



Get Outta' The House

By CAROL DAVIS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times
The annual Plainfield Arts Festival is celebrating its 42nd Anniversary this Saturday, July 16, at Library Park from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. This is not a juried show. Admission is free. The Park is located at the intersection of West Eighth Street and Park Avenue, just behind the library. Crafters and artists from the entire metropolitan area participate, and there is a special student category. Refreshments are available. The rain date is Sunday, July 17.

Wheaton Village in Millville is a long drive, but well worth it. This weekend, July 16 and 17, there will be an international symposium and exhibition of contemporary glass. **GlassWeekend '05** is a biennial event, with lectures, demonstrations, social events, and more. Admission is \$7 - \$10. Call (800)998-4552, or log onto www.wheatonvillage.org for information. If you are a Jersey Arts Ticket cardholder, there is a discount admission offer for this event.

On Saturday, July 16, join Joan Lisi at Studio 16 to create a beautiful sterling silver bracelet. Students will use 14 gauge square wire, and will learn to shape, mold, and wrap a unique piece of cuff bracelet with interesting beads. All materials are included in the \$42 fee. The class will be held from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. Studio 16 is located at 16 Old Stirling Road in Warren. For directions and registration information, call (908) 769-7417.

If you've been wondering what puts the "French" in Frenchtown, this is your opportunity to find out. The 7th Annual Bastille Day Fete will be held along the scenic Delaware River on Saturday and Sunday, July 16 and 17, and admission is free. Activities will include artist and craft demonstrations, heritage tours, vendor events, a variety of entertainment, and refreshments. Visit <http://www.frenchtown.com/> for more information.



The Capris

The Capris will perform on Monday, July 18, in Concert Under the Stars in Tamaques Park. This singing group is known for tunes like "There's a Moon Out Tonight", "Till", and "Morse Code of Love." It's free, and begins at 7 p.m. For more information call (908) 789-4080. To hear a sound clip, log onto <http://www.thecapris.com/>.

Interested in Expressing Your Student Views?

The Westfield Leader and Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times are looking for local students from Westfield, Scotch Plains-Fanwood and Mountainside high schools to write on a regular basis and offer their opinions on what interests them. Please contact Michael Pollack at edu@goleader.com

New Jersey PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
NJ PAC's Summer Musical Program presents a WYACT Production of
GUYS AND DOLLS
A Musical Fable of Broadway Based on a Story and Characters by Damon Runyon
Music and Lyrics by Frank Loesser
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Tickets: Adult \$25 • Child \$14
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Westfield Jazz Night



SUMMERTIME, LIVIN'S EASY...Carrie Jackson with her Jazz quartet is one of several groups in downtown Westfield Tuesday night providing entertainment to the sidewalk diners. In the top photo, dancers from the Cotton Club in Harlem show their stuff. Carrie Jackson is pictured with her husband in the middle photo. A well-known dancer from Kimball Turn is pictured in the lower photograph. Jazz Night, sponsored by the Downtown Westfield Corp., is held each Tuesday evening throughout the summer. See goleader.com/photos for more action.

POPCORN™
War of the Worlds": But Who's The Enemy?
One Popcorn, Poor • Two Popcorns, Fair • Three Popcorns, Good • Four Popcorns, Excellent
By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER
2 Popcorns

With "War of the Worlds," director Steven Spielberg takes his turn at the fright phenomenon penned by H.G. Wells in 1898. It is superbly crafted. But if science fiction is a mirror to a metaphor about our civilization, then the reflection here is much too cloudy. This is more horror flick than sci-fi classic. There have been better and more socially instructive variations on the invading alien theme. Brought to radio on Mischief Night of 1938 by Orson Welles, thousands of folks were caught off balance, and truly believed that Martians had indeed landed in Groves Mill, New Jersey. For extra-added effectiveness, the dramatist had fashioned the story in the form of a news broadcast. Apparently, many listeners didn't hear the opening announcement. It wasn't repeated for another forty minutes. Intentionally or not, Welles let the line between drama and news blur. And visionary or not, he gave Americans a booster shot against what was to come: Nazi and other fascist propaganda in the short term; the increasing sophistication of media manipulation by political powers of all stripes in the long pull. Less sly is the underlying import of producer George Pal's "The War of the Worlds," directed by Byron Haskin and released in 1953. Like almost all science fiction produced in that experimental, golden era of gems and clunkers, when the genre was considered strictly grade B, the conquering invaders were symbolic of the red scourge. But the message

was twofold: If the real communists don't get us, the McCarthy witch-hunt surely will.

