



POPCORN™ Scary Movie 4: So Bad It's Frightening

One Popcorn, Poor • Two Popcorns, Fair • Three Popcorns, Good • Four Popcorns, Excellent
1 & 1/2 popcorns

By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER

Everything is relative. For example, 83 minutes is a rather short running time for a feature film these days. However, in the case of *Scary Movie 4*, the latest in the series of anything-for-a-laugh horror movie send-ups meant to gross out, titillate and make feel superior via its idiocy, it's not short enough.

The Wayanses (Keenan, Marlon and Shawn) didn't write or direct this one. That ended with installment two. Instead, director David Zucker, the progenitor of nouvelleclues who brought us *Airplane* (1980), *The Naked Gun* (1988) and yes, *Scary Movie 3*, again tries his hand at the franchise.

Try it right. *Scary Movie 4's* only true wit begins and ends with its tagline: "The fourth and final chapter of the trilogy." The rest is unmemorable, a giambotte of ploys and mechanisms from several fright-inducing flicks, tossed together in no particular order.

Flitting through notions of *The Grudge* (2004), *The Village* (2004), *War of the Worlds* (2005), *Saw* (2004) and *Million Dollar Baby* (2004), Anna Faris reprises her role as Cindy Campbell, dimwitted heroine and coquette extraordinaire. She is again joined in her adventures by Regina Hall as Brenda, the freewheeling antithesis always happy to extol her lack of virtue.

Somewhere between the first attack of the alien tri-pods and her discovery that the house where she's been hired to care for an old lady (Cloris Leachman) is haunted, Cindy meets Tom Ryan (Craig Bierko). Irresponsible employee and failed father, he is the ultimate loser as love interest...proof that there is a lid for every pot. Unwittingly, their courtship is a competition to see who's the stupidest.

Director Zucker, working from a ragtag script by Craig Mazin and Jim Abrahams, makes little effort to create any continuity among the loose-leafed sketches and half-baked vignettes that comprise the attempted satire. Cur-

ous thing is, in a reverse backfire sort of way it works. If *Scary Movie 4* has one saving grace, it's the utter absence of pretense and ambition.

While a dubious distinction indeed, the nothing ventured, nothing gained attitude is oddly liberating. Want to visit the rest room? Go ahead. Care to cruise the concession? Feel free. You won't miss anything. And by the same token, when a bit doesn't quite work, such as Leslie Nielsen's stint as a practically naked, imbecilic President of the United States, that's O.K. We understand. Some things simply can't be funnier than the tragicomedies they intend to mock.

Besides, most of the ludicrous goings-on are really just an excuse to put various celebrities on display. The opening scene finds Dr. Phil McGraw and Shaquille O'Neal engaged in a witty repartee whilst attempting to free themselves from a dungeon. Others strewn about in the kitchen-sink approach to cameo interjection include Chris Elliott, Bill Pullman, Michael Madsen, Carmen Electra and Molly Shannon.

All of which gives the *Scary Movie* devotee only two responsibilities: to blurt out the movie being parodied and to name with equal self-satisfaction the star briefly appearing therein. That this is now considered entertainment in some pockets of our society isn't necessarily a sign that the apocalypse is nigh.

In a less drastic supposition, you'll have to consult with your favorite philosopher to confirm whether or not this heralds a brand-new form of anti-intellectualism. But one thing is sure. While its aforementioned value as a psychiatric elixir for the world-weary is unproven, the lame-brained *Scary Movie 4* certainly gives the term simple pleasures a whole new meaning.

Scary Movie 4, rated PG-13, is a Weinstein Company release directed by David Zucker and stars Anna Faris, Craig Bierko and Regina Hall. Running time: 83 minutes

CDC to Stage Elton John, Tim Rice's AIDA in May

CRANFORD—Cranford Dramatic Club (CDC) Community Theatre in Cranford announced that it would be bringing its own production of *Aida* to area residents beginning Friday, May 5 and continuing through Sunday, May 21.

Aida tells the tale of the love between an Egyptian soldier and an enslaved Nubian princess — a love that condemns them to death but ultimately transcends the cultural differences between the two warring nations.

Shayne Austin Miller, who also directed the productions of *Smoke Joe's Cafe* and *South Pacific* at CDC, directs CDC's production. Mr. Miller indicated that he has chosen to place special emphasis on lighting and the use of fabric in his interpretation of *Aida*. Fabric played an important role in the culture and trade of ancient Egypt and is used in this production to evoke various moods of the story.

Veteran CDC producer Elizabeth Howard helms the production team with Mitch Koleisire serving as the orchestra director, Tracy Glenn Murray as vocal director and stage management by Kristin Pfeifer. Choreography is by Kelsea-Janene Fleisher. The large multi-racial cast blends CDC regulars with a group of newcomers to CDC.

