

C I N E M A N N

The
State
of the
Industry
Issue



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Letter from the Editor

From the ashes a fire shall be woken,
A light from the shadows shall spring;
Renewed shall be blade that was broken,
The crownless again shall be king.

- Recited by Arwen in Peter Jackson's adaption of the final installment of *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy*, *The Return of the King*, as her father prepares to reforge the shards of Narsil for Aragorn

This year, we have a completely new board and fantastic ideas related to the worlds of cinema and television. Our focus this issue is on the states of the industries, highlighting who gets the money you pay at your local theater, the positive and negative aspects of illegal streaming, this past summer's blockbuster flops, NBC's recent changes to its Thursday night lineup, and many more relevant issues you may not know about as much you think you do. Of course, we also have our previews, such as *American Horror Story*'s third season, and our reviews, à la *Breaking Bad*'s finale. So if you're interested in the movie industry or just want to know if *Gravity* deserves all the fuss everyone's been having about it, jump in!

See you at the theaters,
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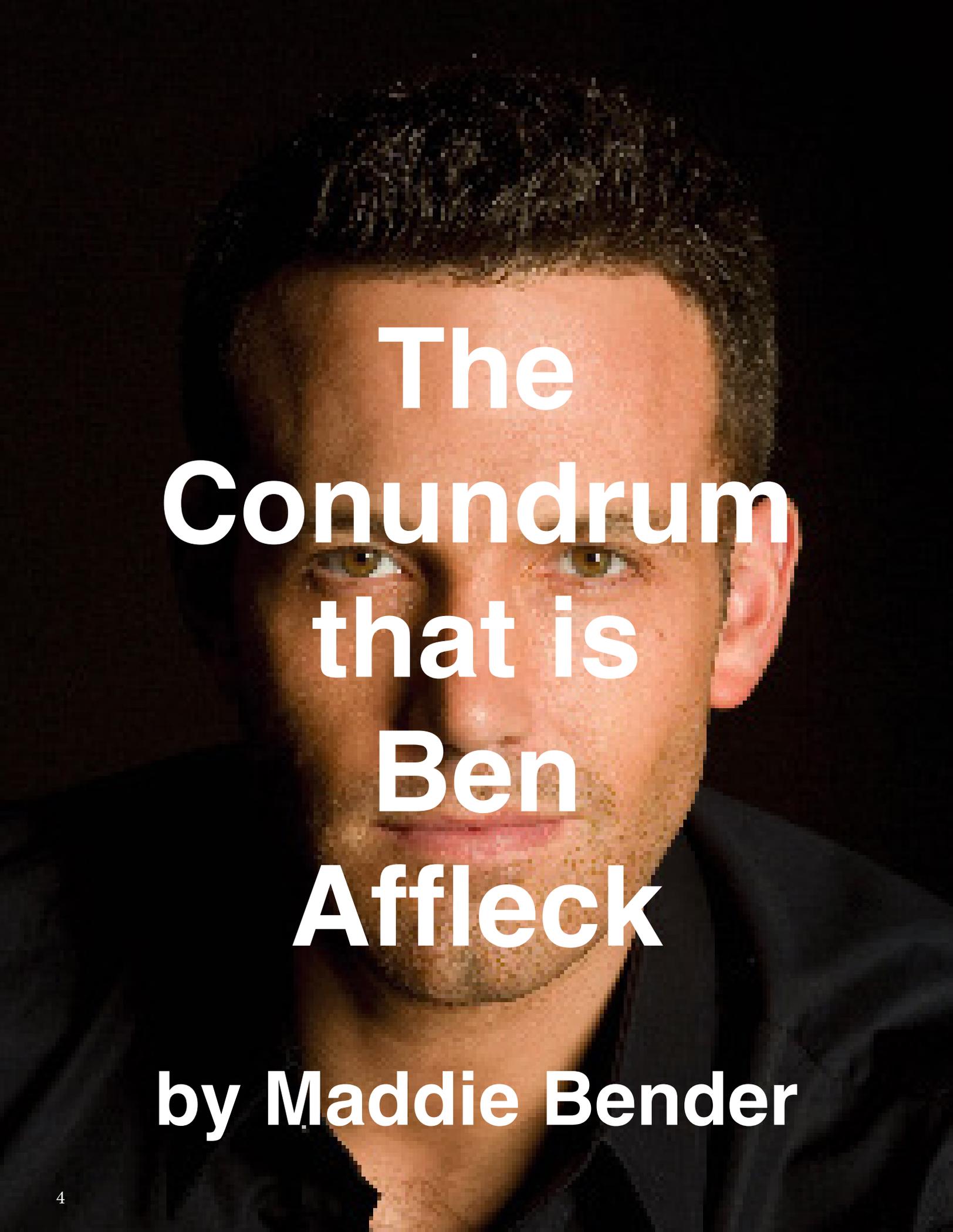
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**The
Conundrum
that is
Ben
Affleck**

by Maddie Bender

A national icon, one of *People's* Sexiest Men Alive, seven-time Golden Raspberry (Razzie) Award Award nominee for Worst Actor—who really is the man behind the Daredevil and Batman masks? Born in Berkeley, CA, Ben Affleck soon moved to Cambridge, MA, where he and his next-door neighbor, Matt Damon, developed aspirations for television and film at a young age. Affleck starred in PBS children's series and small films, but his big break took place in 1997 after co-writing and starring in *Good Will Hunting* with Damon. The pair was awarded an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay, transforming them into full-fledged celebrities. From there, Affleck would go on to star in such blockbusters as *Armageddon*, *Pearl Harbor*, and most recently, *Argo*, as well as some major flops, such as *Gigli*, the most infamous of the flops and arguably one of the worst movies of all time.

What can differentiate a hit like *Argo* from a

remarks from Affleck and his co-stars and through the addition of comic-relief characters such as an eccentric Hollywood producer. Also, while both films have far-fetched plotlines, *Argo's* historical accuracy adds credit and takes away some of the absurdity seen in the nonsensical plotline of *Gigli*. Finally, Affleck's performance in *Argo* was heartfelt and believable, but his acting in *Gigli* was so poor and the chemistry with his own girlfriend was so awful it earned him a Razzie for Worst Screen Couple.

