



ART 3-D ON A TREE...Seventh graders in Anne Cohen's art class at Roosevelt Intermediate School in Westfield decided to hang their expressive three-dimensional art sculptures for passersby to enjoy. On one of the last days of school, the pupils exhibited their art by hanging it on a tree outside the school. "It brightened up the school grounds and became an outdoor sculpture exhibit for the neighborhood," stated Ms. Cohen. "We wanted to think of an original way to display their very original work."



POPCORN™
Road to Perdition:
Voyage of the Damned

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

By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER
3 popcorns

Some movie buffs say they don't make 'em like they used to. In many ways they are accurate. But rest assured that when the more gifted of our modern filmmakers get the cinematic elements to align just right, the result is sublime.

The most recent example of that fortunate artistic circumstance is director Sam Mendes' *Road to Perdition*. This is a good one.

Oh, certainly there are areas in this Depression-era tale of gangsters, loyalty and evil that nitpickers will find lacking. However, much of that may be more because of what *Road to Perdition* isn't rather than what it is.

It's a mesmerizing tale of organized crime. But contrary to some of the early random babble, it isn't another *Godfather* (1972 and 1974). Nor does it attempt to emulate those classic films (meaning the first two; no one in their right mind would attempt to copy number three).

In this go-round, save for Stanley Tucci's small but important stint as underworld boss Frank Nitti, the criminals are Irish-Americans. And the screenplay never presumes to be of epochal proportions. Rather, it's an artistically wrought relationship study featuring three primary players: hit man Michael "Angel of Death" Sullivan (Tom Hanks); his surrogate dad, crime kingpin John Rooney (Paul Newman), and his son, Michael, Jr. (Tyler Hoechlin).

For the younger Sullivan, this is a coming-of-age story of the harshest order. The growing up begins when he inopportunely stows away in dad's car one night. Suffice it to note, what he then witnesses is not your usual take-son-to-work experience. For 'tis the rubbing out of Finn McGovern that serves as young Mike's introduction to how Pop puts food on the table.

When the lad is discovered, Connor Rooney (Daniel Craig), the big boss' real son, asks cohort Michael if sonny boy can be trusted. The elder Sullivan gives his assurance. But things will never be the same. That's what we get from one of the innumerable, superbly subtle facial expressions that mark Hanks' stellar performance. It's obvious he doesn't trust his benefactor's spoiled spawn. Neither do we. The guy's a rat.

Call it variation No. 3613 on the ancient/Biblical parable about the powerful father who must choose between the loyal adopted son and the jealous and corrupt biological son, with occasional machine gun fire to punctuate matters. But while we're deciding if blood is thicker than water, there's certainly no shortage of the red stuff.

It's also a saga of evil versus evil. As the elder Rooney puts it during one confrontation with Sullivan, "Everyone in this room is a murderer." That is to say, almost all this movie's dramatic personae are evil. But are some more evil than others? It's disturbing if we think about it, and it may be a deterring factor for some, but we find ourselves liking Hanks' character.

He's an assassin. For gosh sakes, his nickname is "The Angel of Death." Why we root for him is one of the primary philosophical inquiries at issue here.

Now, while he's an obviously pensive fellow — for a cold-blooded murderer, that is — Sullivan isn't sticking around while those powers that be ponder his fate. He is first and foremost a man of action. Hence it's the highway for him and young Mike. Voila, it's a road movie.

Both explaining the title as well as giving it a double meaning for us to contemplate, Sullivan and son head for the idyllically described community of Perdition. For there,

in a perfect beach front home replete with golden retriever, dwells a sister-in-law who has offered the father and son fugitives sanctuary. But the killer on the lam has a plan to redeem himself. Psst — it involves banks. So there are some stops to be made along the way.

Thus the jaunt ensues, a far more severe rendition of the escapade Ryan and Tatum O'Neal experienced as they tramped across the rural countryside in *Paper Moon* (1973). Nonetheless, again the open road is the inspiring glue by which parent and sibling can bond, even if that parent is a contract killer. Lest you have the impression that director Mendes' effort is short on derring-do, what with all the symbols, metaphors and literary doodads subtly woven into the script by screenwriter David Self, be apprised that this is where the movie shifts into high gear and when the aforementioned blood really starts flowing.

Seat-edged and taut, the action is driven by our hit man's instinct for survival and his passion for revenge. And that's one awfully strong instinct, and one very violently charged passion.

Hanks is excellent as the contradiction in terms — a loving father yet a merciless killer. But all the ink devoted to the perennial good guy finally playing the heavy is much overstated. It's not quite the same as when Henry Fonda, another celebrated everyman and often considered Hanks' stylistic mentor, played despicable badman Frank in *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1969). That was great, but a thespic task as clear as his blue eyes.