Wanda Toro (*Aida*), Richard McNamara (*Radames*), Melissa Loderstedt (*Amneris*), Roger Hayden (*Zoser*), Michael Miguel (*Mereb*), Zhenia Bemko (*Nehebkka*), Howard Whitmore (*Amonasro*) and Marc Chandler (*Pharaoh*) fill the principal roles.

The show will be presented on Friday and Saturday nights at 8 p.m., from May 5 to the 20, with a special Sunday matinee at 3 p.m. on May 21. Tickets are \$20 on a reserved seat basis (senior and student discounts available) and can be obtained by calling the

box office at (908) 276-7611 or through the theatre's website at www.cdctheatre.org. The CDC Community Theatre is located at 78 Winans Avenue in Cranford, off Centennial Avenue near Exit 136 of the Garden State Parkway.

Symphony

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strings was one of the segment's high points, and her percussive playing during a moment of orchestral frenzy stirred intense instrumental drama.

In her performance of the first movement of Saen Sans' Piano Concerto No. 2, 15-year-old Ji-nee Lo showed a technique that was expansive and reflective all at once, and her nuanced delivery gave the concerto's furious low passages even more gravity. The WSO fleshed out the exquisite piece marvelously; rather than saving its energy for its own showpieces in the second half of the program, the orchestra threw everything into supporting the soloists.

Eleven-year-old Katelyn Tran was absolutely mesmerizing. She performed the first movement of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1 with a musicianship far beyond her young years. From fluid arpeggios to intense chordal outbursts, she captured the spirit of the prolific composer — at turns tortured, at turns tender — with passion and grace. During her stunning cadenza, Mr. Wroe and the WSO members watched reverently, looking as captivated as the audience.

After such an ambitious first act, the Royal Fireworks Music gave the orchestra and the audience a chance to take a breather. The stately, regal work is of a much more straightforward classical style than the other works on the evening's program, and the WSO (along with the WHS Chamber Orchestra) poured fantastic exuberance into the piece to generate enough energy to fill the auditorium.

Kodaly's "Dances of Galanta" closed the program with great flair. Dramatic and expansive, the WSO took the music from the wild to the mournful in seconds. Little orchestral flurries harkened back to some of the swirling piano arpeggios in the concerto segment of the concert, and Mr. Wroe seemed to dance on stage as he led his orchestra through passages both melancholy and animated all the way to the triumphant final explosion at the end of the piece.

The WSO did something really special on Saturday night. The orchestra shared its stage with young talents from whom this community can expect much. Absent were any holes one might have anticipated from the prominent incorporation of student musicians.

Instead, the performers gave a coherent, compelling concert in a wonderful triumph for both the WSO and the Westfield public-school music programs.

Wow, I can't wait to do that again.

See It In Color:
www.goleader.com



SIGNS OF SPRING... *Friends of Music* at St. Paul's will present the Parish Choir of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in concert on Sunday, May 7, at 7 p.m. Featuring St. Paul's new organ, the works to be performed are Gabriel Faure's *Requiem* and Francis Poulenc's Organ Concerto. The choir will be joined by nationally renowned soloists and members of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra playing their Golden Age Collection of historic string instruments. The concert will be under the direction of Charles Banks. St. Paul's is located at 414 East Broad Street in Westfield. For further information, contact Mr. Banks at (908) 232-8506, extension 17. A donation of \$10 at the door is suggested.

Murphy Tribute Concert

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Mr. Winder told the newspaper: "I used to see Chip Mergott play at O'Connors — at some point I was writing some songs — so I called him up and he gave me encouragement."

Mr. Mergott ended up producing some of Mr. Winder's CDs and has remained a close friend, and the two often perform together. Mr. Winder also said, "It was Chip who recommended we team up for the evening for the benefit concert."

Mr. Winder's 16-year-old daughter Kimberly, a junior at Bridgewater Raritan High School, intermittently joined the duo on stage with her trumpet.

Between songs, Mr. Mergott reminisced about his childhood friend, Judy Singer, and how later, after Judy married Paul, his friendship grew with both of them. Mr. Murphy led church groups in Colonia, and Mr. Mergott enjoyed helping him with some of the musical activities Mr. Murphy organized for teenagers.

Mr. Mergott also shared intimate details of personal struggles and tri-

umph over the joyous birth of his newborn son. Reaching into his pocket to share a photograph, Mr. Mergott teased the audience that he must have left it somewhere else. Briefly excusing himself backstage to retrieve the snapshot, Mr. Mergott returned with a poster-size picture of his son, Elijah Paul, posed in an infant seat.

