

POPCORN

“Captain America: The Winter Soldier”

Leads the Blockbuster Brigade

2 and 1/2 popcorns

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

By **MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER**
Film Critic

Much care is taken by directors Anthony and Joe Russo to make “Captain America: The Winter Soldier” everything fans of the Marvel Comics franchise might desire. Yet The Great Unwashed will be hard put to distinguish it from the mass of blockbuster adventure yarns splashing their special-effects laden agitations across the silver screen this time of year.

Folks who mistakenly wander into theaters showing this sequel to 2011’s “Captain America: The First Avenger,” the ninth installment in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, will doubtfully become converts. But who needs ‘em? The box office doesn’t lie. Exhibiting the zeal of religious fanatics, true believers will find ample gristle to chaw on and minutiae aplenty to mull over their cheese fries.

The no-expense-spared, \$170M panoply of cutting edge, filmic possibilities feeds the phenomenon, providing adherents with a techno update/variation on the Greek and Roman myths. And yet happily, those living outside its enthusiastic pale won’t necessarily need a libretto or glossary to follow the story. Although a tad complicated, it’s not obscurely convoluted.

But while Steve Rogers, a.k.a. Captain America, handsomely depicted by Chris Evans, again busies himself making the world safe for democracy, it’s the subtextual stuff that the sociologically inclined will find compelling. With the passage of time, this genre, primarily intended for adolescents of all ages, has expanded its gray area, specifically as it applies to governments and morality.

That’s a good thing, eh Mr. Darwin? Nowadays kids pick up earlier on the hypocrisy of their age. Having such forthcoming uncertainty strewn throughout their heroic pulp fiction hopefully arms them with the healthy skepticism they need to preserve American ideals.

It’s changed a bit since Captain America creators Joe Simon and Jack Kirby dreamt up the superhero at Timely Comics, the predecessor to Marvel, ostensibly to hearten kids while we fought the Axis powers in WWII. Not much gray warranted there. By the very nature of his character, a throwback from the 1940s frozen in suspended animation and thawed to fight the good fight, Rogers spans the generations and embraces the changing scenario. Captain America harbors old-fashioned values, and yet is entirely aware of the necessity to merge them with the contemporary folkways, mores and technology important to his world-saving career.

Because I am beside the point, but wished to report on the accuracy and correctness of this rendition, I donned disguise and filtered my way into a cell of Captain America diehards where the film’s faithfulness to the source material was being debated. What I could decipher among the esoteric references was that screenwriters Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely, adapting Ed Brubaker’s story, picked and chose freely from the body of Captain America lore. The quorum deemed this kosher.

I stayed for a short while afterwards, comfortable that my masquer-

ade had gone undetected, and enjoyed the little repast that was offered. My confidence emboldened, I remarked to a fellow on my right, “Good potato salad, huh?”

“Yeah, not bad,” he remarked, adding, “You know, those are Wonder Woman sneakers you’re wearing.” Grabbing two chicken wings and a brownie, my irrelevancy vanished into the night.

That noted, it bears informing that all the movie’s main players successfully etch the sort of characterizations required of their comic book personae. While the baggage of his time-travel travail causes its angst, we never doubt the altruism of Evans’s Steve Rogers. Scarlett Johansson is complexly glib and sultry as his super girlfriend, Black Widow, and Samuel Jackson as their mentor and boss, Nick Fury, is a hip old font of wisdom.

So that works, and so does all the action, especially if you like your colorful kaleidoscope of f/x punctuated with sonic boom explosions, unremitting gunfire and cacophonous crunching. But strip away the big screen framing and what’s left is the sort of perfunctory plot that fuels those mystery series any given night on TV.

You know the drill. In this go-round, all is not what it seems at S.H.I.E.L.D., the secret agency for whom Captain America fights the good fight. And as is par for the course whenever someone questions the authority of an institution gone bad, said doubter is branded a traitor.

The story’s two warring ideologies, S.H.I.E.L.D. vs. HYDRA, might very well be a metaphor for the divisiveness that, Toynebee would probably agree, currently poses the greatest threat to our country. The movie offers vicarious respite from this and other looming challenges.

Thus, addressing the proverbial bottom line, the amusement value can be judged on a sliding scale that takes into account how much of a devotee you are. However, I believe even Captain America wouldn’t think it un-American to wish his “Winter Soldier” episode didn’t take what seems like all spring to make its occasionally entertaining point.

