

Arts and Entertainment



DONATING TO THE ARTS...The Town Bank of Westfield recently granted a generous donation to the Westfield Young Artists' Cooperative Theatre (WYACT). WYACT members are currently appearing in *Oliver!* at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark. Pictured, left to right, are: Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Nicholas A. Frungillo, Jr., Assistant Vice President Angela Bellino, David Shire and Artistic Director of WYACT Cynthia Meryl. Mr. Shire recently spoke to members of WYACT regarding careers in theatre.



Saturday Night Fever Band To Perform at Village Green

SCOTCH PLAINS—Saturday Night Fever, a band that captures the music of the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s, will perform this evening, Thursday, July 22, from 7:30 to 9 p.m. on the Village Green in Scotch Plains.

The band performs the music of Ricky Martin, the Partridge Family, Rick James, Aretha Franklin, TLC and The Monkeys in wardrobe with special effects lighting. They also perform their own, "Grease Mega Medley!"

This concert is sponsored by the Scotch Plains Cultural Arts Committee.

Morris Museum to Present Harlem Wizards Event

MORRISTOWN—The Morris Museum will host a basketball comedy with the Harlem Wizards as part of its Summer Series today, Thursday, July 22, at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. in The John H. Bickford Theatre of the museum.

The children's program features musical routines with basketball players.

Tickets are \$6.50 each for Morris Museum members and \$7.75 for the general public. Special pricing is available for groups of 20 or more. Subscriptions are also available. For ticket reservations and information, please call (973) 538-8069.



REHEARSAL TIME...The 15th Annual St. Helen's Youth Ministry musical production, *Working*, will begin on Thursday, July 29. Forty members of the parish have been rehearsing for the past month. Pictured above is the cast of *Working*, busily working away at rehearsal.

St. Helen's Youth Ministry Prepares Musical, Working

WESTFIELD—The 15th Annual St. Helen's Youth Ministry musical production, *Working*, will begin on Thursday, July 29. Forty members of the parish have been rehearsing for the past month.

The cast includes several members of local communities. Matthew Price, who starred in last year's production of *George M!* is choreographing and performing in *Working*. He was also nominated for the Paper Mill Playhouse Rising Star Award for Outstanding Male Lead for his work this year in Union Catholic High School's production of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*.

Fellow *Working* cast member, Stefan Basti, was also a Rising Star nominee for Outstanding Male Lead in the Mount St. Mary Academy production of *Little Shop of Horrors*.

Lee Matthews, the director of *Work-*

ing, a reggae/calyppo band will perform at Echo Lake Park on Wednesday, July 28, at 7:30 p.m. *Larry Chance & the Earls* will take the stage on July 28, at 7:30 p.m. at Memorial Park in Berkeley Heights. *Country Western* music will be spotlighted at the gazebo in Cranford on Tuesday, July 27, at 7:15 p.m. *Thunder Rose* will perform on Thursday, July 29, at 7:30 p.m. on the Village Green in Scotch Plains. *Don Huff* will take the stage at Friberger Park in Union on Thursday, July 22, at 8 p.m. *The Rahway Valley Jerseyaires* will perform at Mindowaskin Park in Westfield on July 29, at 8 p.m.

Cup of Joe and *One Eyed Jack* will perform this evening; *Billy Hector* will take the stage on Friday, July 23, and *Better Off Dead* will perform on Saturday, July 24. All performances will be held at Caffrey Tree Service which will provide free birch beer. Please bring lawn chairs and blankets.

The rain site of the concert will be the auditorium of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School. For more information, please call the Recreation Office at (908) 322-6700.

Two Gentlemen of Verona To Be Performed At Westfield Library

WESTFIELD—Westfield Memorial Library's Summer Family Entertainment Programs will continue with the production of Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona* on Wednesday, August 11, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets will be available starting Wednesday, July 28, at the library.

Presented by the Next Stage Ensemble, the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival's summer touring program, this comedy follows the escapades of Valentine and Proteus as they vie for the love of Sylvia.