For the rest of the evening, little Eli Paul sat perfectly quiet alongside his father playing music and paying tribute to his namesake. Mr. Mergott remarked how wonderful it will be when some day he would be sitting up on stage with Eli Paul and his wife Annie, playing as a trio, his favorite song, "Jesus Loves Me." No doubt, Mr. Murphy will be watching, enjoying the show from a much higher balcony.

Members of the community wishing to make a donation can send a check to "Foundation 432," 25 South Alward Avenue, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920. In the memo section, please write: Murphy Family Fund.

Don't Fret: April is Natl. Stress-Awareness Month

By CAROL F. DAVIS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

AREA — For a 30-day period in April, designated for the past 15 years as Stress Awareness Month, health care professionals across the nation join forces to increase public awareness about the causes and cures for this modern-day epidemic.

Sadly, stress has become prevalent in our society. Sure, we all experience episodic stress when dealing with particularly anxiety-producing stimuli, but the proportion of individuals suffering chronically seems higher than ever.

There are many definitions and many types of stress. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines stress as "a physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension and may be a factor in disease causation." If you look it up on www.dictionary.com, scroll down for this one:

"A mentally or emotionally disruptive or upsetting condition occurring in response to adverse external influences and capable of affecting physical health, usually characterized by increased heart rate, a rise in blood pressure, muscular tension, irritability, and depression."

There are other types of stress, including the kind you experience when you are excited about something or anticipating something that will occur. But what is the difference in our reactions? None. Both positive and negative stressors, when left unchecked, have exactly the same effect on you. They deplete you, leaving you feeling exhausted.

The first step in dealing with stress is to define the sources of it in your life. Some may be subtle, but they are everywhere because stress is a natural part of living. However, left unchecked, life can become unbalanced. Your personal relationships, your job, and your health can suffer. It can also be a factor in depression, anxiety, and other disorders.

While not a complete checklist, you can begin to look for signs of an unhealthy level of stress in your life by asking yourself questions like:

Do minor problems and disappointments upset you excessively?
Are you noticing a change in your sleep or eating habits?

Are you unable to stop worrying?
Are you experiencing digestive problems or high blood pressure?

Do you experience flashes of anger over minor problems?
Do you suffer from chronic pain, headaches or backaches?

If you answered "yes" to even one of these, consider taking an active role in attempting to reduce stress at its roots. If unable — you may not be able to leave your job right now despite the fact that you have a boss who is making unreasonable demands — then it is time to take control.

Regain peace of mind with stress management techniques such as deep breathing, guided imagery or meditation, yoga, physical activity, soothing music, a hot bath, massage, animal companions, a cup of soothing tea, good friends or a hobby.

The Terra Sky Center for Wellness at 510 Morris Avenue in Summit is a good place to start. Their focus is on total-body fitness, working on the mind-body-soul connection. Stress-reduction methods at the center include: yoga,

massage, meditation, energy healing, special workshops, psychotherapy and acupuncture. Visit them online at: www.terraskycenter.com for a complete schedule of services and special events.

Peter and Anne Ferraro are owners of Westfield/Fanwood Yoga & Pilates Center located at 250 South Avenue in Fanwood, where there are classes and programs that provide a variety of opportunities to reduce stress. Mr. Ferraro believes "When one practices yoga and meditation, the body reaches an ideal condition for healing, rather than a disease mode from the effects of stress. You feel more peaceful and you then actually see more peace in the world."

Ms. Ferraro added, "Stress is not inherently negative, but it is our emotional reaction to stressful situations that we need to be concerned with." Other workshops include chanting, a series to promote healing and a course in miracles based on the Gospel of Thomas.

Fatima Tranquilli is the director and instructor at The Therapeutic Massage Training Center, 560 Springfield Avenue in Westfield. Her unconventional approach to dealing with stress began to take shape one month before she was diagnosed with cancer, when she decided to become a massage therapist. "I did nothing conventional to treat my cancer, and now it's four years later."

She goes on to describe the physiological relationship between massage and stress, explaining how "massage increases blood flow and stimulates the lymphatic system to do its work. Through manipulation of soft tissue, toxins are released," reducing stress and leading to better overall health.

Should your attempts at managing and eliminating excess stress fail, it may be time to seek professional help. There are licensed professional counselors, psychologists and clinical social workers trained to work with you on resolving issues. There are psychiatrists to help you through a particularly acute episode or through chronic stress with a combination of therapy and medications. Remember, there is always hope.

Home and Garden

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might prove challenging due to the watering required, he believes it really adds a nice splash of color for parties.

Ms. Flowers suggested hanging flower swags over doorways as another spring touch for special events.

"We're also making 'kissing balls' of fresh flowers similar to mistletoe balls you see during the holidays," Ms. Flowers said. "Mixing daisies works well because they are a hearty flower in many different colors."