“Captain America: The Winter Soldier,” rated PG-13, is a Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures release directed by Anthony Russo and Joe Russo and stars Chris Evans, Scarlett Johansson and Samuel L. Jackson. Running time: 136 minutes

Evalyn Dunn Gallery to Host Roig Exhibit

WESTFIELD – Evalyn Dunn Gallery of Westfield will host an exhibit featuring the works of artist of Ricardo Roig of Westfield. An opening reception will be held on Thursday, May 8, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the gallery located at 549 South Avenue West, Westfield. Refreshments will be served.

The show will feature a variety of new artwork including several oil paintings, as well as various limited edition hand-cut screen prints. The exhibit will run through Saturday, May 17.

For more information on the artist, visit www.ricardoroig.com or call the gallery at (908) 232-0412.

The Theater Project to Remember Mattfield at Gala

WEST ORANGE – The Theater Project will recognize the late Ken Mattfield who lived in Scotch Plains and Garwood. He is among eight honorees at its 20th Anniversary Gala to be held on Thursday, May 15, at the Wilshire Grand in West Orange. The Theater Project, a professional theater company will celebrate two decades of presenting the best in contemporary theater in New Jersey.

“This gala is a milestone for us. We want to mark our 20th anniversary by celebrating and honoring the impressive people who have helped us bring live theater to more and more diverse audiences,” said Mark Spina, founder and artistic director.



Ken Mattfield

Ken Mattfield pioneered audio-described performances for visually impaired audiences at The Theater Project. He spearheaded the successful collaboration of the Lions, Union County Blind Association and The Theater Project to create a rich theater experience for the visually impaired.

“Ken enthusiastically embraced this project when I first presented it to the Lions Club,” Mr. Spina stated. His legacy continues today at The Theater Project. The Lions Club underwrites this program as they have since 2004. During an audio-described performance, the visually impaired patron uses a headset to hear narrated descriptions of the on-stage action, simultaneously as it occurs.

Ken, a beloved Springfield public school administrator passed away in 2009. He lived in Scotch Plains for 22 years before moving to Garwood. Once retired from his career in teaching and school administration, he devoted himself to the Lions Clubs International.

He was a past district governor at the state level at Lions Clubs Inter-

national and a Melvin Jones Fellow. Ken served as chairman of the Board of Directors of the Eye Bank of New Jersey.

In addition to his devotion to charitable groups he enjoyed world travel and ballroom dancing with his wife of 40 years, Catherine. She will represent her husband at the Gala where his contributions will be honored.

The evening will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a cocktail hour, followed by a sit down dinner.

The keynote speaker will be Ken Davenport, producer of *Kinky Boots*, the winner of the 2013 Tony Award for Best Musical.

An open bar will be available throughout the evening. Entertainment includes live music and a lineup of many favorite actors who have appeared in Theater Project productions over the past 20 years. Tickets are \$100 per person.

Besides attending the 20th Anniversary Gala, anyone can pledge support for The Theater Project by being a Gala Sponsor or placing an ad in the evening’s program. Silent auction donors will be listed in the evening’s program and on The Theater Project’s website.

For more information on sponsorships, advertising and auction donations, visit www.thetheaterproject.org/gala.

The Theater Project, www.TheTheaterProject.org, a professional theater company, is based at the Burgdorff Cultural Center for the Performing Arts in Maplewood. The Theater Project began in 1994 with the goal of bringing the best contemporary plays to their community, and now presents more than 50 performances a year on five stages in two counties. In addition to stage productions, it offers extensive programs serving local playwrights, the disabled, children and seniors.

Town Book Store Hosts Mystery Author Milchman

WESTFIELD — The Town Book Store will host author Jenny Milchman on Saturday, April 19, from 2 to 4 p.m.

One January morning, in a frozen Adirondack village, Nora Hamilton wakes to find her police detective husband missing from their bed. Nora discovers what happened to her husband within minutes. But that is when the real questions begin.

“Cover of Snow” is a dark, wintry tale about the lies we tell those who are closest to us...and those we tell ourselves.

Now in its fifth printing, “Cover of Snow” was chosen as an Indie Next Pick, received starred reviews from *Publishers Weekly* and *Booklist*, and praise from *The New York Times* as well as many other publications.

Jenny Milchman is a suspense novelist from Morristown, who took 11 years to get published. Once her debut novel appeared, Jenny hit the

road with her family on a seven month/35,000 mile book tour, visiting over 300 bookstores, libraries, and book clubs.