In essence, Hanks' job is a bit murkier. He imports his good-guyness to the role, managing to fashion the antithetical hero-villain without relinquishing his regular Joe repute. Imagine ... he could very well be your ruthless, next door neighbor hit man ... actually a pretty nice guy when he's not at work, don't you think?

The role has intrinsic intrigue. But when it really comes down to cases, Newman as the Irish mob patriarch is the real show. Newman's John Rooney completely convinces us that nothing less than an uncompromising evil lurks behind his avuncular demeanor. The veteran actor and national treasure imbues the crime figure with a haunting understatement. It's what assures the mobster's domination. He is a dyed-in-the-wool Machiavellian. He knows that the Prince must be loved. He also knows that if the Prince cannot be loved, then he must be feared.

Therefore the gangster hedges his bets, regularly rubbing out perceived traitors within his organization to gain fealty, and then illustrating his benevolence by throwing a big wake for the poor soul.

In short, we don't have to look very far to see where Hanks' dichotomous character learned his stuff. Just as we don't have to look very far to find the early Oscar favorite for 2002's best supporting actor. It's Newman.

Include *Road to Perdition* in your moviegoing itinerary and see why.

Road to Perdition, rated R, is a 20th Century Fox and DreamWorks Pictures release directed by Sam Mendes and stars Tom Hanks, Paul Newman and Tyler Hoechlin. Running time: 119 minutes.

Arts & Entertainment

Mary Poppins To Take Stage Next Week

WESTFIELD — Students in Westfield Summer Workshop Studio One have been rehearsing for almost four weeks for their production of *Mary Poppins*, which will be held at Edison Intermediate School in Westfield on Monday, July 29 and Tuesday, July 30. Matinees are at 1:30 p.m. and evening performances are at 7:30 p.m.

In preparing for the production, Director Polly Nelson is joined Union County professionals, Vocal Director Valerie Pineda, Choreographer Irene Ulesky, Scenery Director Diane Burkam, and Westfield resident Charlie Roessler, who builds the scenery.

The Workshop Band, directed by Janet Lyman of the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts, will play for the production.

Kristen Dilzell of Westfield plays the title role and Michael Mielicki of Scotch Plains plays Bert. The Banks children, Jane and Michael, are played by Jana Goldfarb from Westfield and Shane Sheppard from Scotch Plains.

Other cast members include Julia Murphy from Mountainside and Katie Lauricella from Scotch Plains. Westfield residents include Danielle Bercovicz, Jennifer Dilzell, Kelly Dohm, Alex Forstenhauser, Anne Galligan, Katie Lee, and Daniella Regencia.

Tickets are \$6 for adults and \$5 for students and senior citizens. For more information, please call (908) 518-1551.

WCP Upgrades

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In addition, the monitor system will also operate in the dressing rooms so that the actors will have visual cues and be able to see the action onstage without having to stand in the wings.

Cenci said that WCP has been fortunate to have had a terrific construction crew for many years and the scenic design for productions continues to be above par. In addition, the play-reading committee works extremely hard to try to come up with seasons that are entertaining and diverse.

In October, the season opener will be the comedy *Over the River and Through the Woods* which had a very successful run Off-Broadway. In January, audiences will delight in the terrific Kander and Ebb review *And the World Goes Round*. Kander and Ebb are the team that brought us *Cabaret*, *Chicago* and several other superb musicals, so this review will surely be a treat.

In March, audiences will enjoy a classic murder mystery entitled *Dr. Cook's Garden* and the season finale will be Wendy Wasserstein's exceptional play, *An American Daughter*.

WCP continues to offer quality community productions for theater lovers of all ages. I wish them all the best in their upcoming season.

Coming Next Week:
• Delicious Discoveries at Our Farmer's Markets
• Westfielder Authors Book on Baseball
• The Importance of Being Accessorized with Jen's Trends
• Does MTV's "Sorority Life" truly portray the Greeks?

Talent of Local Seniors Soars During County Art Show

COUNTY — Union County's most artistically inclined senior citizens recently exhibited during the 2002 Union County Senior Art Contest and Exhibition, administered by the Union County Division of Cultural and Heritage Affairs and the county's Division on Aging.

The artwork was judged by Frank

Scotch Plains:

George Hodges, second place for "Bronx Day Lily" in the category of "Photography/Non-Professional."

Fanwood:

Gi Wan Song, second place for "Horse" in the category of "Oil/Professional."

Mountainside:



ACRYLIC COTTAGE...Natalie Rotker of Westfield shows Union County Freeholder Chairman Lewis Mingo, Jr. her acrylic piece in the Non-Professional Acrylic category entitled, "Country Cottage." Rotker earned an honorable mention in the Union County Senior Art Contest & Exhibition, which will be on display at NUI/Elizabethtown Gas in Union until August 9.

