

## Nola's Joint

Reviewed by Julie Mastrine  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Coming from an Italian family, I go into any Italian joint with pretty high standards. But Nola's Joint, 129 McAllister Alley, didn't just meet my standards — it surpassed them.

The restaurant, tucked away in a back alley, offers a slew of Italian pizzas, cheeses, salads and breads. But when my friend and I visited Nola's for lunch, we skipped the menu, which was mostly in Italian, and were able to choose from a variety of pizzas that were laid out on the counter.

These pizzas were far from your standard cheese-and-pepperoni combo — they included a variety of toppings and sauces. I tried one with shrimp, zucchini and squash, though I was apprehensive about seafood on a pizza.

This was the best slice of pizza I've ever eaten. The pizza included a light, creamy sauce that made it stand out. It perfectly complemented the shrimp and vegetables. Though it seemed bizarre at first, I will never again have doubts when I encounter a strange combination of toppings on a pizza, especially if it's from Nola's.

I also tried a slice of the mushroom and ham pizza, which was just as delicious as my first choice. I was happy to find that this piece had an entire layer of ham beneath the cheese, and the mushrooms were baked into the cheese instead of thrown on top of the pizza at the last minute, which is what seems to be common at other pizza places. Nola's puts time and thought into preparation, and the results are delicious.

The price was also very reasonable — most items on the menu are under \$10, which is perfect if you want good food on a tight budget. Nola's cuts your pizza slices into your desired portion size and determines the price according to weight. Two slices came to \$3.50, and my friend's meal came to about \$2.50.

For dessert, the 3\$ aren't too pricey, but I'd be willing to pay even more for these fantastic desserts, which were absolutely delicious but not too filling — the perfect way to top off a meal.

Nola's Joint also has a great atmosphere. The red brick walls are adorned with abstract art and mismatched tables and chairs give the eatery a reclaimed feel. The soft Italian music playing also added to the laid-back vibe.

If you're looking for great Italian food, prices and atmosphere, Nola's Joint is the place to go.  
Grade: A

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## 'Loud'

Reviewed by David Strader  
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Though Rihanna sure has grown since her 16-year-old Def Jam Recordings signing, her music is still a work in progress.

Rihanna released her fifth studio album "Loud" today, and, while it serves its purpose as another shipment of dance pop songs, the album is nothing groundbreaking.

"Loud" has a healthy portion of catchy songs and some beats that are nice — borderline sick. And Rihanna even offers a certain sense of variety on the album.

But the release ultimately suffers by sticking to the conventional. Rihanna's voice may have the capacity for something more soulful than formulated dance songs, but we're yet again left to wonder.

"Loud" starts off on dangerous ground as the opening track "S&M" sounds regrettably fitting for a sweet 16 dance party — aside from its explicit lyrics referring to deviant sexual behaviors.

The album matures quickly, though, as song two, "What's My Name?" is catchy and well-composed. And, hey, it features Drake, if you're into that.

Rihanna succeeds through her dance-worthy pop songs like "Only Girl (In The World)" and "Raining Men," as is expected.

Rihanna's most blatant disappointment is the ill-conceived slow jam "California King Bed," which sounds like a forgettable Taylor Swift B-side.

The song showcases some variation on the album, but it is otherwise skippable.

A track that thrives on its variation is "Man Down," a reggae-influenced delight akin to Rihanna's debut album "Music of the Sun."

While Rihanna's style doesn't feel quite right dipped in reggae, her voice fits the genre, and it's a match that should be developed.

"Loud" concludes with "Love The Way You Lie (Part II)," a sequel to Eminem's single.

Though the song is somewhat recycled goods, it's a surprisingly welcome addition.

The song is rightfully focused on Rihanna rather than Eminem this time around, and when the track builds up to Eminem's explosive entrance, listeners will be exhilarated by the conclusion.

All things considered, "Loud" is nice, but it's nothing to yell about.

Grade: C+  
Download: "What's My Name?" and "Raining Men"

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# CONAN'S COMEBACK

## O'Brien still good after switch

Reviewed by Karina Yücel  
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We can thank Tom Hanks for the nickname and chant "Coco" now that Conan O'Brien is back on late night television.

"You ruined my life," O'Brien said last Tuesday night to Hanks. "My children call me 'Coco' instead of 'daddy,' which enrages me."

Hanks responded: "Finally he will blame something on someone other than Jay [Leno]."