Therein lies both the excitement and mystery surrounding Ben Affleck: how can one go from a movie that received an abysmal six percent approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes (a critical consensus site dedicated to movie reviews) to Oscar-winning material? But while the inconsistency of Affleck's acting adds interest for some, it discredits much of his good acting to critics and fans alike, causing many to be outraged when Affleck was announced to be

“Therein lies both the excitement and mystery surrounding Ben Affleck: how can one go from a movie that received an abysmal six percent approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes (a critical consensus site dedicated to movie reviews) to Oscar-winning material?”

complete flop like *Gigli*? These two films do seem to share a fair amount in common—humor, an absurd plotline, and Ben Affleck as a starring character, though when examined closely, these three aspects shape both movies very differently. *Gigli* was labeled and marketed as a comedy. However, the plotline is not inherently funny or coherent. In it, Affleck plays a mobster with a lesbian sidekick (played by girlfriend at the time Jennifer Lopez), together on an assignment to kidnap the mentally challenged brother of a federal prosecutor. There is no intrinsically funny character; forcing humor upon these characters to make *Gigli* a comedy resulted in poor performances from Affleck and his co-stars. *Argo*, on the other hand, did not market itself as a comedy but rather as a drama: it features Affleck as a CIA agent working undercover to save US ambassadors in the 1980 Iran hostage crisis. Humor, though, is present throughout the film in the form of sarcastic

cast as Batman in the upcoming Batman/Superman crossover film. Holy Affleck, Batman!

Like many of Affleck's questionable performances, there were mixed reviews of Warner Bros.' casting decision. As some fans pointed out, Affleck's unsuitability for the iconic role—a less than stellar performance as the title character in *Daredevil* as well as a chin cleft being some of his supposed drawbacks—others defended him as a reputable actor/screenwriter/director. “I’m very tough,” he said on *Late Night With Jimmy Fallon* about the negative backlash he’s received from critics and fans alike—and without a doubt, strength is imperative in order to act alongside the Man of Steel. Suspense around the film will continue to heighten until its 2015 release date when viewers and critics will have the chance to gauge Affleck's acting ability once and for all.



How Real is Reality TV?

by Chase Kauder



Reality TV is practically taking over the TV scene. “Reality” is an inexpensive form of entertainment that claims to capture real, unscripted events on camera. It costs from a quarter to a half as much as a scripted show. Some people think that “reality” is polluting television with “mindless crap” and that it replaces talented actors with regular people who act as obscene as possible to become famous. Reality television is becoming more popular at an exponential rate. Considering its immense following, I find it extremely ironic that, according to a survey conducted by MSNBC, four out of every five people think there is too much reality TV. Another survey conducted by MSNBC shows that 82 percent of reality television viewers believe that the genre is scripted or at least distorted. Reality TV exists on the sole principle that it is real, and yet paradoxically most of the people that watch it don’t even think it is real. This leaves us to wonder: how real is reality TV?

Reality shows vary from competitions, such

what is staged then anything could be real, but knowing that items are deliberately put in lockers in *Storage Wars* is very upsetting, considering it is a show I often watch.

Other methods producers use to control reality shows include manipulated casting and editing. On *Survivor*, producers organize teams based on how they think their personalities may clash and create the most drama. Drama is not the sole reason for manipulating scenes, though. Since reality shows generally do not have cameras on people 24/7, they may miss certain things. The show may take other footage they have and try to edit it together to simulate a scene they missed. They also periodically add in personal interviews with cast members when they lack proper footage. The editing makes it seem as if there is constant action or drama going on the show when it may be a week’s worth of footage edited down to one 30-minute episode. Think about how interesting the real, unedited show might be... probably not so interesting.

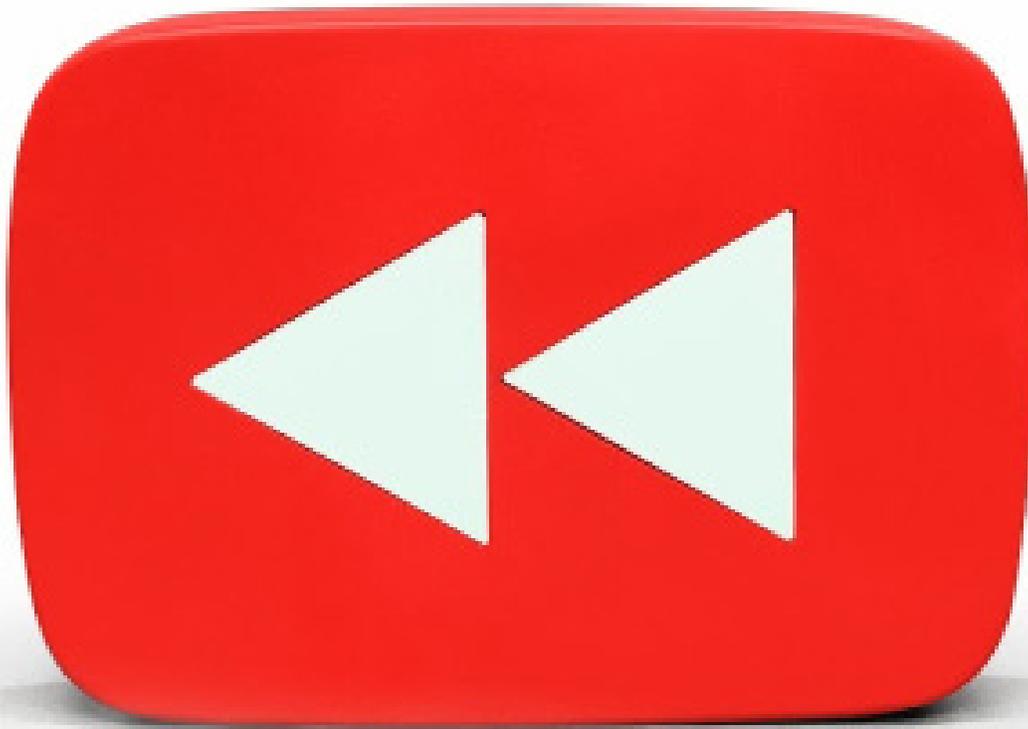
“In reality TV, the producer is essentially the writer. It requires a certain amount of creativity on the producer’s part to make sure his or her show has an entertaining plot.”

as *Survivor* and *The Bachelor*, to depictions of other peoples’ lives, such as *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* and *Duck Dynasty*. Most reality shows may not have word-for-word scripts, but producers have other ways of controlling the programs. To make them entertaining, the producers try to filter out the messiness of reality and give the audience only interesting stories, making the production sound nearly identical to a scripted show. In reality TV, the producer is essentially the writer. It requires a certain amount of creativity on the producer’s part to make sure his or her show has an entertaining plot. Dave Hester, an ex-cast member on the reality show *Storage Wars*, was fired for complaining about the staged portions of the show. Hester claimed that the show plants valuable objects in characters’ lockers to make it more entertaining. Although I already thought that all reality TV was staged in one way or another, hearing of the exact staging is quite discouraging. I suppose that when I don’t know exactly

Some shows such as *The Biggest Loser* seem to end in success, but the contestants’ lives continue after the credits roll. For instance, after the show is over, many of the contestants quickly gain a lot of the weight back. This is not to say the show does not help people, but the effects are not exactly what they appear to be on TV. There are also other problems that may not be apparent on television. Prizes won on reality television (especially game shows) are subject to IRS income taxes just as any income would be. For example, if you get a free car, you have to pay income taxes just as if it were money. A lot of people cannot afford to pay this and in consequence cannot keep prizes won on TV.