If Mr. Spielberg's rendition has a subliminal lesson, other than that being invaded by a completely heartless, unrelentingly wicked enemy is a drag, it isn't quite so easy to decipher. The evil he portrays is so terribly pervasive. He could be alluding to any of several crises that concern us. As we watch, wangled and manipulated to seat's edge, they come to mind.

You scratch your head, wondering if there's some insight enclosed about today's ever-present obsession with terror, both real and imagined. The connection is not immediately obvious. Maybe you have to play this two hours of pain and suffering backwards to get the gist.

H.G. Wells wrote his allegory in aversion to Victorian England's imperialism. As in, how'd you like to be invaded by an indomitable, completely selfish force? So you muse. True, it would be controversial and bad for business. But whether or not Spielberg means to say the same thing about U.S. involvement overseas is a viable matter for conjecture.

Regardless, his "War of the Worlds" is pretty harsh stuff. Referring to the book rather than the 1953 film version, he even leaves in the red weed, the sanguine vines snaking everywhere as the aliens begin supplanting the flora and fauna to meet their own needs.

You marvel at how realistic Spielberg makes the mass exodus look and feel as New Jersey dockworker Ray Ferrier, convincingly portrayed by Tom Cruise, attempts to flee from the alien menace with his son Robbie (Justin Chatwin) and daughter Rachel (Dakota Fanning).

All of which almost makes you feel guilty for broaching the question, evidently still unanswered even after reading a rather thorough review: Is "War of the Worlds" entertainment?

"War of the Worlds," rated PG-13, is a DreamWorks Distribution LLC release directed by Steven Spielberg and stars Tom Cruise, Dakota Fanning and Tim Robbins. Running time: 116 minutes

Arts & Entertainment

Rachel Gordon's Subjects Head To The "Big House"

By MICHAEL POLLACK
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Rachel Gordon would prefer to skip the "aspiring" part and be referred to as Director Rachel Gordon. "I already think I'm a director. I've done projects before, I've directed before. I'm a director," she said, boasting of her ability to cope with an experience-challenged crew, tight conditions, a limited budget and less than perfect lighting and sound quality. She speaks like a seasoned film veteran about her knowledge of the business and casts a cynical eye towards the perceived confinements of Hollywood production studios and its limited supply of "movies that make people think," she said.

While some classmates learned how to sew or hang glide for their senior projects, Rachel tackled creating a reality TV show, dubbed *Big House*, for English Teacher Ron Barner's class. "My project was really complex," Rachel said. "It wasn't just me. I was relying on a huge crew, editing and doing technical stuff."

She insists that she doesn't want to pursue reality TV, but is interested in studying film and ultimately being a director. She will attend Bard College in New York to further her directorial track.

Many of the students Rachel recruited had limited practical experience as TV 1 students at Westfield High School (WHS).

"I remember on the first day, a girl said, 'wait. How do you zoom?'" It's not that Rachel expects *Big House* to be a gold standard of integrity and hard-hitting commentary. She acknowledges "it's TV. It's a reality show. If you've seen the new season of *The Real World*, it'll rot your brain. I didn't expect the audience to learn life lessons from it. TV doesn't teach you life lessons."

When asked how she combats stereotypes that claim reality TV is a wasteful medium, she said, "I'm not. Reality TV is a waste of time. It's pure entertainment."

Rachel's *Big House* aspires to be similar to MTV's *The Real World*, but more in line with earlier seasons where real pertinent issues were on display for a worldwide audience to potentially learn, while still being entertaining. One of the first seasons of *The Real World*, Rachel recalls, a cast member with AIDS died after the filming, causing President Bill Clinton to speak out on the contestant and the growing epidemic.

Concerning reality TV's manipu-



BAKER'S DELIGHT...Athina, left, and Megan, the two senior girls featured in *Big House*, enjoyed baking brownies during the filming of the show.

lation of true reality, she said, "About 99.9 percent of what happened on this DVD is completely true. I didn't do anything but tell the cameras where to go. I didn't do anything but edit it together. I didn't do anything to promote drama. Some of the girls are going through major issues with their families, their friends, their identity. If you look beneath the surface, you can take a lot of this very seriously. This is real. This is what happened in one weekend."