O'Brien made his reappearance on television Monday, Nov. 8, after being replaced by Leno on NBC's "The Tonight Show" in January. Instead of gracing broadcast television, O'Brien's now on TBS — a situation that provided much of the first week's material.

Jokes about being on basic cable lasted throughout the first four episodes of "Conan," and guest stars and O'Brien made jokes about O'Brien being moved from NBC to TBS.

"I'm really glad to be on cable... It's not a joke," O'Brien said in the premiere episode. "I have dreamed of being a talk show host on basic cable since I was 46."

Hanks was O'Brien's second guest when he started on "The Tonight Show" in 2009.

O'Brien referred to his new show as "the whitest man in show business on the second blackest network on TV," also joking that he was now contractually supposed to call himself "Tyler Perry's Conan O'Brien" since he is on TBS.

On Friday's episode, O'Brien was officially received into the basic cable family when Bruce Jenner from "Keeping up with the Kardashians," a hoarder from A&E's "Hoarders" and four Alaskan king crabs from "Deadliest Catch" came on stage to formally welcome him.

But O'Brien himself wasn't focused on the special guests. It seemed they had no airtime at all, as most of the show was banter between O'Brien and his helping host Andy Richter.

Hopefully once the hype of O'Brien's return to television after a nine-month hiatus passes, the guests will become more of a focus.

But for now, we will all enjoy O'Brien's constant jabs at TBS and NBC, as well as all the news surrounding his return.

"It seems a little silly all the atten-

tion we have been getting for the show starting," O'Brien said during the second episode.

Afterward he showed the crowd what he meant.

A news station in Taiwan had made an animated short about his return to TV which depicted O'Brien as drinking and spitting dollar signs on stage and his most devoted fans as holding "Team Coco" signs in one hand while holding bongos in the other.

With the move to basic cable, O'Brien and his guests are still trying to figure out where exactly the line is when it comes to things like cursing and subject matter.

To investigate this, O'Brien went to a TBS censor and tried out different slang terms and costume choices.

O'Brien saying different terms for genitalia and sex weren't the funniest part of the skit — it was the costumes he made other

people walk around in during the skit.

One costume idea was a pair of leather pants, which were permitted by the censor until the model turned around and the pants had no back. With that, the censor decided O'Brien would be able to wear the pants, but only if his butt was on TV for a limited amount of time. Four seconds was all the censor could stand.

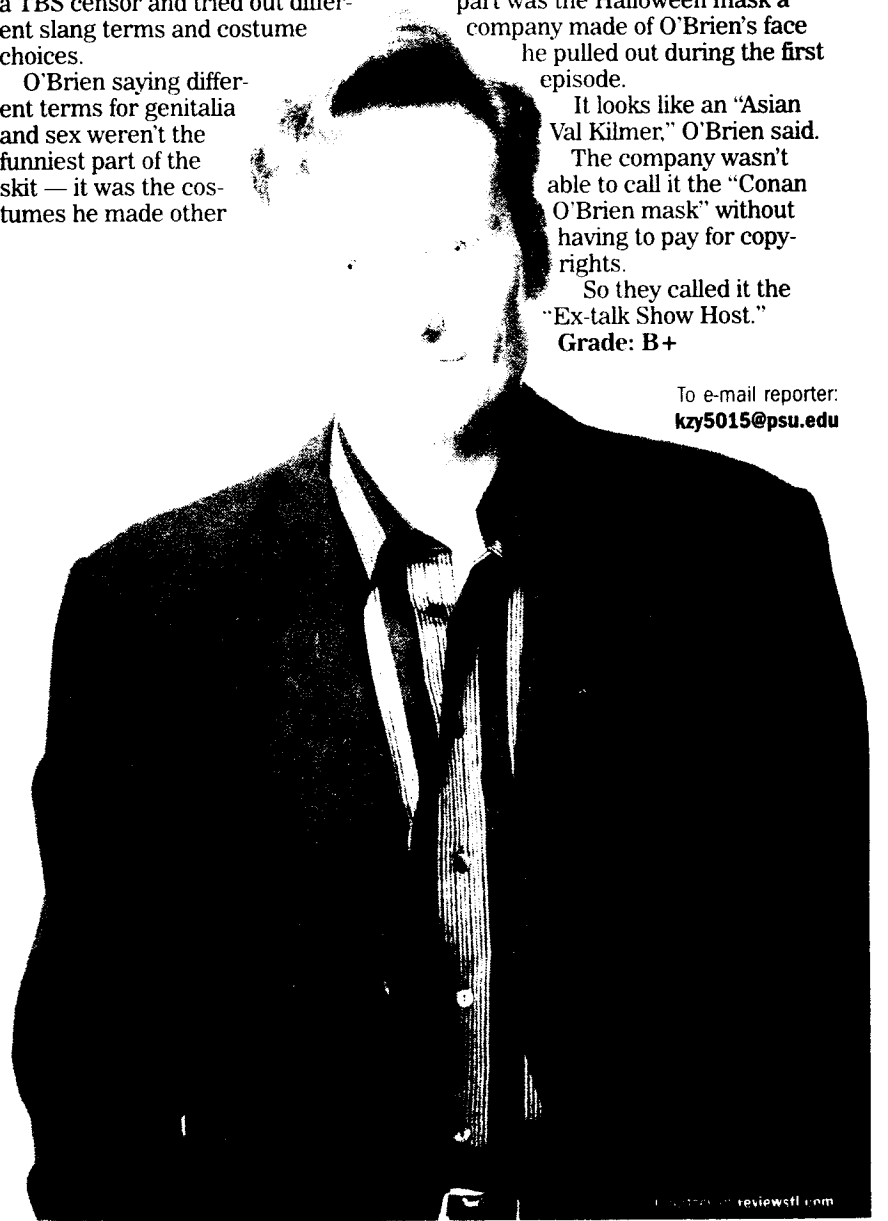
The next costume was a pair of fish tank underwear. Once the skeptical censor saw the back to make sure there wasn't any extra skin showing, he approved of the fish tank briefs.