However, I must admit that no matter how fake or unethical reality TV may be, I still shamefully find it extremely entertaining.

Launching Careers through YouTube



by Benjamin Ades

Making money through the Internet is not a very new concept, but gaining a following and reaching profitable fame through the Internet was far more difficult before the inception of YouTube in 2005. One of the most notable people to gain fame through YouTube is Canadian pop musician, actor, and singer-songwriter Justin Bieber. In 2008, after posting videos of himself singing and playing music on YouTube, he was recruited by a talent manager and went on to have one of the most profitable singing careers of all time. He is now worth \$130 million.

Now, I am not saying that YouTube promises everyone instant viral fame, but that is the beauty of YouTube. Anyone—if you are

talented, special, likeable and (in most cases) funny—can start making money and become famous in both the digital and non-digital realms. The days of needing connections and of the big studios being the sole source of profit are no more. YouTubers like JennaMarbles, PewDiePie, Smosh and BlueXephos are making millions every year by releasing short videos on YouTube. BlueXephos cashes in \$6.7 million by producing video-game-related content. Usually, that entails sitting in front of a computer and playing *Minecraft* while saying silly things into a microphone. I find that watching people play video games does not take much talent and is not very entertaining, but I am sure his six million subscribers

would argue otherwise. Also, while Hollywood movies usually have incredibly huge budgets that can range from \$5 million to a whopping \$300 million, YouTube videos cost nearly nothing to make. Jenna Marbles became famous just by using her webcam to make funny little skits

cas Cruikshank, also known as “Fred,” was one of the most subscribed to on YouTube. Now he is the 139th most subscribed on the list, which is nearly nothing in comparison. While he did have a show at one point, it was canceled for low ratings in 2012. It lasted just under nine months.

“The success of YouTube is always dependent on knowing how much you are worth.”

and now she is making \$4.3 million a year.

Andy Samberg is another YouTube success story. Before joining the late night comedy show *Saturday Night Live*, Samberg started out as an Internet sensation. He began his career making comedy videos with his friends Akiva Schaffer and Jorma Taccone, which they would post on their website, The Lonely Island. Their videos were popular, but when YouTube hit the Internet, their views and media attention skyrocketed and their videos became widespread. Hollywood agencies recognized their talent and eventually they all landed jobs on *SNL*.

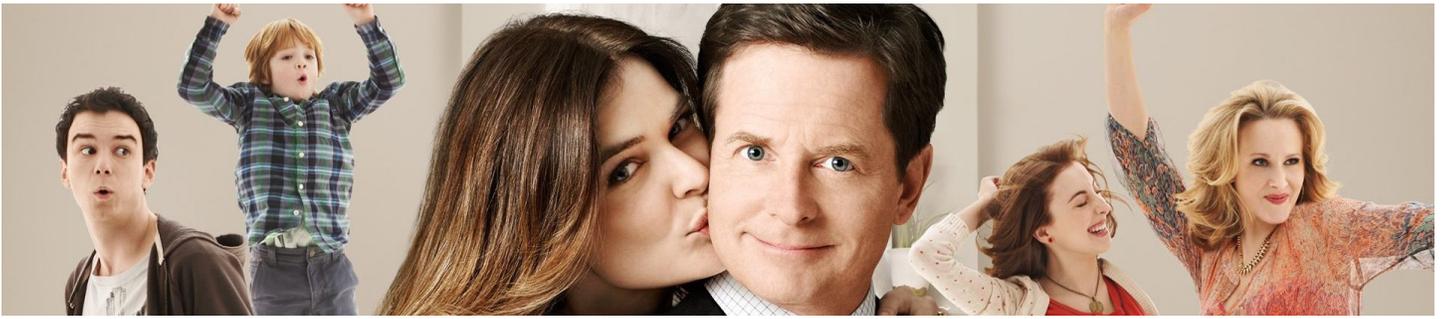
Speaking at an event at the University of Southern California this summer, George Lucas and Steven Spielberg discussed the future of the film industry. Spielberg argued that studios would rather spend \$200 million on one movie than divide that money and make smaller, more interesting movies; eventually there would be an implosion in which those mega-budgeted films would come crashing to the ground, thereby changing the film industry model. While TV and films usually are more promising than Internet videos, more and more people are turning to YouTube for entertainment because it is much cheaper than film and television and much easier to produce.

Being successful on YouTube does not always translate into success in movies and television. Achieving the same success in TV and film is at times more difficult because they are very different entertainment media than Internet videos. There have been many popular YouTube filmmakers who have started to integrate into the film industry, and for some it worked out, but for others, like Lucas Cruikshank, it did not. Prior to his TV adventures Lu-

One of the reviews said, “I wish I could give this show a zero. It is really not worth watching. I enjoyed ‘Fred’ as a YouTube bit...” So people enjoyed him on YouTube, but once he switched to TV everything changed. Popularity is more sustainable on YouTube due to the shortness of the videos. These YouTubers put out videos that last around two to four minutes, but when they start making full-length TV episodes, their content has to get longer and adapt (for the worse in some cases).

The success of YouTube is always dependent on knowing how much you are worth. Many YouTubers make the mistake of taking any offer to go work at an actual studio because they think it will advance their career. YouTube celebrity Daneboe, like Lucas Cruikshank, had his own show that lasted only one season because of low ratings, and as a result, he is not as popular as he was before. Not everyone is as reckless, though. Jenna Marbles has received numerous offers but has decided to stay where she is. Hollywood studios “want to own your soul” she said in an interview to *Variety*, “and the coolest thing on YouTube is nobody owns you.”

While success on YouTube can help you launch a career in TV and/or the film industry, YouTube is relatively new and the film industry is constantly evolving. So if you are achieving YouTube success and making good money, think again before you decide to pack and move to Hollywood!



Ratings over Quality: NBC's Quest for Commercial Relevancy

by Dahlia Krutkovich

Smart sitcoms have been the bread and butter of NBC's Thursday night lineup for the last decade. Although shows like *The Office*, *30 Rock*, *Parks and Recreation*, and *Community* never achieved the great ratings their reviews would seem to reflect, they are what made NBC's Thursday night brand unique.

