

'Charlie St. Cloud'

Reviewed by Kathleen Loughran
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

I was prepared for the waterworks. Being someone who cries at basically any emotionally jerking movie, I fully expected that my mascara would run down my face.



Courtesy of imdb.com

And for once, I was ok with it. Before seeing "Charlie St. Cloud," the only two things I knew about it was that it was rumored to be an extremely sad movie and that Zac Efron was the star.

Only one of those rumors was true — apparently my preparation was unnecessary because the tears never came.

Though the movie wasn't all sunshine and butterflies, it definitely wasn't as tragic as I expected it to be.

In the movie, Efron's character, Charlie, is about to head off to Stanford University on a sailing scholarship.

The summer before Charlie leaves for college, he promises to practice laying baseball with his little brother Sam so that Sam can make the team.

But at the start of the summer, the two are in a car accident, and only Charlie survives.

By no means am I trying to downplay the death of Sam, but because he frequently visits Charlie after his death, it didn't seem like Sam actually ever died.

As a character, Sam was allowed the ability to fully develop, giving viewers the opportunity to see the close, sweet relationship that Charlie and Sam shared.

Probably the most heartbreaking part of the movie is what Charlie gives up because of his loss.

Instead of going to Stanford, Charlie perpetually defers. He gives up sailing and works in a graveyard.

And at sundown every day, Charlie meets Sam for practice.

In a sense, it seems more like Charlie is the one who died in the car crash, as opposed to his little brother.

Until he meets Tess Carroll, who shares his similar love of sailing. As their relationship grows, Charlie is slowly able to let go of the tragic events in his past.

But the movie does dare to be different than a typical love story because there is an unexpected twist.

Though the writers tried to be original with the twist, overall "Charlie St. Cloud" retains the formulaic romantic story line with a nice, happy ending.

It's a movie to watch if you want to see a sappy, heartwarming chick-flick, but you have to be in the right mood.

Frankly, if you're not in the right mood, "Charlie St. Cloud" is just going to be a boring and lackluster movie.

Grade: B

To e-mail reporter: krl5106@psu.edu

WASHED UP IN MIAMI

New 'Shore' season bad, yet fun

Reviewed by Zach Geiger
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Bumpits? Check. Hot tub? Check. Gym, tanning and laundry? Check.

MTV's unabashedly ridiculous and trashy show "Jersey Shore" is back on TV this summer, and love it or hate it, the cast of transplanted New Yorkers and their drunken antics is entertaining to watch.

The cast members on the show — to put it nicely — are intoxicated idiots. Even their names are ridiculous: Jenni "JWoww" Farley, Michael "The Situation" Sorrentino, Nicole "Snooki" Polizzi, Paul "DJ Pauly D" DeVecchio and Sammi "Sweetheart" Giancola.

Rounding out the group are Ronnie Ortiz-Magro, Vinny Guadagnino and the return of Angelina Pivarnick, famous for her decision to leave the house in the first season.

The concept of the show is similar to MTV's "Real World" series — take a group of strangers, dump them into a ridiculously cool house loaded with alcohol and watch as members of the group hook up and self-destruct while trying to hold down some type of temporary job.

And it's usually entertaining to watch, but "Jersey Shore" is a new beast entirely. Instead of a diverse group of people,

MTV threw eight caricatures of Italian American "guidos" ("It's a way of life, not a racial slur," according to The Situation) into a run down shore house in New Jersey, and we all know what happened next.

Infidelity. Fist pumping. Snooki getting punched in the face. After season one, the "Jersey Shore" cast became B list celebrities complete with Twitter accounts that rival actual celebrities.

The show has made waves across the nation — even Obama took notice with his tax on tanning beds, according to the show's self-proclaimed "guidette" Snooki.

Comments like that are the reason I watch the show.

Everything The Situation says is comedic gold. Famous for his routine of "gym, tanning, laundry," or GTL, the real humor behind The Situation is the hubris he constantly flaunts.

The girls on the show are just as crazy. Angelina is back — and five minutes after saying "hi" to The Situation and Pauly D, she's already hunting at the possibility of a hookup with either of the two (or both). Classy.

It doesn't help that the other girls hate Angelina. One of the funniest scenes from the premiere was the alterca-

tion in the cab among the girls.

The girls are cursing and swinging (maybe because Angelina doesn't have a nickname yet?). Cut to the guys' cab: silence. The juxtaposition was perfect.

The only normal cast member seems to be Vinny. As the youngest cast member, audiences might have expected him to be the craziest, but he was barely present in season one.

The cast of "Jersey Shore" know they're famous. Hopefully that fame doesn't lead to the cast getting recognized in public — the cast has no problem acting like idiots on their own.

Also, the cast members hate each other. The entire state of New Jersey hates them. Italian Americans hate the "guido" stereotype they perpetuate. Other "guidos" hate that they're not on MTV. But does everyone watch the show?

