

**POPCORN™**  
**The Cave: Nothing To Fear**  
**But Ineptitude Itself**

One Popcorn, Poor • Two Popcorns, Fair • Three Popcorns, Good • Four Popcorns, Excellent  
 By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER  
*1/2 of a popcorn*

We expect monsters to be scary. No big thing. With all due respect to the guy over at Loch Ness and Champ up in Lake Champlain, monsters don't exist. But people do. And when they act like monsters, when man's inhumanity to man is in full fester, it's among the most frightening things on Earth.

*The Cave*, on the other hand, is just pathetic. Neither amateurish enough to draw a good-natured laugh, nor professional enough to cause a legitimate jolt, the confusing bit of drivel can't seem to get out of its own way. So forget about it if you've been thinking of saving some money on those shock treatments by seeing this film instead.

At best, the movie is worrisome, if that does anything for you. Worrisome in the way that a driver who won't go above 50 mph in the left lane becomes disconcerting. It dawns on you that he either has no idea what he's doing or is in no condition to know what he's doing. Plus, after flashing your lights for a few miles, you're certain that he may continue just like that for an eternity. He will drive all the way to California in the left lane. "How was your trip, Uncle Ignacz?"

"Great! Drove all the way from Florida in the fast lane. But you should have seen some of the nuts passing me on the right. And nasty, some of 'em...sheesh."

Only good sense assures us that *The Cave*, about some scientific expedition to an underwater cave in the Carpathians, will ultimately end. Populated with the usual array of attractive experts in their field, the film can't even emulate the genre stereotype it aspires to. Yea, sure...this gang is going to discover a new ecosystem. You begin to fret. Like Uncle Ignacz, director Hunt doesn't seem to

know what he's doing.

Paranoia sets in. 'Has Hunt ever made a movie before? Maybe he doesn't know it's eventually supposed to end. I'll be in the theater forever, stuck behind Uncle Ignacz. I don't care if the movie isn't scary. I give up. I just want to go home.' But being scared into submission is hardly a substitute for true terror.

Evincing the very slightest modicum of filmic savvy, Hunt doesn't bring out his fiend until at least the midpoint. And then, the dude isn't much. Depicted in a mishmash of cheesy special effects and quick splice shots doubtless meant to conceal his ho-humness, he is at one point a big larva and later your typical, leaping, dripping gargoyle.

But don't be alarmed. His intent is nothing quite so bad as wanting to keep us in our seats until kingdom come; he just wishes to eat our intrepid adventurers. Good for them. That's one way out of *The Cave*.

Ill-fated souls all the same, the group includes Cole Hauser as Jack, the leader who gets bitten by the ogre and becomes a mite weird; Eddie Cibrian as Tyler, his apologetic brother; Lena Headey as Katherine, ostensibly to provide some sexual tension if only the film could decide how to accomplish that, and Morris Chestnut as Top Buchanan, probably to bestow *The Cave* with at least one brand name actor.

The director stumbles along, trying to figure out the order in which his uninteresting characters should be dispatched. As if it mattered. Our eyes are on the exit sign. This too shall pass.

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*The Cave*, rated PG-13, is a Screen Gems release directed by Bruce Hunt and stars Cole Hauser, Lena Headey and Morris Chestnut. Running time: 97 minutes.



**TAMARA TOMORROW...**Liz Zazzi is a struggling actress who gets her big break playing "Tamara Tomorrow," a children's cartoon show host in *Music From A Sparkling Planet*, a comedy by Douglas Carter Beane. The comedy opens at The Theater Project, Union County College's Professional Theater Company, on Thursday, September 22 at 8 p.m.



**MEET AND GREET...**Superintendent of Schools William Foley greets new teachers Jessica Willard, who will be joining the Science staff at Edison Intermediate School, and Sabino Losco, a new Vocal teacher at Roosevelt Intermediate School, during the district's New Teacher Breakfast on September 1.



**NEW TEACHER TRAINING...**Westfield Public Schools Supervisor of Technology Barbara Mammen conducted a training in technology and differentiated instruction during the New Teacher Institute.

**Sparkling Planet Beams To Theater Project**

CRANFORD — *Music From A Sparkling Planet*, a comedy by Douglas Carter Beane, opens at The Theater Project, Union County College's Professional Theater Company, on Thursday, September 22 at 8 p.m., and continues through Sunday, October 9.