Jenny is the founder of Take Your Child to a Bookstore Day, which was celebrated by over 650 bookstores in all 50 states and four foreign countries this year. Jenny chairs the Debut Authors Program for International Thriller Writers and teaches for New York Writers Workshop.

On April 19, Jenny will appear at The Town Bookstore to talk about her critically acclaimed debut, the long road to publication, and what happens once things start to speed up.

Meet Jenny Milchman at The Town Book Store located at 270 East Broad Street in Westfield (corner of East Broad and Elmer Streets). If you are unable to attend this event, feel free to call The Town Book Store at (908) 233-3535 to reserve an autographed copy of “Cover of Snow.”

Park Middle School PTA Clothing Drive Set for May 17

SCOTCH PLAINS – The Park Middle School PTA in Scotch Plains is offering the perfect opportunity to clean out your closets. In collaboration with A&E Clothing Corp., who distributes the items around the world, the school PTA has organized a Clothing Drive to be held on Saturday, May 17, from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. in front of Park Middle School, 580 Park Avenue, Scotch Plains.

The following items will be accepted in well tied plastic garbage bags: Wearable, usable clothing all types, all seasons; Shoes, belts, pocketbooks, backpacks and brief-

cases; Household items made of fabric (comforters, sheets, blankets, bedspreads, curtains, towels, small rugs, tablecloths); Soft toys: stuffed animals, dolls, beanie babies; Hard toys: (cars, trucks, action figures, dolls. In good shape, all pieces).

Please note that no oversized hard toys (24” by 24” by 21” or larger) will be accepted. No books, VCR Tapes, CD’s, household appliances, items made of glass/porcelain, or furniture will be accepted.

Receipts will be available upon request. For more information call Gina Ricketts at (908) 313-7834 or email gfr7834@gmail.com.



SWEET MELODY...Mika Walker of North Plainfield, left, and Cecily D’Amore of Scotch Plains, students at The Wardlaw-Hartridge School in Edison, play “Allegro” by Francois Devienne during a school music recital on April 6. Many of the school’s most talented performers showcased their musical abilities at the event. Students from the elementary, middle and high school divisions displayed their vocal and instrumental talents with 20 classical pieces.



A WALK IN THE PARK...The Scotch Plains Fanwood Arts Association will host a bus trip to the Grounds for Sculpture located in Hamilton Township on Thursday, May 8. “Renoir” by Seward Johnson can be seen at the Grounds.

SPFAA Hosts Trip to ‘Grounds for Sculpture’

SCOTCH PLAINS - FANWOOD – The Scotch Plains Fanwood Arts Association (SPFAA) will host a bus trip to the Grounds for Sculpture located in Hamilton Township on Thursday, May 8. The Grounds for Sculpture contains 42 landscaped acres. In May, the Grounds for Sculpture will exhibit the largest and most significant exhibition in its history – a presentation of work by its founder, Seward Johnson. The exhibit will feature more than 150 sculptures, including his much acclaimed “Forever Marilyn,” “The Awakening” and “Unconditional Surrender.”

The cost of the trip is \$30 for bus transportation. Admission to the gardens is \$12 and \$10 for seniors 65 and older. The bus will pickup at Brookside Park on Hetfield Avenue in Scotch Plains at 9 a.m., returning at approximately 4 p.m.

Please mail your checks for transportation to the SPFAA, P.O. Box 151, Fanwood, N.J. 07023 by the Friday, May 2, deadline.

The SPFAA meets monthly on the second Sunday of the month. May is an exception and the meeting will be on Sunday, May 4, at 1 p.m.

The Scotch Plains Fanwood Arts Association is a group of fine artists, crafters, photographers and sculptors forming a social group to express and enjoy their talents. All are welcome who want to use their creative skills to share, appreciate and grow with others. A main goal of the Scotch Plains Fanwood Arts Association is the integration of the arts into daily life. This is achieved through informative demonstrations, discussions and group trips. Visit the SPFAA website at SPFAA.net or call President Sandra Cerchio at (908) 889-9504.

Gallery U to Host ‘Student Life’ Exhibit

WESTFIELD - Gallery U in Westfield is celebrating the artistic talents of local high school students with a special exhibition in June 2014 called “Student Life” that will feature the artwork of high school students from Union and Essex Counties. The gallery is seeking artwork of all mediums and styles. This event will serve as a fundraiser for local high school art departments.