With the end of fan favorites *The Office* and *30 Rock* as well as the cancellations of *Up All Night* and *Whitney*, this year NBC has been left with a rather large gap in its Thursday night schedule. The overall quality of shows has taken a nosedive. Save for the delightful *Parks and Rec.*, the headlining shows are underwhelming in comparison to years past. Clearly fed up with lackluster ratings, NBC sacrificed quality for commercial success with this new lineup: *The Michael J. Fox Show*, *Sean Saves the World*, and *Welcome to the Family*. These shows are half-decent attempts at something funny, but they just don't compare to what NBC has showcased in the past.

The Office, *30 Rock*, *Community*, and *Parks and Recreation* are great shows known for witty, quirky humor, vibrant characters, and remarkably low ratings. Because of those low ratings, NBC hasn't been able to pull in that sweet, sweet advertising cash flow they so desire. Fed up with cleaning up at the Emmys instead of in Nielsen boxes, NBC has decided that it wants fewer niche shows and a wider audience appeal. All of the aforementioned programs have been most popular in the younger half of the 18-49 demographic, but the problem is that a lot of those people watch them on platforms such as Hulu or Netflix, thus depriving NBC

of ratings, and subsequently, ad revenue.

These shows were also hard to watch when tired or after a long day. Some jokes weren't completely apparent unless given some thought, and others referenced very specific areas of pop-culture, history, and literature. *Community* and *30 Rock*, not being "turn off your brain and watch" shows, had the most trouble appealing to wide audiences.

In the hope of appealing to wider audiences, the three new shows are centered around families, perhaps in a masked attempt to re-capture the magic of ABC's wildly successful *Modern Family*, perhaps in trying to create shows that will entice families to sit down once a week and watch them together, reminiscent of the *I Love Lucy* era of television.

The Michael J. Fox Show follows beloved TV anchor Mike Henry (Michael J. Fox) and his family in Henry's return to TV after a Parkinson's disease diagnosis, a story somewhat paralleling Michael J. Fox' life. This show is the most obvious attempt at groveling for ratings. Fox semi-retired in 2000 due to the progression of his disease, and the public loves both a feel good story (Fox' return from a debilitating disease) and a decent dose of nostalgia (Fox is best known for his work from the mid-80's through late 90's, which is more than enough time to see his career through rose-colored glasses). Casting Fox is an instant ratings boost, as people want to see him do well and will stick with the show longer because of him.

Unfortunately for Fox, the supporting cast is mediocre and the characters are poorly written. Bet-



sy Brandt, who plays Fox' TV wife, is a fine actress, as exhibited through her run on *Breaking Bad*, but is just not a great fit for her character. The role she plays, Annie Henry, is supposed to be a silly, understanding, and devoted mother/wife. While Brandt can be understanding and devoted, silly feels a little forced, and subsequently, uncomfortable. The oldest son, Ian, is a freeloading college dropout who thinks he can create his own Internet startup company while living in his parents' house and lacking any coding skills. The character is egotistical, highly deluded, and has a taste for the finer things in life, but instead of making him loveable (à la Tom Haverford from *Parks and Rec.*), he just comes off as grating and two-dimensional. The daughter, Eve, switches from stereotype you've ever heard of teenage girls to "perfect daughter" every other episode. She hates her parents, her brothers, her school, and has many boy troubles, along with being a model student, very respectful, and interested in her family's lives. Portraying these two sides of the character would be great if the writers didn't choose one per episode.

The youngest son, Graham, doesn't get much on-screen time and is mostly there for comic relief, but acts far too much like a boxed kid written for TV to feel believable. The aunt, Leigh, is a blatant rip-off of the self-indulgent Jenna Maroney from *30 Rock*, but lacks the over-the-top quality required to pull off the character in a funny, rather than irritating, tone. The casting is deplorable, as all three "child" actors are a good deal older than their characters and do an amateur job portraying them. The supporting characters

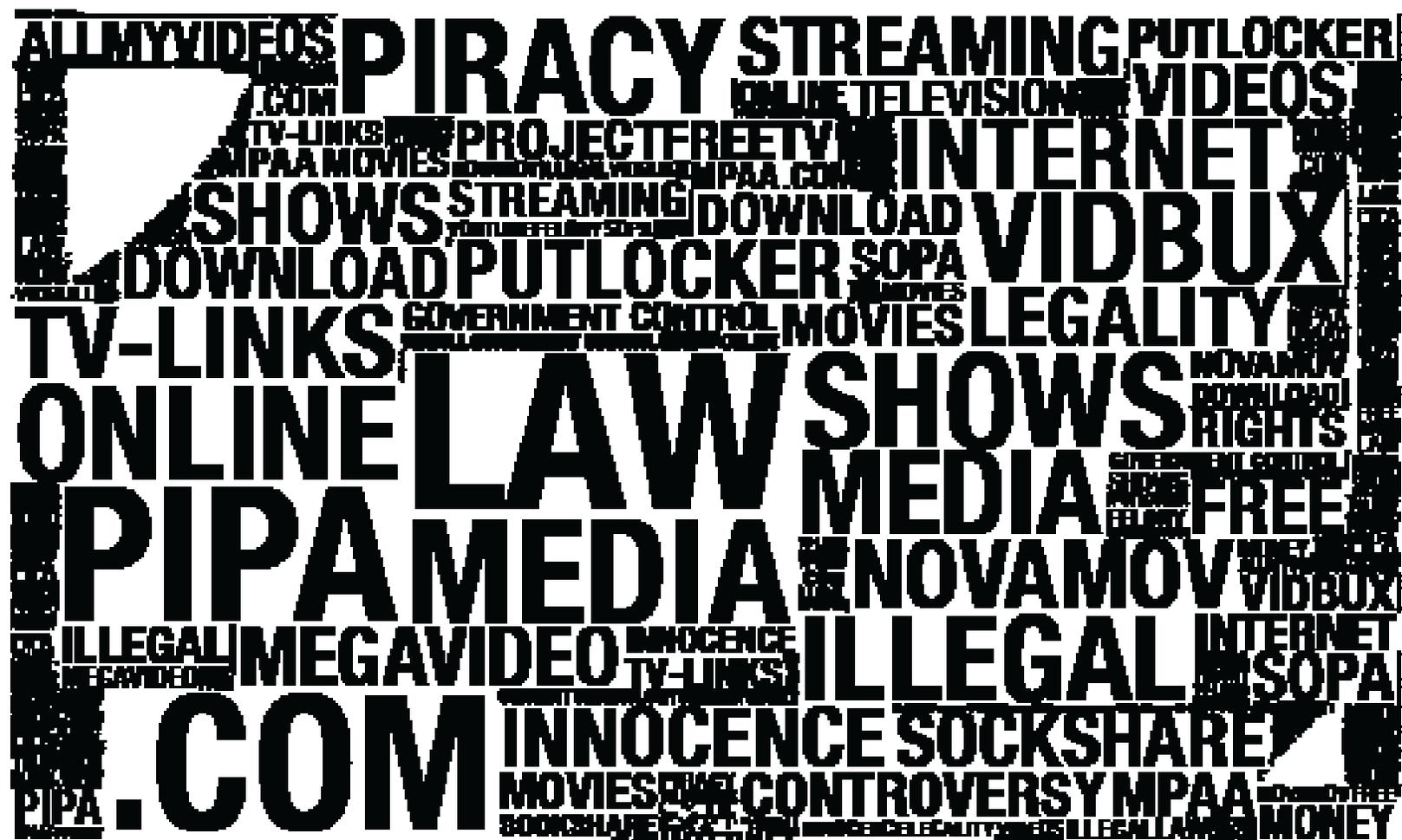
are good only in providing some cheap laughs and color to the show.