Directed by guest director Wendy Liscow, the cast includes Liz Zazzi, Clark Carmichael, Gary Glor, Jesse Jou and Jeff Maschi.

The production team comprises Jessica Parks (set design), Jill Nagle (lighting design), Cherie Cunningham (costume design) and Mike Magnifico (sound design).

The Theater Project is Union County College's professional theater company, bringing artists from all over the state and New York City together in its productions. Known for its intimate "Studio on Stage," where the audience sits within arm's reach of the performers, the company is celebrating its 11th season of producing new works and contemporary classics.

The Theater Project has been recognized by grants from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the New Jersey State Arts Council, and The Union County College Foundation.

Audiences are invited to meet the actors after each performance. On Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, tickets are \$20. To reserve tickets, call The Theater Project Box Office at (908) 659-5189.

**WF Glee Club Invites Singers To Rehearsals**

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Area Glee Club will resume rehearsals on Monday, September 12 at 8 p.m. at the Westfield Presbyterian Church choir room. Male and female, adult and student singers are invited.

At the first rehearsal on September 12, Director Thomas Booth will introduce the winter program music, which will be performed at local area churches on Saturday and Sunday, December 3 and 4. Choral sections of the program will include a variety of seasonal, classical, traditional and popular songs. Invited special artists will perform two artist sections. George Lachenauer will be the choral accompanist with Director Thomas Booth.

At the September 12 rehearsal, a fellowship time with coffee and donuts will follow the singing. For additional information, call Dale Juntilla at (908) 232-0673.

**Bantry Boys Perform At FW Kuran Center**

FANWOOD—The fifth annual Summer at The Bandstand Concert Series returns, as The Bantry Boys perform a free concert on Saturday, September 10 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Patricia M. Kuran Cultural Art Center next to Fanwood Borough Hall.

Bring a lawn chair or blanket. In the case of inclement weather, the event will move indoors. For more information, call (908) 889-7223 or (908) 889-5298. The event is sponsored by the Fanwood Arts Council.

**Book Nook**

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cently released "Seven Spunkey Monkeys," a book that is not only fun to read, but also teaches counting and the days of the week. Young readers and illustrators will get a laugh out of these adventuresome monkeys. Published by Harcourt (2005).

Max wants to be rich, so he makes a plan. "Max - A - Million" by Trina Wiebe is a chapter book that readers in the middle elementary school grades will enjoy. There's a wonderful lesson to be learned in the pages of this slender book. Keep it in mind when it's "Book Report" time. It is published by Lobster Press (2002).

**The Chansonettes Begin Rehearsals**

WESTFIELD—The Chansonettes of Westfield will begin rehearsal Wednesday, September 7 at 7:30 p.m. for current members and for anyone who would like to join the group.

The Chansonettes are a women's choral group under the direction of Jean Schork and accompanied by Mel Freda. Rehearsals are held at the Presbyterian Church on Mountain Avenue in Westfield. Anyone interested in singing for fun and who would like more information, may contact Nancy Lau at (909) 654-5130 or Jane Walsweet at (908) 232 4531. The Chansonettes perform for various organizations, church groups and nursing homes.

The theme for the holiday program is "there's no business like snow business." The Chansonettes are currently booked for the fall program; however, anyone interested in booking for the spring may contact Ms. Lau or Ms. Walsweet.

**Spiraling Plays Echo Lake Park MusicFest**

WESTFIELD —Spiraling has spent much of the past few months outside of its native New Jersey, touring across the country in support of artists including OK Go, Hot Hot Heat, Eisley, Armor For Sleep and Q and Not U. However, Saturday, September 17 will find the band back home for MusicFest '05 — an all day, outdoor show that includes rock icons the Smithereens, They Might Be Giants and Joan Jett.

The concert, presented by the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders, is a free, all-ages event that will take place in Echo Lake Park in Westfield.

The band is no stranger to such high profile shows, with previous gigs at prominent venues such as Irving Plaza and the Bowery Ballroom to its credit. Spiraling has also played at the CMJ and South by Southwest music festivals, and has toured with They Might Be Giants and Violent Femmes.

For more information, check out <http://www.unioncountynj.org/svcsgov/parksrec/program1.htm>. Spiraling will play at 3:15 p.m. with Thuli Dumakade at 11:15, Joe Bonamassa at 12:30 p.m., Jo Bonanno & The Godsons of Soul at 2 p.m., the Smithereens at 4:30 p.m., They Might Be Giants at 6 p.m. and Joan Jett at 8 p.m.

