



Pen & Ink

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"What is wrong with these people?" asked my father, with a face redder than scarlet. "We're telling the enemy just where to come and get us." Anchors reporting when, where and how President George W. Bush would reach his next destination made Dad even more infuriated.

Networks demonstrated exceedingly poor taste when they opted to return to sitcom programming when flags were still at half-mast. A nation engulfed in a period of mourning, we might have sustained our need for entertainment by renting a movie and allowing the telecasts to 100 percent coverage of the disaster. When President Bush raised the flags to full-mast this Sunday at Camp David, the networks would have been in good taste to resume regular programming. But, good taste is just as foreign to most networks as (unfortunately) the terrain of Afghanistan is to our troops.

So, in essence, we were trapped - (as most of us are) somewhere between returning to the season premieres of our favorite shows, and planning for war. Do we pick up our remotes or our flags? Do we distract ourselves with canned laughter and sloppy scriptwriting or force ourselves to confront the reality that we are a mourning nation in dire conflict? Does it really matter that much whether Buffy the Vampire Slayer comes back to life or that a nation resurrects itself from the ashes of terrorism?

As always, the devil is in the details. He's also in Afghanistan too, but that's another editorial. The entertainment industry's top priority must be demonstrating a tremendous amount of tact, responsibility and sensitivity for its viewers. No explosives, people being killed in their workplace, no hostage situations, airline tragedies, or jokes about people being "MIA (Missing In Action)."

Appropriate entertainment includes supporting the USO, those individuals and celebrities who band together with talent to bring smiles to the soldiers sacrificing their lives for the sake of their country. I'm a pretty good singer, if I do say so myself, and wouldn't hesitate to sign up for the singing of patriotic songs to help keep spirit alive in the souls of our military personnel.

Last Friday, everyone from Tom Hanks to Billy Joel sponsored a two-hour commercial-free telethon, "America: A Tribute to Heroes," to raise money for the victims of the terrorist attacks. When I heard about it, I started to have nightmarish flashbacks of bad 80s haircuts and handholding Hands Across America/Live Aid events. Cyndi Lauper shattering a microphone with bars of "We Are the World," while members of Duran Duran are swaying in the foreground.

Up until the end of the program, the participants spared us a huggy, kissy, splashy display, and struck us straight to the heart with Joel's "New York State of Mind," Celine Dion's "America, the Beautiful," and Neil Young's version of John Lennon's "Imagine." Overall, it was a fantastic display of selflessness and emotion on the part of the entertainment industry. Let's hope it isn't a passing fancy for them.

Some of the industry's heroes include Robin Williams, who rolled up his sleeves and told Red Cross personnel to take his blood. Alec Baldwin was a champion when he went to Lower Manhattan to pitch in at Ground Zero. Rosie O'Donnell and Jim Carrey were advocates for the cause when they recently donated \$1 million each for victims.

These celebrities have big buckaroos and lots of clout. It's time to fork it over and tighten their belts for the martyrs of this great nation.

In the meantime, might I suggest that we use our "T.V. time" to stay informed about the events shaping our lives interrupted, instead of focusing on whether Joe Schmo will use up all of his lifelines and lose his money to Reeg?

We have our own real lifelines to save and protect.

Exhibit at Tomasulo Gallery in Cranford Extends Beyond This Galaxy

By MARYLOU MORANO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

CRANFORD -- The walls of Union County College's Tomasulo Gallery are exploding in color as its opening season spotlights the work of Stephen McKenzie. Entitled the "Alien Being Series," the exhibit is a series of monotype prints depicting alien life-form images.

The prints in this series are the result of the artist's knowledge of the printmaking medium combined with a diversity of aesthetic and design influences that cut across cultural boundaries, two primary ones being primitive art and Native American design.

Monotype printmaking pulls one fully inked impression through a plate, but depending upon the amount of ink residue remaining on the plate, one or two "ghost" images may also be printed.

Mr. McKenzie's use of color makes his prints appear vibrant and alive. He adorns his alien life-form beings in various hues of non-harmonious vibrant colors. Somehow it all works.

"The result is an invading of the senses in a bold and vibrant way," commented Ray Cohen, docent at the Tomasulo Gallery.

Indeed the aggressive use of color combined with the 42" X 30" size of the prints creates an excitement that will appeal to collectors of abstract art.

In addition, Mr. McKenzie's cre-



Marylou Morano for The Westfield Leader and The Times
IT CAME FROM BEYOND... "Alien CEO with Freshly Sharpened Knife," Monotype, 1997 by Stephen McKenzie.

ativity is evidenced in the prints' anatomical designs and in the symmetry of the alien life-form images, which mimic the human body.

In creating this series, Mr. McKenzie explained that he sought to expand and seek a wider context of image diversity and content for his aesthetic concerns.

Also included in this exhibit of 15 monotype prints are two wood-

cuts.

Mr. McKenzie has worked as the assistant master printer at the Center for Innovative Printmaking at Rutgers University. He also worked at the Printmaking Council of New Jersey for two years.