Sean Saves the World's premise is tired and the creative writing needed to revive it is sorely lacking. The characters, like *The Michael J Fox Show's*, are flat, stereotypes, or just plain annoying, but to a far greater degree such that it's not worth explaining them. This show is just another terrible, canned laugh-track comedy relying on the same, repeated gags, such as "Whoops I'm a single dad raising a teenage daughter, how silly!" and "My boss is cr-azy!" Unlike real laughter, racial token characters and gay jokes are plentiful. The simple plot of each episode is shoved in the viewer's face as if he or she were too stupid to understand concepts such as "I'm worried about my daughter," and "My daughter needs her first bra." This is the kind of "turn off your brain and watch" show NBC missed with the last lineup.

Welcome to the Family, the third new comedy NBC tried out this year, has since been cancelled due to poor reception and ratings after three episodes, which itself speaks for the quality of the show.

Regardless of the direction NBC has taken in a run for ratings, the numbers of their new shows gravely disappointed them. *Sean Saves the World's* numbers dropped from 4.43 million viewers to a dismal 2.64, and *The Michael J. Fox Show's* dropped from a great 7.50 to a truly awful 2.43, both of which are worse than *30 Rock* and *The Office* this time last year. It will be a difficult year for NBC, as it will lack both commercial and critical success.

Illegally Streaming Movies & TV



Anne Rosenblatt

Edith Herwitz

ILLEGAL MEGAVIDEO
VIDBOX LEGALITY

Technology has become an essential tool in our lives; we can access nearly anything in just a few clicks. However, with these tools arise many questions: how far can we go with this technology? The Internet revolution has caused an illegal video-streaming epidemic. The Motion Picture Association of America defines streaming

as the distribution of unauthorized copies of copyrighted works for download, websites that offer unauthorized streams are guilty of only a misdemeanor. In March of 2013, U.S. Register of Copyrights Maria Pallante urged Congress to revise the nation's aged copyright system, arguing that copyright laws have not progressed as rapidly as technology.

its success? While regular TV ratings may drop due to online streaming, these don't measure the actual number of viewers for a specific show. The real issue with TV networks, though, is that TV ratings directly correlate with the revenue that the network makes from advertising. A TV show that draws a large audience of online viewers

“While it is a useful alternative to watching live TV or buying a movie, the general public must understand that this seemingly innocent act is not so innocent after all.”

theft as “a form of online content theft that allows users to view unauthorized copyrighted motion picture and television content on demand, without downloading the illegal file.” In addition the MPAA states, “Both hosting unauthorized content and linking to unauthorized content hosted on other websites is illegal.” The MPAA recently released statistics stating that the movie industry loses approximately 6 billion dollars a year through piracy and illegal streaming. So with this information, we must weigh the pros and cons of a seemingly innocent act. What is the impact of illegal streaming on our society?

It has proven very difficult for the government to control streaming sites due to their multiplicity. Still, there have been several attempts to combat the illegal streaming of movies and TV. In 2011, a bipartisan trio of Senators made illegally streaming movies or TV a felony. Curiously, while it is currently a felony to distrib-

ute illegal copies of copyrighted works for download, websites that offer unauthorized streams are guilty of only a misdemeanor. In March of 2013, U.S. Register of Copyrights Maria Pallante urged Congress to revise the nation's aged copyright system, arguing that copyright laws have not progressed as rapidly as technology.

Many feel as if they have no other options than to stream movies and television illegally. So much of our contemporary culture revolves around these media. Teenagers especially may feel isolated from a topic of conversation as a result of their families' inability to afford obtaining this content legally. For an average family, cable can cost as much as \$60 a month, with premium channels adding an additional 15 dollars a month. These children feel that they have no alternative if they want to be included in a social circle than to watch this content illegally.

However, those who stream movies and TV don't realize the true effect of their actions: how online streaming, legal or illegal, directly affects the movie industry and TV networks. We already know that the movie industry takes a huge loss in profit, but does moving a large group of viewers of a TV show to its online component positively or negatively impact

is not nearly as appealing to advertisers as a TV show comprised of a mostly sitcom-watching audience. Perhaps, while not the best solution, one option would be to work towards integrating advertising into the actual content of the show, rather than during the typical advertising time slots.

In the public eye, the illegal streaming of movies and TV has no repercussions and is a crimeless act. If the government wants to decrease the amount of illegal streaming, it needs to transition the public into a different mindset, one in which illegal streaming is a damaging and condemnable act. While it is a useful alternative to watching live TV or buying a movie, the general public must understand that this seemingly innocent act is not so innocent after all.