For each piece that sells during the exhibition, 50 percent of the retail price will be paid to the artist and the remaining 50 percent will be donated to the art department of the school that artist represents. Submission deadline is Monday, May 12.

Register for Spring Semester At NJWA Music Studio

WESTFIELD – Spring is often looked upon as a time of regrowth and renewal and this concept can certainly be applied to fostering a talent in the field of music. Area musicians will have that opportunity when they register for the spring session of the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts Music Studio (NJWA), which begins on Monday, April 21.

Private lessons, for both children and adults, are offered in a 30, 45 or 60-minute format. Instruments include strings, guitar, woodwinds, brass, percussion and piano. Vocal music lessons are given as well.

The staff consists of highly skilled music educators and professional artists, who hold degrees from some of the best universities and music programs. Dr. Ted Schlosberg, Founder and Executive Director of the NJWA has often

commented that the staff members “have the knowledge and experience to accurately evaluate each student’s ability and design instruction to fit the individual needs of the learner.”

Ensemble playing also gives aspiring musicians an opportunity to perform with others in many musical groups, among them The Flute Ensemble, Majestic Winds, Rockin’ Jazz Band, Rock Performance Workshop, Alphorn Ensemble, Wednesday Morning Strings, and the Summer Symphony, whose 2014 season begins on June 24.

For information on this or any of the other NJWA programs, including the NJWA Summer Workshop or the Westfield Fencing Club, call (908) 789-9696, visit the studios at 150-152 East Broad Street, Westfield, or log on to www.njworkshopforthearts.com



HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR...On March 26, Holy Trinity Interparochial School eighth grade students from Westfield had the opportunity to meet Holocaust survivor Sol Rosencranz. The students met Mr. Rosencranz while visiting the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City. Mr. Rosencranz was from a family of nine; only he and his brother survived. He told his story of survival to the class. He is now 96 years old and is working on restoring the Jewish cemetery which was completely destroyed in WWII in his native Krosniewice, Poland. The students were so moved by his story they made part of their Lenten sacrifice a donation to his cause. The Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust is located in Battery Park in New York. Pictured is Sol Rosencranz, Holocaust survivor, with eighth grade students from Holy Trinity Interparochial School.

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Education Matters
WF PTC-Special Ed. Comm. Hosts ‘Autism Among Friends’

WESTFIELD — Join the Westfield Special Education Community for an evening of education and insightful conversation on Wednesday, April 30. There will be a general parent meeting from 7 to 7:30 p.m. followed by the main presentation and guest speakers from 7:30 to 9 p.m. at the Edison Intermediate School Library, located at 800 Rahway Avenue in Westfield.

The presentation will begin with a viewing of the award winning documentary created by Alexandra Jackman of Westfield. It will continue with a presentation by Dr. Joannmarie Sackles and Dr. Leslie Newport concerning autism and how it impacts communication with peers and siblings.

Come learn about ways to help your child understand social decision making and problem solving; strategies to foster your child’s ability to develop social perspective taking and to think about how their behaviors impact their relationship with friends and siblings.

Alexandra Jackman, a freshman at Westfield High School, created a video aimed to encourage teens to understand and accept those with Autism Spectrum Disorder as part of her TR Scholar program at Roosevelt Intermediate School. “A Teen’s Guide to Understanding and Communicating with People with Autism” has been shown at schools

and community events across the country and is now part of many school-districts’ anti-bullying programs. Recently, Alexandra received the Multimedia Award from NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities and her video is currently being viewed at Palm Beach and New Jersey Shore Film festivals.

Leslie J. Newport, PsyD, BCBA-D is a licensed psychologist and a doctoral level Board Certified Behavior Analyst. She works at Project: Natural Setting Therapeutic Management at Rutgers University where she serves as a consultant to public school districts in New Jersey. She is also an associate professor at Endicott College, where she teaches courses in Autism Studies and Applied Behavior Analysis. In addition, she has a private practice.

Joannmarie A. Sackles, PhD, BCBA-D is a licensed psychologist and a certified school psychologist. She has worked in schools with both special education and general education students for the past thirty years. She currently works as a consultant in several school districts in New Jersey.

This program is free and all parents, teachers, and advocates are invited to attend. CEUs (1.5 credits) will be offered free of charge to educators. Pre-registration is not required. For further information, visit www.westfieldnj12.org/specialparents.