Currently, he is employed at the Newark Museum Arts Workshop, where he is responsible for the craft and fine art studio programs. He has exhibited his works both nationally and locally since 1984.

The "Alien Being Series" will be on display at the Tomasulo Gallery in the Kenneth MacKay Library on the Cranford campus of Union County College until Thursday, October 25. The college is located at 1033 Springfield Avenue.

Gallery hours are from 1 to 4 p.m. on Mondays through Thursdays and on Saturdays. Evening hours are from 6 to 9 p.m. on Tuesdays through Thursdays.

For more information, please call the Tomasulo Gallery at (908) 709-7155.

POPCORN™
Hardball: Strikes Out



By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

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What the world needs now is more drunken gamblers. Put 'em to work coaching inner-city little league teams as a means to their rehabilitation and it's a win-win situation.

The fatherless urchins find guidance as well as the surrogate dad they never had, and the luckless dipsomaniacs get in touch with the good inside them. No big spending programs. No massive government intrusion into the lives of the poor. It's a social worker's dream come true.

Two negatives combined to make a positive. And all you need to know to start improving your neighborhood right now is available in the simple to follow directions that comprise the screenplay of *Hardball*.

Is there any possible way the Nobel Prize folks can overlook this movie? Maybe not. But viewers who detect my cynicism are advised to do just that.

A haphazardly constructed amalgam of several films that have opened this same pie-in-the-sky solution in far more entertaining ways, director Brian Robbins' lackluster little movie trots out the same old urban fairy tale.

The guy (Keanu Reeves) is a mess. The ghetto kids are saccharine cute. And the housing project environment where all manner of social woe is addressed is nothing less than America's answer to Calcutta.

But, despite the interspersing of harsh realities amidst the trite conventions, there is no real attempt to

make the story more credible. And that's too bad, because there is indeed basis in fact here.

It's practically a tradition. Helping youth has always been an acceptable way for the down-and-out to make amends for a life misspent. And probably many of the real-life stories that have played out this pattern would make for great drama. But then that would require a good script and tossing away the convenient formula Hollywood has found so successful over the years.

And when you get down to brass tacks, there is no real cost to speak of here, save Reeves' salary. Just figure it as if you were Mr. Movie Producer.

If you can manage a few good weekends at the box office and a confident prognostication of reasonable success once it hits video, why aspire to any more than tried and true mediocrity?

So don't be alarmed by the roster of shortcomings *Hardball* throws at you. The editing is slipshod, allowing for some obvious continuity boobies. The poorly realized mixture of location and studio shots points up the decidedly low-budget mindset. And while occasionally forceful, Reeves as Conner O'Neill is otherwise a curious study in inconsistency, managing to span the spectrum of acting styles from intense to uninterested, sometimes within the same scene.

And then just to makes things more transparent, they throw in a perfunctory love interest. Played by Diane Lane, Elizabeth Wilkes is a lay teacher at a parochial school and the moral conscience of the tale. The blatantly hackneyed persona further illustrates the filmmakers' lack of concern for creativity.

Why they couldn't give this character just the slightest glint of fascination is an enigma. Because, except for Elizabeth's occupation, we know absolutely nothing about her. And, we don't know very much more about Reeves' loser protagonist who comes a courting. Only that the bookies and loan sharks are into him for several thousand, and that a stockbroker friend is willing to help keep Conner from having his legs broken if he fulfills the firm's community service pledge by coaching little league.

Strange, though, for a gang with an obvious eye to the bottom line, is the PG-13 rating this film garners. Words heard in and around the projects and one sadly violent scene make *Hardball* verboten for children 12 and under if not accompanied by a parent.

This needlessly cuts down on the potential audience. And while that's a lucky thing for the kids who get to miss this film, it didn't have to work out this way.

The aura of danger and bleak prospects that surrounds the moppets in *Hardball* could have been better achieved without resorting to four-lettered favorites. Yet then again, that would require some thought and a sense of artistry, both of which are pitifully missing from these proceedings.

But the greatest shame is the anti-septic way that our national pastime is used as a mere plot mechanism. For all that it matters to this film, it could have just as well been basketball, football or nok-hockey that Conner has to manage in order to save his neck.

All those concerned go through the motions, but no one says very much about baseball. Why, it's practically un-American not to extol the virtues of the game when the chance arises.

But whether or not you believe that, it is nonetheless a sorely missed opportunity. That's all this movie empire needs to issue *Hardball* — its third strike.

Hardball, rated PG-13, is a Paramount Pictures release starring Keanu Reeves, Diane Lane and Julian Griffith. Running time: 95 minutes.

See A&E in Color: www.goleader.com/



Cheri Rogovsky for The Westfield Leader and The Times
TOWNSHIP TALENT... Scotch Plains Music Center's Saturday concert series included last weekend's performance of "Out of Ashes."

Remembering

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think so.

With each walk, work commute, everyday events, I remember the friend I had for fishing at the local pond, sharing time with our 5-year-old sons. The proud father, who was in awe of his son's ability to cleanly cast line on the first try, a commuting friend to shorten the train ride and compare family stories...now a startlingly vivid memory.