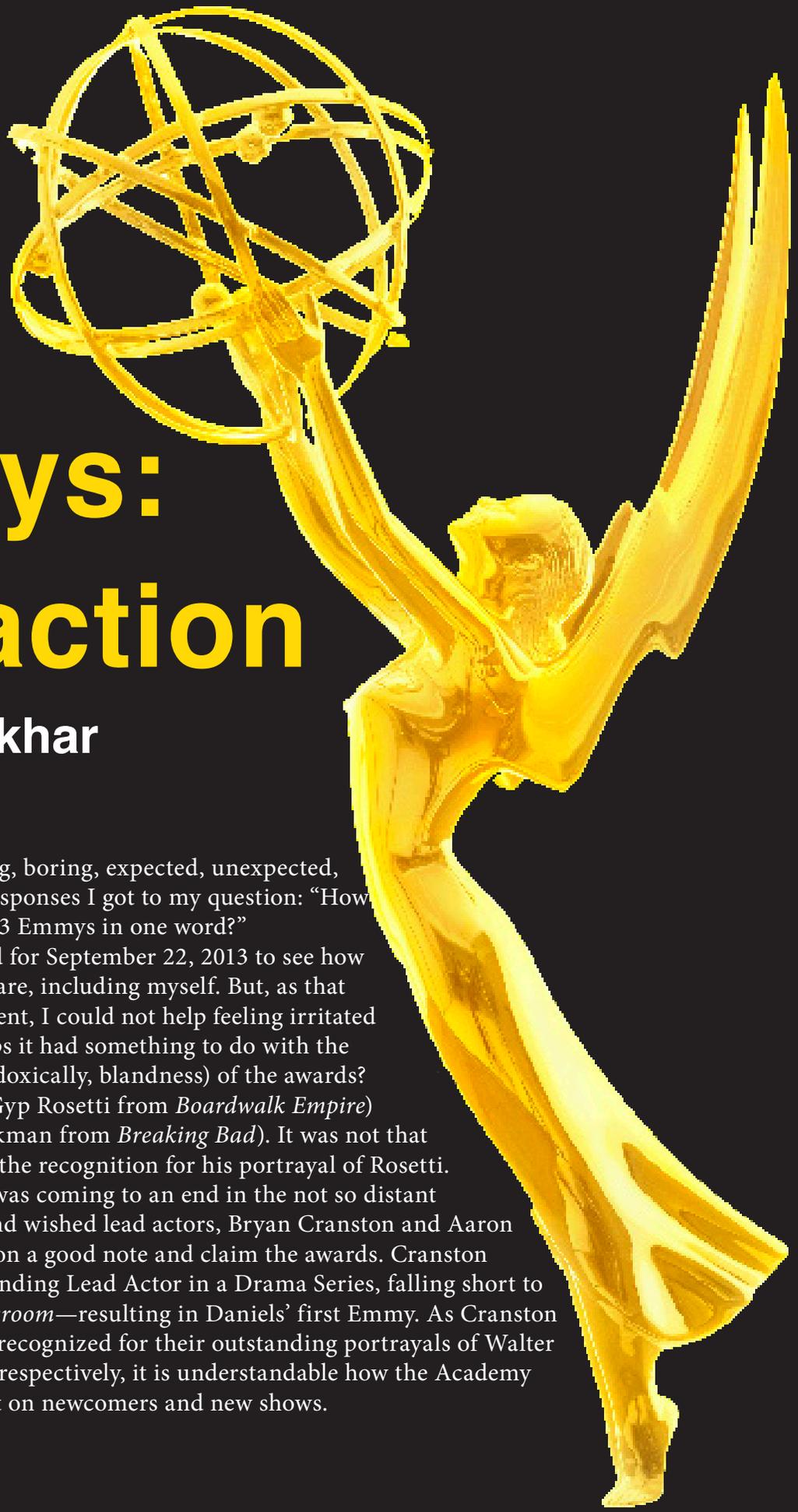
The Emmys: a Reaction

by Aisha Iftikhar

Messy, disappointing, boring, expected, unexpected, confusing; these were all responses I got to my question: “How would you describe the 2013 Emmys in one word?”

Anxious fans waited for September 22, 2013 to see how their favorite show would fare, including myself. But, as that fateful Sunday came and went, I could not help feeling irritated and almost cheated. Perhaps it had something to do with the unexpectedness (and, paradoxically, blandness) of the awards?

Bobby Cannavale (*Gyp Rosetti* from *Boardwalk Empire*) beat Aaron Paul (*Jesse Pinkman* from *Breaking Bad*). It was not that Cannavale did not deserve the recognition for his portrayal of Rosetti. However, as *Breaking Bad* was coming to an end in the not so distant future, many fans hoped and wished lead actors, Bryan Cranston and Aaron Paul, would end the series on a good note and claim the awards. Cranston also did not win for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series, falling short to Jeff Daniels from *The Newsroom*—resulting in Daniels’ first Emmy. As Cranston and Paul had already been recognized for their outstanding portrayals of Walter White and Jesse Pinkman, respectively, it is understandable how the Academy chose to shine the spotlight on newcomers and new shows.



However, the Academy did not follow that principle when Claire Danes (Carrie Mathison from *Homeland*) or Jim Parsons (Dr. Sheldon Cooper from *The Big Bang Theory*) took home Emmys; both had won the same award in the year prior. When I walked into school on Monday, I heard a lot of “Claire Danes, again?” This déjà vu factor definitely contributes to the boredom that people mentioned when speaking about the awards show.

But, Neil Patrick Harris, star of popular television show *How I Met Your Mother* and renowned actor, was hosting. I figured he was going to save the day with his charming personality or singing and dancing. Harris had already hosted the Emmys in 2009 and

“The sporadic content of the Emmys satisfied no one with the shock of one award winner and then the predictability of another.”

has hosted a number of other award shows, including the Tony awards; thus I was drawn into believing that he could not do badly. I was mistaken. Harris spent a limited amount of time actually on stage, ultimately resulting in his distance from the show. Additionally, Harris’s predicted dance number came around the half point in the show after the boredom had started to set in.

However, this was not the only dance number of the night! Choreographers created short dance routines based around the drama show nominees. These

dance numbers were unexpected in an exciting, captivating way, and following conversation about the show, I found that most enjoyed this performance as opposed to Harris’ “The Number in the Middle of the Show” song and dance routine. The costumes used for the *Game of Thrones* dance were accurate and stunning, almost making the faux Daenerys Targaryen as beautiful as the real one.

Negative reception of the Emmys this year resulted from its sporadic mood and tone. This flaw made the show seem messy and hard to watch. One minute it would be giving someone an award for outstanding acting and the next it would be mourning and honoring someone’s death. I believe award shows are great times to come together and

mourn the talented people of the industry who have passed, but staggering the memorial segments throughout the entire show caused the mood to fluctuate too frequently, ultimately making the show confusing for viewers. It had, back-to-back, a memorial of the late Cory Monteith and a dance by Neil Patrick Harris. The show was very random and hard to watch at points.

In the final moments, *Breaking Bad* won what some might say was the most significant award of the night: Outstanding Drama Series. But

even this overdue win did not do much to lift the spirits of viewers at the end of the show.

This year, the sporadic content of the Emmys satisfied no one with the shock of one award winner and then the predictability of another. Suddenly switching from a dance number to an obituary only made things worse. Perhaps next year, the producers of the show will surprise us with something new and without the déjà vu factor. We’ll see in 2014!

Top Awards:

Drama Series:
Breaking Bad

Comedy Series:
Modern Family

Lead Actress in a Drama:
Claire Danes -*Homeland*

Lead Actor in a Drama:
Jeff Daniel -*Newsroom*

Lead Actress In a Comedy:
Julia Louis-Dreyfus -*Veep*

Lead Actor in a Comedy:
Jim Parsons -*Big Bang Theory*



Who Gets Your Money at the Movies?

by Spencer Lerner

Have you ever wondered where the \$14.50 you spend on a movie ticket goes? Many people (which used to include me) may think that the theater and the movie studio have a fair relationship in which profits are split 60/40, or even 50/50. However, that's not the case. Profits from ticket sales, especially for most big name movies, largely tend to favor the movie studio. As a matter of fact, the studio usually keeps all of the ticket-sale profits, leaving the theater with nothing, according to Jeff Tyson from *How Stuff Works*. This standard isn't true for every movie. There are bigger-name movies that require a lot more money to make than others.