This program is appropriate for children aged 12 and older. The approximate running time is one hour.

Admission is free and a Westfield Library card is needed to obtain a ticket. For more information, please call (908) 789-4090.

STATE OF THE ART

Music

Verdict, a reggae/calyppo band will perform at Echo Lake Park on Wednesday, July 28, at 7:30 p.m. *Larry Chance & the Earls* will take the stage on July 28, at 7:30 p.m. at Memorial Park in Berkeley Heights. *Country Western* music will be spotlighted at the gazebo in Cranford on Tuesday, July 27, at 7:15 p.m. *Thunder Rose* will perform on Thursday, July 29, at 7:30 p.m. on the Village Green in Scotch Plains. *Don Huff* will take the stage at Friberger Park in Union on Thursday, July 22, at 8 p.m. *The Rahway Valley Jerseyaires* will perform at Mindowaskin Park in Westfield on July 29, at 8 p.m.

Cup of Joe and *One Eyed Jack* will perform this evening; *Billy Hector* will take the stage on Friday, July 23, and *Better Off Dead* will perform on Saturday, July 24. All performances will be held at

The Crossroads in Garwood.

Literature

Barnes & Noble in Clark will host a health discussion with the Clark Chiropractic Center about healing the body on Monday, July 26, at 7:30 p.m. A pajama night will also be held on Tuesday, July 27, at 7 p.m. This will feature crafts and bedtime snacks.

Barnes & Noble in Springfield will host the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival in a performance of *Two Gentlemen From Verona* on Friday, July 23, at 7:30 p.m. The African-American Literature Group will meet on Tuesday, July 27, at 7:30 p.m. to discuss new releases by African-American authors. The Westfield Summer Workshop will host "Rock the Juke Box" on Wednesday, July 28, at 10:30 a.m.

POPCORN™ American Pie

Funny, If You Can Stomach It

By Michael S. Goldberg

One Popcorn, Poor • Two Popcorns, Fair • Three Popcorns, Good • Four Popcorns, Excellent

3 popcorns

Sex, sex, sex.....and more sex. And then some more sex. It preoccupies the four teenage boys whose raucous and often raunchy exploits are humorously observed in *American Pie*.

Breathing and eating are probably very distant second and third priorities for Jim, Kevin, Oz and Finch, desperate young men in search of the elusive path to manhood.

A blatantly derivative but nonetheless buoyant coming of age gambol, director Paul Weitz's down and dirty odyssey through the catacombs of adolescent sexuality is wrapped in the new vulgar-chic that the trailblazing *There's Something About Mary* made borderline acceptable at the multiplex.

But beware! While this is the junior version of that film, it is no less risqué and certainly more exploitative. Yet there is a curiously inherent quality of good-naturedness to *American Pie*, and it prevails; as matters unfold and the movie's would-be Casanovas are hilariously shown for the sexually naive bumbler that they are, the rite-of-passage aspects of the tale winsomely supplant its naughty quotient.

In short, it's not what they do, but how awkwardly they try to do it that makes *American Pie* so rollickingly engaging.

Contemporized here to include a steady flow of obscenities and a smattering of semi-nudity, you might call this "Andy Hardy Learns The Facts of Life," the R-rated version. For it belongs to a genre with a heritage dating back to the 1930s, even before its thrill-questing pre-adults were dubbed teenagers.

Thus borrowing from several classic examples in the dustbin, filmmaker Weitz incorporates a soupy bon of soul-searching from *The Breakfast Club*, a smidgen of slimmness from *Porky's*, and a mini-lesson on life's timeless inevitabilities from *American Graffiti*.

But the coup de grace is a comically satisfying paean to *The Graduate* that merits ties in with the movie's sense of irony, Simon and Garfunkel's "Mrs. Robinson" shamelessly playing in the background; for Boomers and beyond a tear of nostalgia might be understandable here.

Sworn to conclude their virginal days no later than prom night, a gaggle of neo-Brat Pack stereotypes are played by a solid ensemble of young actors making a passage of their own — to starring roles.