There are moments of great teenage jubilation and glee when making late night treats for movie watching, but also moments of angst and uncertainty when a cast member would need the support of her housemates to deal with guy trouble or bullying from the other housemates.

Senior Megan Kealy, who participated in *Big House*, and fellow senior Athina Doutsis, who were friends prior to the taping, appeared to separate themselves from their young counterparts Maria Kheyman and Kaitlin Kominsky. Megan admits to being "kind of mean" to Maria and possibly causing a divide, noting, "she was completely opposite to me. I'm a mellow person and she sort of got on my nerves by being so energetic all the time." Megan did say that she sees Maria in the hallways and is friendly with her now, having shared the experience.

At the premiere, Megan said she was uncomfortable with watching herself onscreen. With her mom in atten-

dance, she said she felt badly because she might have come across as malicious, causing Maria to remove herself from the group. "I didn't realize I was being such a b---. I thought my mom was going to kill me."

The housemates' mission was to make as much money as they could in a weekend; afterwards, an audience would screen the two half-hour episodes and decide who, among the four contestants, was most deserving of the money.

The first episode shows the four cast members, Athina, Megan, Kaitlin and Maria, getting to know each other and shopping for food for the weekend. It works out how they get used to living with one another in the house. The second installment showcases their moneymaking scheme (selling lemonade in Mindowaskin Park) and some petty drama at an impromptu party.

Rachel had to rely upon donated and borrowed equipment to facilitate her project. Her mother, Kristen Larsen, is an executive producer, who helped in the production and, in addition to lending her North Euclid house, let the kids spend \$80 of her own money on food.

A few weeks ago, the *Big House* premiere went "extremely well," said Rachel. "People were laughing, commenting, after I showed it, my family counted the ballots. During the Q and A session, they asked really good questions. I was surprised."

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WF's Kate Geenberg Hits Grand Slam At Ithaca Poetry Tourney

By CASSIE LO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Kate Geenberg of Westfield has always had a passion for writing and poetry. As a freshman at Cornell University this past fall, Kate began performing at local poetry slams, which usually took place at Juna's Café in Ithaca. The occasional performances turned into regular events, with Kate winning numerous slams.

This summer, she was asked to join Team Ithaca, a group of poets who perform in slams together and will be attending the National Poetry Slam in Albuquerque, N.M. on August 10-13. Approximately 80 teams will be competing against Team Ithaca in hopes of taking home the top cash prize and respect from other poets.

Poetry slams have become a contemporary way for poets to showcase their talents. At a typical slam, the night starts off with an open mic segment, which "gets the crowd into the competition more," according to Kate. Before the slam portion begins, five audience members are chosen at random from the audience to judge the competition.

The judges award scores between 0.0 and 10 to the participants, and the highest and lowest scores are disregarded. At the end of the competition, the poet with the highest cumulative score is declared the winner.

To earn his or her scores, each poet has three minutes to perform a piece. If they go over their time limit, a half point deduction usually occurs. Winners usually speak for approximately two minutes and forty seconds, and



Kate Geenberg

also repeat their poem from memory. "If you write a poem that is rhythmically sound and the lines flow you should be able to speak from memory rather than the page," said Kate, who rarely brings a written copy of her poem on stage.

Depending on the amount of poets, all or the top half return to the stage for a second, and sometimes a third,



INTELLIGENTLY ARTISIC... The entire third grade class at Brunner School in Scotch Plains recently participated in "The Wonderful Circus of Words," a play about third graders who have trouble with their grammar homework and are visited one night by two magical ringmasters who help them make sense of the 3-ring circus that is often the English language. In this culminating project designed by Brunner third grade teachers Joe Roskin, Charlene Hall and Debbie Pincus, many curriculum areas were integrated to develop the complete production. Every student had a part in the play as a noun, verb, adverb or adjective, parts of speech that could be used to construct a variety of sentences. Students used math to design a clown face using a coordinate grid, student artists completed the backdrop and scenery and a third grade accompanist led the music that introduced and concluded the play. In the photo are some of the "grammatically correct" third grade thespians, including (front, l to r) Dominique Toro and Danny Brunt and (back, l to r) George Ye, Ben Evans, Ashley Tailon and Kelly Yeager.

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