Yes. Yes they do.

It's a sexy, alcohol fueled train-wreck broadcast on national TV every week — how can you not watch?

Grade: A (for hilarity), D (for intelligence)

To e-mail reporter: zjg5012@psu.edu



'Every Last One'

Reviewed by Megan Rogers
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

"Every Last One" will keep you intrigued until the very last page.

Famed novelist and journalist Arna Quindlen does what she does best — throwing real-life, relatable characters into intense situations with thought provoking results — in her latest novel, "Every Last One."

The novel follows the lives of an average suburban family — mom, dad, oldest daughter Ruby and twins Alex and Max. They have the "usual" suburban issues: marital problems,

teenage angst and high school crises. But "Every Last One" infuses some fresh life into the plot lines.

The first half of the novel consists of plenty of anecdotes and flashbacks, so even when the present day action is slow — which is often — the book is still engaging.

The characters come to life through the anecdotes. Readers don't feel as if the author is pulling the puppet strings on her characters, but rather that the characters are so real that their actions are naturally what they would do if they were a real person.

But just as you settle in the rhythm of the novel, a plot twist blindsides you. Unlike other books, it's not a jarring twist, and the plot veers smoothly in the opposite direction. It's the kind of shocking twist that makes you ask who-done-it, but the novel keeps its original charm without switching genres to and becoming a murder mystery novel.

Quindlen's latest has the detailed plots and the character nuances of her past novels, but more action than before — making "Every Last One" her best book yet.

So even though the novel is lengthy (about 300 pages) the compelling plot still makes for a quick read. And though the mother is the narrator, all readers can still enjoy the book, as the secondary characters are equally as vibrant.

There are a lot of secondary characters to keep track of and at times it is confusing to keep track of everyone. But that's a small price to pay for a great story.

There are 3D characters and enough action to keep a reader flipping through the pages. The combination makes for a must read novel.

Grade: A

To e-mail reporter: mer5200@psu.edu

A SMALL-TOWN SUPERDOME

King novel complicated, dense

Reviewed by Paul Osolnick
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

It is October 21 in the small Maine town of Chester's Mill. The sky is clear on a beautiful autumn day with a small private plane flying above the townspeople below.

The picturesque scene opens Stephen King's recently published novel "Under the Dome." The novel was published in November 2009 and was released in paperback in early July.

As an invisible dome completely covers the town, the lives of several Chester's Mill residents, countless birds and one unlucky woodchuck come to an abrupt end. The dome slams down like a guillotine, causing several imaginative deaths.

The dome surrounds the town in all directions — including thousands of feet in the air — but the book takes too long to discuss that the dome goes underground as well. (I spent 200 pages wondering why they didn't just dig underneath it.)

Dale "Barbie" Barbara, a former U.S. Army captain, is leaving the town after running into a fight with some of the town's more unsavory characters, when the dome cuts off his escape route.

After a day of unexpected accidents and unexplainable events, the people of the town discover they are

trapped in the impenetrable — except for a faint mist from water, some air and heat from the outside weather — bubble-like structure.

Barbie returns to the town which is now consumed by fear and controlled by a hypocritically-religious town leader Jim "Big Jim" Rennie. Big Jim is a devout Christian, but is also involved with several illegal acts including drug selling and even murder.

(The existence of a religious person who hypocritically does bad things is present in many of King's works, including Warden Norton in "The Shawshank Redemption" and Marcia Gay Harden's unsavory character in "The Mist.")

The dome's presence cuts off some of the town's communications to the outside world and most of its power as everything must run on propane fueled generators. The dome also blocks the town from most of its fire department and some of its police force.

After the chief of police dies when the dome's force field rips out his pacemaker, Big Jim instates a new police chief and deputizes his mentally unstable and homicidal son and a few of his friends.

The new deputies are also the group of guys that fought Barbie before the events in the book.

As Barbie, an Iraq War veteran, is

contacted by his former commanding officer in the army to be the U.S. government's acting representative inside the dome.

Barbie's power comes in direct opposition to Big Jim's wishes to control the town as the conflict between the two escalates.

Barbie, along with the owner of the local newspaper, a physician's assistant from the town's hospital and a few other town citizens, form an alliance against Big Jim who controls the local government, police force and runs an illegal drug product with a few other people in the town.

As the book progresses, precise details and vivid forms of death are coupled with some anti-climatic moments including a failed attempt by the military to blow up the dome with a cruise missile. (King writes about the plan to fire the missile for about 75 pages and then uses a half a page to say it didn't work.)

But for the most part, King keeps the reader trapped to the page — all 1,074 of them — with an ending that will make the early major conflicts of the book seem inconsequential in comparison.

Do yourself a favor and let yourself get caught "Under the Dome."

Grade: A-

To e-mail reporter: pro5004@psu.edu