Zaniest among the 17-year-old hopefuls is self-deprecating Jim (Jason Biggs), delivering his lines with the distinctive patter of a stand-up comic, easily the least likely to succeed. Entirely flummoxed by the mission to the sexual major leagues, Jim's ineptitude with the fairer sex becomes legend when his foiled attempt at romantic conquest with an East European exchange student (Shannon Elizabeth as Nadia) is mistakenly broadcast to their entire Midwestern community over the Internet.

Oz (Chris Klein), on the other hand, a handsome lacrosse player, seems a shoo-in for success. But guess again. His original plan dashed, the jock uncharacteristically tries out his vocal chords in the school choir whilst exploring the possibility of amour with straight-laced Heather

(Mena Suvari).

And then there's Kevin (Thomas Ian Nicholas), certainly an odds-on favorite to win masculine bragging rights. He's the only one who has a steady gal. Trouble is, girlfriend Vicki (Tara Reid), who will be attending classes at a college far from where Kevin will be matriculating come September, finds herself torn between love and pragmatism.

Not knowing that boyfriend secretly confides in and seeks advice to the sex from her best pal, Jessica (Natasha Lyonne), betwixt and between Vicki does the same.

An experienced veteran of the teen war between the sexes, with "Been There...Done That" seemingly stenciled across her forehead, jaded Jessica reminisces that once upon a time she was "duped out of her virginity." Oddly, the go-between's advice is generally sound.

Rounding out the quartet is Finch (Eddie Kaye Thomas), the sartorially conservative top and resident brain of the group (no band of friends should be without one). Of course, he tries the intellectual approach, and not without some rather amusing results. Naturally, it behooves someone of his cosmopolitan demeanor to suffer at the dirty hands of the movie's one really big potty joke. It is one too many, though the set will probably be delighted.

The main portrayals are nicely complimented by some rather sturdy support work. But the secondary performance affording the most benefit to the plot is contributed by SCTV veteran Eugene Levy as Jim's concerned father.

Hell-bent on teaching his Portnoyish (the ludicrous apple pie scene is unforgivable) sonny boy about the birds and the bees at these sensitive crossroads in his life, he is part uncomfortable nerd, part enthusiastic Cyrano and always loving dad.

Levy hooks glibly into the film's rough groove to supply a barrage of endearing laughs while giving *American Pie* the grown-up stamp of legitimacy it would sorely miss without him.

For all its nasty posturing, when it comes down to cases this is really a traditional tale, a punk-suburban look at the fires of spring. It's just dressed up like Peck's Bad Boy. And that's because between the ages of 14 and 17 there is status in smut. The off-color tint is more a marketing consideration than an inseparable part of the story.

Hand held over mouth in faux embarrassment, young viewers enjoying their complicity in these goings-on will readily offer their favorite parts and register hearty approval of this self-conscious prurience.

For just as *American Pie's* four Lotharios are really more interested in impressing each other than actually making the post-pubescent journey in question, it's much cooler to flaunt one's sophistication than to wax rhapsodic about the moral of the story. But surprise. The core viewing group's worst fears are realized: Hidden amidst the irreverent junk food, *American Pie* manages to serve up a nourishing slice of life.

American Pie, rated R, is a Universal Pictures release directed by Paul Weitz and stars Jason Biggs, Eugene Levy and Natasha Lyonne. Running time: 101 minutes.

The Dining Table

CAÇADA

New Jersey Performing Arts Center
One Center Street, Newark, (973) 642-1226

By MICHELLE H. LePOIDEVIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Before the curtains rise inside of the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) or after the actors and musicians take their bows, Caçada, an outdoor dining center at the theater, is the quintessential way to begin or end your evening.

Festive and welcoming is the perfect description for the atmosphere at Caçada. I have been there on two occasions when Latin music or the ballads of Frank Sinatra were piped into the eating abode. The chunks of stained glass embedded in mosaic tables with tiny flickering candles add a charming touch.