You can also treat guests to flowers in unexpected places.

"Try a brandy snifter or tiny bud vase of flowers in the powder room," Mr. Christoffers suggested.

And if you'd like to opt for something that lasts longer than fresh cut flower displays, you may want to choose a potted variety.

"Azaleas can be displayed inside until they are done blooming," Ms. Mohn said.

An added bonus is that if you use bulb varieties such as tulips, daffodils or hyacinths, you can later replant the bulbs outside to bloom next year.

"Hydrangeas have a big flower top with showy leaves," Mr. Burke said.

WHS Students Create Tibetan Sand Painting

WESTFIELD — Following the traditions of Tibetan artists, students in Art I classes at Westfield High School (WHS) recently participated in creating a Mandala sand painting.

Starting with a four-foot-square black table top, the students first created an outline of geometric designs drawn in white on the table's surface. Next, the students used Chak-purs (metal funnels which hold the sand) to release small sprinkles of sand into specific pre-drawn areas on the table. By rubbing sticks over the Chak-purs, the students created vibrations, which made the sand flow out.

This is a traditional Mandala sand painting method, according to WHS art teacher Roy Chambers. Mr. Chambers also made available a second table for a "community" Mandala sand painting open up to anyone in the school to participate. According to Mr. Chambers, "This project is unique because it emphasizes the 'process' of creating art instead of the finished 'product,' because the finished product is erased at the closing ceremony."

Mr. Chambers learned the intricate design method from Tibetan Buddhist monks through a program offered at Rutgers University.

Pam Newell Hosts Artists Gallery of Gifts

WESTFIELD — For the last 20 years, Pam Newell's 1881 Victorian home has hosted biannually the Artists Gallery of Gifts in Westfield. Each season, a collection of 10 to 20 vendors joins Ms. Newell at her home on 603 Clark Street in Westfield.

This year the gallery will take place on Friday, April 28, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and continue from 7 to 9 p.m. The gallery can be viewed on the weekend as well — on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Vendors collect every season for a three-day showing of gifts that include: painted glass, garden accessories, floral designs, sterling silver and costume jewelry, imported straw and travel bags, hostess gifts, original watercolors and portrait art.

The spring show is geared towards the garden, while the fall show in November previews the holidays.

Raffles are drawn each season benefiting Children's Specialized Hospital in Mountainside. Guests are invited through the mail and walk-ins are also welcome.

Ms. Newell can be reached at (908) 654-3614.



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Funding has been made possible in part by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Department of State, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, through a grant administered by the Union County Division of Cultural and Heritage Affairs



Get Outta' The House

By CAROL F. DAVIS

Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

On Saturday, April 28 at 8 p.m., the **Plainfield Symphony** (New Jersey's oldest) will present Broadway and Movie Favorites at the Crescent Avenue Presbyterian Church in Plainfield. Single tickets will be available at the door for \$25 - \$45, with senior and student discounts. For more information, call (908) 561-5140 or visit: www.plainfieldsymphony.org. The church is at the corner of Seventh and Watching Avenue.

On Sunday, May 7, at 2 p.m., the **Beacon Hill Swing Band** will return to the Watching Arts Center for a concert featuring tunes from the Great American Song Book. You will hear pieces by some of the nation's best arrangers, including: Andre Previn, John Williams, Marty Paitch, Bill Holman, Harry Betts, Bob Florence and Shorty Rogers. Admission is \$12 - \$15. For directions or information, call (908) 753-0190, or visit them on the web at: www.watchingarts.org.

The final play of the season at the Westfield Community Players, **Nunsense**, will begin on Saturday, April 29, with several performances to follow in May. The theatre is located at 1000 North Avenue West in Westfield. Tickets for this award-winning musical are \$20 each. Call the box office at (908) 232.1221 for information.

On Saturday, May 6, the Antioch Chamber Ensemble will perform at the Calvary Episcopal Church 31 Woodland Avenue in Summit. This vocal group was formerly headquartered at Trinity Church on Wall Street, and moved to Summit following the tragedy of September 11. The concert begins at 7 p.m., and admission is \$20. Tickets are available at the door. For information visit: <http://www.antiochonline.com/>.

Off the Rack: Art Made From, On or About Clothing, is the featured exhibit at the Arts Guild of Rahway through May. Four featured artists take articles of clothing and transform them into works of art using a variety of techniques including painting, printmaking, and sculpture. Admission is free, and the gallery hours are Wednesday, Friday, Saturday: 1-4 p.m., Thursday: 1-3 and 5-7 p.m. or by appointment. Call (732) 381-7511 or log onto: <http://www.rahwayartsguild.org>.