Falotico, artist and Executive Director of the duCret School of Art, Tony Velez, photographer and Associate Professor of Fine Arts at Kean University, as well as Bisa Washington, mixed media sculptor.

Winning artists from Westfield, Scotch Plains, Fanwood and Mountainside included:

Westfield:

Rose Gelfman, first place in the category of "Acrylic/Non-Professional" for her piece, "Self-Portrait." Natalie Rotker, honorable mention in the category of "Acrylic/Non-Professional."

Matilda Reitman, third place for "Rage 9/11" in the category of "Watercolor/Non-Professional."

Elizabeth Hetherington, first place for "Old Sanibel Light," in the category of "Oil/Non-Professional."

Isabelle Jankowski, honorable mention in the category of "Oil/Non-Professional."

Steven Hua, second place for "Lincoln Head" in the category of "Sculpture/Non-Professional."

The show, which will continue at the NUI/Elizabethtown Gas, Liberty Hall Center in Union until August 9, was also funded in part by a grant from the State Council on the Arts, Department of State, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

For more information, please call (908) 558-2550.

South Pacific Makes Audience Long for Love

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vince herself not to fall for Emile, it's simply to late; she loves him.

Emile, who is madly in love, refuses to help Lieutenant Cable and therefore delays his mission. He takes the extra time and spends it with young Liat.

Back at the plantation, Emile tells Nellie about his two children that he had with a Polynesian woman years ago. Nellie leaves confused and upset. Once again, she realizes that they are too different.

Meanwhile, Bloody Mary attempts to marry off her daughter to Lieutenant Cable. She convinces him of the great decision he would be making if he only married Liat. He is moved by the gesture but says that he cannot marry her, they are simply too different.

Upset by his decision, Bloody Mary runs away with Liat stating that she will be forced to marry someone else.

In the next scene, Emile visits Nellie to ask her not to judge him or his children. But Nellie is saddened by the fact that Emile loved a Polynesian woman.

Later in the following scene, Lieutenant Cable walks in after listening to Nellie's conversation. They both bond in song about how they were taught racial prejudice, rather than being born with it.

Angry by rejection, Emile later approaches him and agrees to the mission; after all he felt he had no future with Nellie. They both enter the Japanese Island and communicate valuable information back to the Americans who end up successfully destroying Japanese crafts and invading Japanese Islands. During the mission, sadly, Lieutenant Cable dies.

The play ends with Emile returning home to find Nellie spending time



Get Outta The House

By CAROL F. DAVIS

Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

The nighttime darkness either soothes us or frightens us. Either way, you can learn more about the world after dark at Reeve-Reed Arboretum's *5th Annual Moonlight Madness* on Friday, July 26, from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. See the animals that come to life when we sleep, learn about the night sky, and check out some glowing rocks. There will even be bedtime stories. Families are welcome to picnic at the Arboretum, beginning at 6:30 p.m. The cost is \$20 per family, and you should pre-register by calling (908) 273-8787, extension no. 15.

Making its debut on August 10, is "*Second Saturdays Coffee House*" in the Fellowship Hall of the Summit Unitarian Church at 4 Waldron Avenue (corner of Springfield Avenue) in Summit. Admission is free, and the series is initially going to be an open microphone deal. Come at 7:30 p.m. for the 8 p.m. start on the second Saturday of each month, where musicians, poets, comedians, and all types of performance artists are invited to strut their stuff. If you will be performing, call them for their guidelines. Professional concerts will also be featured during particular months. Coffee and desserts will be provided, and they do suggest a donation to cover costs. Call them at (908) 273-3245.

Also is Summit, at the Member's Gallery of the New Jersey Center for Visual Arts (NJCAVA), is *A Collective Photographic View of the Great Swamp*. Seven participating photographers from NJCAVA's advanced class will display the results of a visual journey from August 6 through September 3, with an opening reception on Saturday, August 25, from 2 to 5 p.m. See how each artist responded in an individual way to the light and shadow, fog and snow, and changing seasons of the same trek on nature's boardwalk. For more information, call (908) 273-9121.

It's back to Echo Lake Park's amphitheater for a night of Motown with *The Sensational Soul Cruisers* on Wednesday, July 31, at 7:30 p.m. This performance in the always-free series features this group for the eighth year in a row, with popular tunes spanning decades of favorites like "Could It Be I'm Falling In Love," and "It's Your Thing" as they pay homage to greats like Otis Redding and Barry White. Their credentials include being a longtime favorite house band at New York City's famed Copacabana. Refreshment stands will open at 6:30 p.m., so come early if you want to be assured an up-close view at the 11-piece horn band.

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