The wait staff is polite, gracious and accommodating. They can tell if you are trying to grab a quick bite before a show or if you just hopped off the train and want a leisurely dinner. In either case, the staff makes certain that the food is served in a timely, punctual manner. You are never rushed through your meal.

A cuffed white paper bag of flat bread is an ideal snack or munchie while waiting for your appetizer or entree. You never miss a basket brimming with bread because this variety fits in ideally with the aura and offerings of the menu — simple yet mysteriously flavorful.

A generous seafood bar is available before a warm wood burning oven. The bar features Oysters on the Half Shell including the following varieties: Blue Point for \$1.25 each, Fanny Bay for \$1.50 each and Malpeque for \$1.50 each.

Shucked Littleneck Clams at \$1 each, Ceviche de Bay Scallops for \$6, and Peel and Eat Shrimp for \$10 per dozen are also highly recommended.

The emphasis on fish continues with a plentiful offering entitled, Tower of Shellfish, which features Chilled Lobster, Clams, Oysters and Shrimp at \$26 for two people or \$48 for four diners.

Refreshing summer salads are crisp and delectable. My companion enjoyed the Grilled Chicken Cobb with Pancetta and Avocado (\$9). The chicken was chilled over a medley of flavorful greens served in a mammoth bowl, laced with a stream of tangy vinaigrette and topped off with

chunks of blue cheese. Fresh slices of avocado and small yellow tomatoes are sprinkled throughout the dish.

The Oven Roasted Clams with Chorizo (\$7) was worth a standing ovation. The clams were tender, nestled inside of the shells stuffed with a blend of zesty Chorizo sausage, plump clumps of tomato, sprigs of fresh parsley and snips of pungent garlic. The clams swim throughout a bowl of the savory sauce. You will lick your fingers.

The chefs at Caçada deserve to take a deep bow for the Baked Crabcakes (\$14). The perfection cannot be surpassed. The crabmeat was clearly fresh and ample, the spicing was the best ever. It is a must have. Otherwise, one will never know the highlight of Caçada's menu.

A wide selection of pizzas are also up for grabs. These offerings include: Chorizo and Argentinean Regeanito and Exotic Mushroom and Arugula. Both pizzas are priced at \$12 each.

Every Thursday, free live music is on tap at Caçada from 5 to 9 p.m. Live jazz is offered on Saturday nights at 9 p.m. Happy Hour is from 5 to 7 p.m. every day. Free parking is available in Lot A of the NJPAC.

Lunch is served Monday to Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Dinner is served from Tuesday to Saturday from 5 to 9 p.m.

Newark offers glorious fare in the surrounding restaurants. Trying one of those is a wonderful idea. However, missing an experience at Caçada would be a tragedy, not a comedy. So, enjoy a dramatic, worthwhile play for your taste buds — make reservations at Caçada or any of the other restaurants that are a part of The Theatre Grill at NJPAC.

Special A&E Notice:

If you are especially talented in art, music, dance, theater or any other form of art and entertainment, we would like to feature your talent in our section. You must be a resident of Westfield, Scotch Plains, Fanwood or Mountainside. For more information, please call Michelle H. LePoidevin at (908) 232-4407.

Rahway Valley Jerseyaires Slate Concert at Gazebo

WESTFIELD—The Rahway Valley Jerseyaires Chorus, with William Laurie, George Schwerdt, Doug Brown, John Huetz and Jack Robinson assisting with the performance.

The chorus rehearses every Monday at 7:30 p.m. in Roosevelt School in Rahway. Men of all ages are welcome.

The Rahway Valley Chapter's funding has been made possible in part by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Department of State, through a grant administered by the Union County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs.

The chorus will be directed by Marty Isreal, the new director of the

Jerseyaires Chorus, with William Laurie, George Schwerdt, Doug Brown, John Huetz and Jack Robinson assisting with the performance.

The chorus rehearses every Monday at 7:30 p.m. in Roosevelt School in Rahway. Men of all ages are welcome.

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Information:
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Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce