very different. She began two courses for the American Film Institute entitled "Acting for the Camera" and "The Business of Acting" to help theater actors transition into television and to control their careers financially.

After taking a course on film animation at Johns Hopkins

University, Schwartz was determined to produce animated films. She produced a number of successful animated films that were used for a variety of purposes, including exhibitions in science and public health.

Her next career move was into the realm of documentary filmmaking. "It was in the documentary world that I fell in love with history," said Schwartz. She began to collect fine arts films for Arthur Canter Inc., located in New York. Her next venture brought Schwartz back to the theater. She traveled to London in search of British plays that could be brought to America's famous theater district known as Broadway. A few British plays were successful on Broadway, including one entitled Ian McKellen: Acting Shakespeare. Schwartz showed a short clip of this play during her presentation.

Back in Washington, D.C., Schwartz developed the D.C. equivalent of the Tony Awards for theater, named the Helen Hays awards. The introduction of these awards created an influx of new theaters in D.C.

Schwartz moved onto bigger things, physically bigger to be more specific. She produced parts of both the 1992 Barcelona Olympics closing ceremony and the 1996 Atlanta Olympics

opening ceremony. She also created an exhibition entitled "Women in the Olympics: 100 Years" for the Atlanta Olympics.

"Women fought every inch of the way to get the right to where they are now. This was produced to reflect that incredible effort," said Schwartz.

Schwartz continued to make films including a fiction film shot in South Africa entitled Gordimer: My Son's Story.

Schwartz then began looking into the field of broadcast news. She wanted to know how it worked; who decided what is shown, how is that decision made. She was curious about who was really regulating what information was given to the public. Schwartz was determined to make a documentary film on the inner-workings of a broadcast news station. After a long and disappointing pursuit of a station to penetrate, Schwartz finally came upon Aaron Brown of CNN News Night. Brown agreed to allow Schwartz to film and interview his crew. Schwartz showed part of the final documentary to the audience during her presentation.

Schwartz is currently working on a documentary film about Studs Terkel, of which she shared a short clip to the audience. Terkel

is best known for his storytelling of the average American. Schwartz was always a natural storyteller. She told a story in her presentation about one such instance. When she was young, she would collect pieces of neighborhood gossip and type them up to distribute throughout the neighborhood; it was called the "Village Voice."

Though Schwartz has ventured to all corners of communications, she said her heart will always be in theater. She considers her greatest achievement to be her body of work on Broadway, for which she is most recognized.

Schwartz has some reservations about the state of theater and fine arts in general. "There is not enough support for the arts," she said. "We used to joke about climbing ticket prices, saying one day it would cost \$100 for a ticket to a Broadway show. That's not so funny anymore."

Her biggest challenge was not having the comfort and security of a regular job. "Only one time did someone give me a job. Every other time I had to literally create the job for myself," said Schwartz. Many of the career moves occurred when one opportunity ran out and she was forced to search for or create another.



Photo courtesy of www.wisc.edu

Bonnie Nelson Schwartz spoke to students about her experiences in an interdisciplinary career in communications last Wednesday.

"I had to keep reinventing myself," said Schwartz.

Schwartz said the advantage of the communications program's interdisciplinary approach is

that students will have a broad-based background. Students will be equipped with a wealth of knowledge that can be used in a variety of settings.

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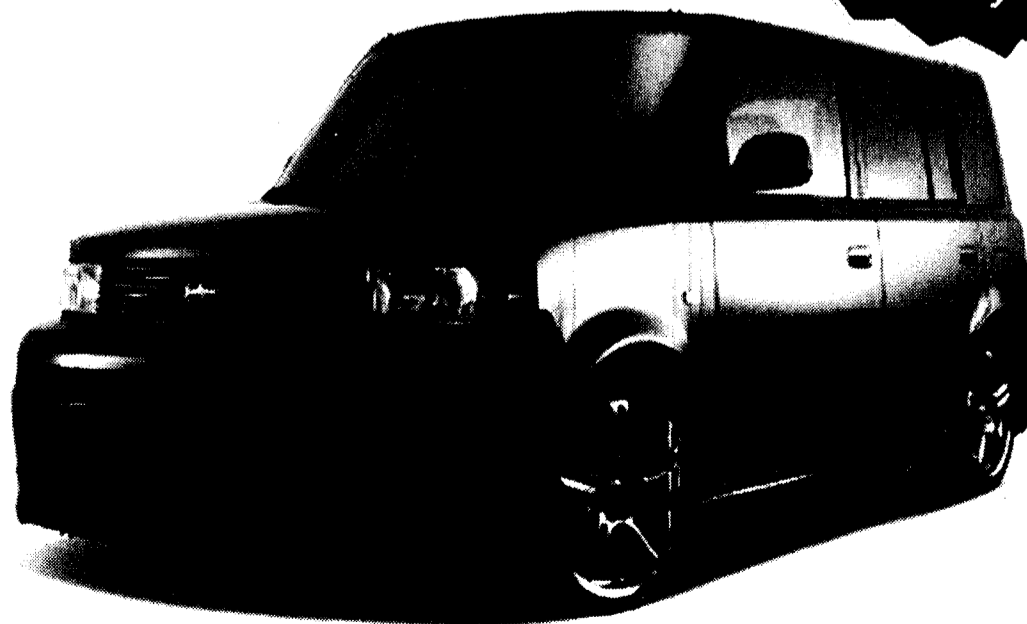
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