Now you're probably wondering: how do the theaters even make any money at all? I may have stretched the truth earlier. The theater does usually get none of the ticket sales, but only for the first two to three weeks that the movie is out. Then, the movie studios may decide to be a little generous and give the theater 25 percent of the profits, or \$3.62 per ticket, reports Brad Tuttle from *Time* magazine. That isn't very much for most movie theaters today. Modern movie theaters are big, often having at least seven movies

playing at a time with a new feature movie coming out every week. Theaters lose money from the costs of overstaffing and heating. You have to remember IMAX movies as well. This technology causes theaters to employ more staff members, using the little money they do make from the concessions. IMAX films may cost you more, but they definitely cost the theater more, especially when you don't give back the glasses. When you don't give them back, the theater gets charged and has to pay for more for the next film, losing even more money. Furthermore, they have to pay for many more staff members the first two weeks big-name movies are out.

Again, how are these movie theaters staying open without making their owners bankrupt? As it turns out, that long concession line where you have to pay an absurd \$6.50 for a small soda is where the movie theater gets most of its money. A concession stand worker from my local movie theater said, "We're not in the movie business. We're in the candy business." So if you want to keep your local movie theater in business, don't complain about the price of the snacks and buy one instead.

Taking a Look into Box Office Flops

by Karina Hooda



Despite this summer's record \$4.7 billion dollars earned at the box office, propelled by movie hits like *Man of Steel* and *World War Z*, blockbuster season was still marred by a slew of big box office bombs. A film is considered a "flop" if it fails to "break even" at the box office (meaning it fails to gain more money than its budget). Additionally, flops are hard to predict because it is hard to foresee when a movie will tank. The truth of this last statement has been shown a lot this summer when some of the most highly anticipated films were huge disappointments.

Two of the most advertised movies of the summer, *R.I.P.D* and *The Lone Ranger*, were both financial failures. *The Lone Ranger* is currently listed as the third biggest flop in history, and *R.I.P.D* the fourth—pretty rough for one summer's worth of movies. *The Lone Ranger* pulled in a net loss of approximately \$102.6 million, while *R.I.P.D* had a net loss of an estimated \$94.6 million, both significant amounts of money to lose.

Why did these movies do so badly? There are multiple factors that can determine the success of a movie, although it is often difficult to pinpoint one specific reason a film might not have done as well as expected. Take a look at *The Lone Ranger*: it was marketed well, even landing an advertisement during the

Super Bowl, and Disney produced a staged version to promote the film. Unfortunately, *The Lone Ranger* got largely negative reviews, scoring a 31 percent approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes, a critical consensus site dedicated to movie reviews. Many critics stated that, at two and a half hours, the film was just too long, and because it was written by the same four people who wrote the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise, it has an all too familiar plot and feel to the movie. *The Lone Ranger* also premiered during the same week as the successful *Despicable Me 2*, adding as yet another possible reason it was a commercial failure.

While it is difficult to predict whether a movie will be a hit or a failure, this summer has seen an unfortunate amount of flops, some others being *Turbo*, *The Internship*, *White House Down*, and *After Earth*. In some cases, the production studio still profits from a box office bomb when additional revenues are taken into account, such as television broadcasts, home media sales and rentals, licensing, and distribution rights. Due to this, a box office bomb can eventually break even after its theatrical run. Regardless, it's been a tough year for the film industry, with there being almost as many flops as hits; but hopefully these box office failures might at least break even in the long run.

Product Placement in Movies

by Jasmine Katz



They interrupt your favorite television shows at the worst possible times. They distract your driving on the highway. They even show up in your mailbox. Advertisements are the ultimate, omnipresent annoyance. They are obnoxious and often overdone to the point of silliness.

Advertisers realize this, so they have turned to other methods of getting the public to buy what they are trying to sell. Product placement is a marketing device that involves subtly (or sometimes not-so-subtly) integrating the products of certain companies into movies, television, video games, and books. Although the irritation of badly managed product placement can spoil an otherwise enjoyable movie, the goal is to seamlessly incorporate the product, reaping profits for the company and hopefully adding realism to a plot or character.

One of the first notable cases of product placement was in the movie *E.T.*, when the young protagonist, Elliot, befriends an extraterrestrial named "E.T."

using Reese's Pieces. Within two weeks of the movie's premiere, Reese's Pieces, owned by Hershey, saw a 65% increase in sales. The success from this product placement launched Reese's Pieces into long-term, widespread demand.

Moreover, product placement can actually be humorous, and humor entices the viewer more than a desperate attempt at a profit. In an episode of the television show *30 Rock*, Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) and Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) exchange obvious remarks praising Verizon Wireless' reliable phone service before Tina Fey breaks the fourth wall and asks directly into the camera, "Can we have our money now?"

Advertisers are still experimenting with product placement as a relatively new marketing device, but when product placement is not cringe-worthy it can benefit a company, strengthen a movie, and entertain viewers.

Piece-weeks of premiere, Reese's Hershey, saw a 65% success from this product

Futurama's (Second) Untimely Ending

by Daniel Mindich

Futurama, an absurd and irreverent show, which many times seemed unwilling to end, just ended. Written by Matt Groening, the writer who created *The Simpsons*, it was originally canceled by Fox at the end of its fifth season. Its creators then made four movies, which when combined together, are considered to be an additional season. After being brought back to life, it aired again on Comedy Central. On September fourth this year, at the end of its tenth season, *Futurama* was canceled again. The show ended with the wedding of Fry and Leela, as well as the blossoming of a new relationship between Dr. Zoidberg and a florist who luckily doesn't have a sense of smell.