**THE STUDENT VIEW**  
 The weekly column written by local high school students

**Student Combats Anti American Stereotypes**

By KATE MCGEE  
*Specialty Writer For The Westfield Leader and The Times*

Three weeks ago, I enjoyed my first vacation to Europe - destination: Paris, France. Now, I know what some people may be thinking- "Why would you want to go there, they hate Americans?" or "The French are rude" or "I hate the French."

Before I left, numerous people told me the French were going to be rude to me, yell at me, pretend not to speak English or spit in my food. Yes, someone told me that they would spit in my food. One hundred percent of the time, the people who made these comments had never been to France.

My friends who had been to France told me totally different things. I was told that if you're polite, try to speak French, and aren't obnoxiously rude, then I would survive and I did. So I thought I'd share with Americans what the French are really like, how France is different from America and how the people aren't waiting at the airport to tar and feather every American that enters their country.

You don't realize what an impression America has made on other countries until you visit one. Everyone spoke English, so it was easy to shop and find your way around. We saw McDonalds' everywhere, heard Usher and the infamous song, "YMCA" on the radio, saw shops like Lacoste and GAP. French people wore printed t-shirts with English writing, and billboard ads were in English and French.

The food in France is fantastic. The meals, like here, consist of an appetizer, entrée and dessert. However, the salad is served after the entrée, and not with the appetizer. The desserts are amazing, especially the Crème Brulee. The French fries are the best I've ever had, and everything looks and tastes fresh. Meals are very slow, and dinners take about two to three hours. Plus, they eat dinner a lot later than Americans. We would usually finish dinner around 10:30 p.m. and no, no one ever spit in my food.

Contrary to popular belief, French poodles are not the dog of France, because I didn't see one, but dogs were allowed almost anywhere. I saw dogs in the Galleries Lafayette, a huge Lord and Taylor like department store, in parks, in cafés, in hotels, and even in people's handbags.

Also, everyone wore really plain colored clothing, like grays, dark

greens and browns. I rarely saw anyone in pink or yellow. Men also wore purse-like bags, and I did have the chance to see a man in a kilt.

My thoughts are that the French are normal people, living normal lives. I think that I've been treated worse in New York City than I ever was in Paris. Even if there were French who disliked Americans, they never showed it. They were polite and considerate, the way we all should be.

**WF BOE Discusses Goals At First Meeting**

WESTFIELD—The Westfield Board of Education will convene its first meeting of the 2005-2006 school year on Tuesday, September 13 at 8 p.m. in Room 105 at 302 Elm Street.

Included on the agenda will be a discussion of board goals. The board agreed that the goals for 2005-2006 will include:

- Addressing enrollment imbalances at the intermediate and elementary levels;
- reducing the achievement gap across the district;
- improving community engagement; developing initiatives between the town and the school district; and strengthening curriculum and raising achievement of learning disabled students. A complete agenda will be available on Monday, September 12, at [www.westfieldnj.k12.org](http://www.westfieldnj.k12.org).

**Enrich. Cent. Provides Community Education**

SCOTCH PLAINS—The Enrichment Center Annex is the new provider of Community Education for the Scotch Plains Fanwood School District for the 2005-2006 school year.

The Enrichment Center Annex is a non-profit company headed by Elaine Sigal. All classes will still be offered in the Scotch Plains-Fanwood schools. Classes for students in K-12 will be taught by state certified teachers with a maximum class size of eight students. Adult classes will run in the evenings.

Over 100 courses are being offered this year for students and adults. There are enrichment classes for every grade offered in every elementary and middle school at 3:30 and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Parents have already started to register their children from word of mouth class descriptions. Register early to avoid disappointment since there is a maximum class size of eight.

A new program brochure has been mailed to all residents of Scotch Plains and Fanwood. All class listings are on the new web site: [www.TheEnrichmentCenterAnnex.org](http://www.TheEnrichmentCenterAnnex.org) and on line registration is now available plus parents may now use credit cards. Residents from any and all towns are eligible to register for any of the classes offered. There is a slightly higher registration fee for non Scotch Plains-Fanwood residents.

Please call the new Scotch Plains-Fanwood Community School number at (908) 654-8878 to speak with Mrs. Sigal about courses or to register.

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