With all the special actors, comedians and musical guests on this premiere week of "Conan," my favorite part was the Halloween mask a company made of O'Brien's face he pulled out during the first episode.

It looks like an "Asian Val Kilmer," O'Brien said. The company wasn't able to call it the "Conan O'Brien mask" without having to pay for copyrights.

So they called it the "Ex-talk Show Host."  
Grade: B+

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# New film thrilling, plot still in training

Reviewed by Lauren Ingenu  
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If you're looking for an action-packed, runaway train movie that will get your heart racing, watch "Unstoppable." But if you're looking for good plot, characters and dialogue, look elsewhere.

The thriller was inspired by an event in 2001, when an unattended 47-car freight train pulled away from a rail yard, forcing a flock of people to chase it for two hours until it eventually came to a stop. There were no property damages or injuries caused by the train, according to the Times Leader's website.

The movie, shot in areas around State College, including Unionville, Pleasant Gap and Port Matilda, is a lot more dramatized than this little news story.

It takes place in rural Pennsylvania, and Frank (Denzel Washington), a veteran train engineer, is not excited when he is forced to spend the day in a train paired with newcomer Will (Chris Pine). But when a freight train filled with toxic chemicals is left unattended and races down a track toward towns at an unstoppable speed, the two working-class men must collaborate to stop it in its tracks. A railway controller (Rosario Dawson) plays the third hero, as she sits in her control room trying to stay calm and figure out how to fix the catastrophe.

But the most engaging character is the train itself, which barrels through Pennsylvania at 75 miles an hour — a pretty wild ride.

You get to see the train from every angle and at times you're a bit scared it's going to zoom right through the screen and into your seat.

"Unstoppable" proved that a movie doesn't have to be in 3D to be visually appealing and get your adrenaline pumping.

The escalating threat of the train and how its going to be stopped builds tension, and you can feel it every single moment.

Unfortunately the living, breathing characters in no way live up to the intensity of the speeding train.

Washington and Pine are alright as the stereotypical pair of a veteran and a new guy, but there isn't too much chemistry between them and their backstories are laughable.

At one point, when their train is catching up to the runaway train and they are minutes from a possible collision, Frank decides to ask Will about his relationship with his wife.

The director is obviously trying to pull on our heartstrings a little, but don't these guys have, uh, larger things to be talking about? Will responds with a yawn-worthy story about his wife, a texting incident and a restraining order that does nothing to move the plot along or get us closer to the character.

Can we just cut back to the train already?

At times when the mood was tense and I was really getting hooked to the two men stopping the train, the movie took a turn toward the bizarre and humorous which seemed inappropriate, out of place or downright too cheesy to bear.

Though parts of "Unstoppable" was somewhat laughable it was still pretty entertaining for the first part, suspense and emotional roller coaster of the freight train.

Grade: B-

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