I don't want the memories to fade — only the pain to go away, so the memories become happy reminders of special people.

Those who have lost the most from the tragedy, so much more than I, begin to move forward. One step forward, two steps back, a step forward, followed by another step forward.

So much senseless loss of life...how will they be remembered by their children?

Our friend begins the purposeful task of creating scrapbooks of her lost spouse for the children to remember. With this creation comes happy memories, invoking old memories thought to be lost, and a lasting testament for the children.

The lost parents will ultimately be remembered for their love. The children will always be reminded through stories and personal mementos passed down across the generation, which will help them develop into loving parents themselves when joined with the wisdom and understanding that comes with future years.

Stories will change, but the base meaning will be the same. Daddy used to play golf. Daddy used to have a 5 handicap. Daddy used to have a scratch game...in the end, all meaning that Daddy was special.

For my part, I can remember, share and become an even more loving father and husband. Small worries should not become big, patience lost should be found, and anger suppressed should be discussed. With time comes healing, but the scars will remain for everyone. Let the scar be a reminder to live each day to the fullest, and ensure every person knows everyday how special they are to you.

Steve Beattie of Westfield, the writer of this prose, was originally supposed to be in New York at the time of the terrorist attack, but was called away to business in Ohio.

Speakeasy Jazz Babies To Entertain at Library MOUNTAINSIDE

Mountainside Public Library will open its doors to the public for a special Open House on Sunday, September 30, from 2 to 4:30 p.m. for a concert by the Speakeasy Jazz Babies, Moogie the Clown and caricatures by Gina.

Specializing in Chicago and New Orleans styles jazz and blues, the band will play two 45-minute sets. In addition, refreshments, prizes and a brief dedication ceremony of the library's new media room are scheduled.

The Open House and all activities are free. The public is welcome to attend. For more information, please call the library at (908) 233-0115.



Music Corner
by David Palladino
Ethereal Sounds of Marimba Entrance Symphonia Audience

By DAVID PALLADINO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

LAMBERTVILLE — The Riverside Symphonia String Ensemble, under the direction of Polish conductor Mariusz Smolij, offered a terrific chamber series concert this past Saturday night in Lambertville at the Church of St. John the Evangelist.

Greg Giannascoli was the featured soloist who performed the *Concertino dell' Inceso* on Marimba, a keyboard instrument somewhat similar in appearance to the xylophone, but made primarily of rosewood, highlighting a warm, velvety sound.

Other works included an Aria in D major by Bach, which was offered in memoriam to the victims of the tragedy at the World Trade Center, the *Concerto Grosso* in D Major by Corelli, and the *Serenade for Strings* in C Major by Tchaikovsky.

Soloist Greg Giannascoli has been a featured soloist in the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, as well as many other venues. His finesse and style are apparent on the marimba.

The first cadenza, which comes early in the opening section of the *Concertino*, while aggressive, was performed with accuracy and feeling. The use of rubato was particularly effective. The ethereal effect of the marimba is so smooth, in fact, that it is difficult not to be impressed by the sheer unique sound.

The Tchaikovsky *Serenade for Strings* was the orchestral showpiece of the evening. The orchestra highlighted a full sound, which was enhanced by the acoustics of the beautiful church. The third movement was well handled and highlighted sensitive playing by the concertmistress, Danwen Jiang and the Principal cellist, Jodi Beder.

Tempos were set well throughout the work, and the extremely romantic work seemed to flow effortlessly from the Symphonia.

Immediately noticeable are the acoustics in the church, which are well suited for these smaller ensembles. Bass sound is particularly enhanced in this venue, which is primarily composed of marble, tile and plaster — all slightly tempered by wooden pews.

Concert ushers might wait until pauses between movements to seat late arriving patrons as squeaky floors and benches in

the church act as a distraction to not only concertgoers, but performing musicians as well.

Truly worth the trip down to Lambertville, consider taking upcoming concerts of the Riverside Symphonia on Friday and Saturday, October 19 and 20, Friday, November 30, and Saturday and Sunday, December 1 and 2. The Symphonia can be reached at (609) 397-7300.

My Take on It

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messages of some of these shows will continue to be heard.

At a time like this, when our world seems to be falling apart, spending a few hours in a theater may seem self-indulgent. But it is just the opposite. It is an act of bravery. It is an example of our tenacity as human beings. When hearts are breaking, we need to cry. When souls are weary, we need to cry.

Grabbing your best friend and attending a Broadway show together could be just what the doctor ordered. We need to laugh. We need to escape, if only for a few hours. Not only will we personally benefit from seeing a show, but we will also be doing our part to help the community.

Broadway.com, for example, is donating a percentage of profits from tickets purchased on their website to the American Red Cross. Many, many other businesses are starting to come up with similar ideas.

We cannot let these terrorists win. They have hurt us. They have taken away our loved ones. They have scared us beyond our wildest nightmares. And this is exactly why we must stand proud in the face of adversity. If our economy shuts down, they win. We cannot let that happen.

Stand tall, America. Hug your kids. Tell your spouses how much they mean to you. And, if you can find the time, go see a show in New York.

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