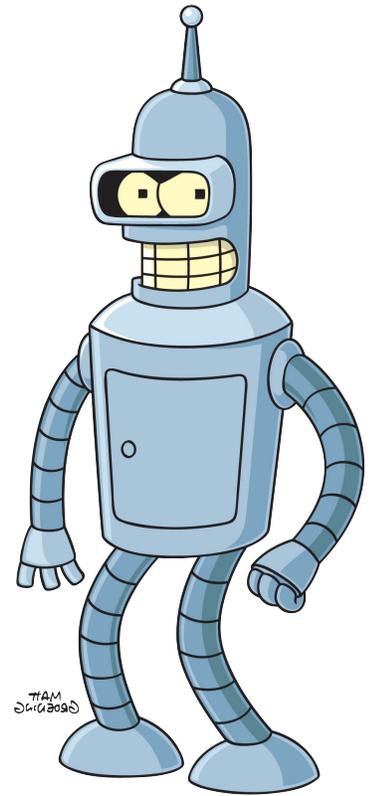
The writers of most shows are not likely to take the kinds of risks that those of *Futurama* did. For example, in the movies, the writers humiliated the heads of the network that had carried the show. In Bender's Big Score, *Futurama* portrayed Fox as a company called Box, introduced with a flickering neon sign that, when blinking, could also clearly be read as Fox. The characters also graphically described how they turned the heads of Box into a finely chopped powder (called Torgo's Executive Powder, which has "a million and one uses").

Futurama's wonderful absurdity can be seen in its plot and characters. The main character, for example, is a pizza delivery boy named Fry from the year 1999, who was cryogenically frozen and defrosted in the year 3000. He then meets his closest living relative, a 160-year-old man named Hubert Farnsworth, who is also his great-great-great-great-... grandson. Fry becomes an interstellar delivery boy who goes on crazy adventures with his robot friend Bender and his mutant cyclops friend Leela. Other notable characters include Dr. Zoidberg, the smelly, crustacean doctor who wanted to be a comedian when he was growing up, Amy Wang, the Martian intern that works for Planet Express, Hermes, the Jamaican bureaucrat who does all the paperwork and is also an Olympic limbo athlete, and, of course, Nibbler, an extremely cute alien animal

that becomes Leela's pet but is secretly a genius.

Futurama has something that few other shows can boast (except those written by Matt Groening). It is hard to describe what this is besides calling it a "Matt Groening flair" (like in *The Simpsons*). It goes very off-topic (which makes me laugh a lot) and is absurd and sarcastic. An example of this "flair" is in the episode Saturday Morning Fun Pit. I paused the episode several times while watching it so that I could just marvel at the absurdity of it and question why I was watching something so ridiculous. For instance, the show has a Smurf spoof where everyone is purple. And in an unaired episode called Everybody Loves Hypnotoad (available as a bonus feature in the Bender's Big Score DVD), there is nothing but Hypnotoad in a white background with fuzzy music and eyes that keep moving for 22 minutes.

It is an amusing show; it is needless to say that the end was incredibly sad for all fans, especially me. Unfortunately, this ending will probably be the last cancellation of *Futurama*. When *Futurama* was on Fox, the writers relentlessly made fun of the network, thinking that the show was invincible, but later they learned it wasn't. An interview with David X. Cohen, who wrote for *Futurama*, revealed that when Fox originally canceled *Futurama*, the show had only 72 episodes, but the writers wanted to have more. After it was cancelled a second time, the show had 140 episodes, and now the writers think they have enough behind them to leave the show as it is. I will miss Dr. Zoidberg and his hilarious jokes, as well as Nibbler's weirdly deep voice and his ability to fuel space ships with his droppings. And last but not least, I will not forget the crazy adventures that they all go on, which, wonderfully, make no sense.





The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones - It's Not All in the Timing

by Sabrina Lautin

The film *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones* is based on Cassandra Clare's fantasy novel *City of Bones*. After Clary Fray's (Lily Collins) mother Jocelyn disappears, Clary discovers that she is one of the Shadowhunters. They are responsible for slaying demons and policing the Downworld, the realm of supernatural creatures that exists alongside the human world. Clary's lineage provides her an entrée into the world of vampires, werewolves, runes, pentagrams, and warlocks, all of whom are invisible to mortals because they are concealed by "glamour," which is a layer of magic that makes elements of the Downworld appear normal to humans.

Clary and her friends join forces in order to find her mother who is kidnapped by Valentine's henchmen and to fight Valentine, a Shadowhunter infamous for having a cult following and attempting to acquire all three mortal instruments: the Mortal Cup, the Mortal Sword, and the Mortal Mirror. The Mortal Cup, the Mortal Instrument that Valentine tries to steal in the movie, has the power to turn a human into a Shadowhunter; Clary's mother is privy to its location, and her usefulness to Valentine's quest for power leads to her kidnapping. The movie captivates viewers with its surreal realization of Clare's novel, with realistic portrayals of battles between Downworlders and Shadowhunters and the grandeur of the Downworld. For those who read the books, however, all the chronological and plot-based inaccuracies diminish the movie's effect.

Upon closer examination, the movie is riddled with changes in the plot (especially its order of events) that make the movie disloyal to the book. For instance, within the first 30 minutes of the movie, viewers get to see Clary's mother drink a coma-inducing potion right before Valentine's henchmen kidnap her so that she can remain silent about the location of the Mortal Cup; however, here the movie is skipping ahead, as the nature of Clary's mother's disappearance is revealed in the second book, *City of Ashes*. Also, although in the movie Clary has the ability to invent new runes, she does not actually have this ability until the second

book. Furthermore, the pentagram, the shape that Valentine constructs to summon demons, was taken from *City of Ashes* and spliced into the storyline without an explanation of the shape's significance or purpose. The screenplay writers incorporated events in *City of Ashes* into a movie about *City of Bones*, and in doing so they shot themselves in the foot, lavishing key moments of the plot on one movie without taking into account the possibility of there being a second movie.

Another even more egregious error on the part of the director and screenwriters is the extent to which Valentine's character is downplayed. He is dressed in the same fashion as the Shadowhunters so that he blends in with the protagonists, thereby detracting from the evil vibe that defines the character's personality and role in the plot. Furthermore, Valentine receives so little screen time or mention by any of the characters that, to viewers who have not read any of the books, Valentine's suddenly large presence in the final stretch of the movie would compound their confusion.

On the flipside, the movie's chronological inaccuracies add elements of surrealism and grandeur to the film. One example of this is the appearance of the pentagram (albeit too early relative to the timeline of the book series) in the scene where Valentine summons a staggering number of demons to a rooftop in New York City. This symbol shows the coexistence of the Downworld and the human world and, coupled with the timing of this scene, demonstrates Valentine's growing power and the climax of the battle between the Shadowhunters, the Downworlders, and Valentine.

Some critics and fans have proposed that Clare drew inspiration from *Harry Potter* during her writing of *City of Bones*. Perhaps, given time, *City of Bones* and the rest of *The Mortal Instruments* series will be accepted as the new *Harry Potter*. This newfound recognition will enable people to look beyond the patchwork plot and appreciate the movie for the technical expertise that capitalizes on the fantastical and quixotic elements that are invaluable to Clare's work.

Gravity Works, Even in Space

by Lorenzo Brogi-Skoskiewicz

Making a movie about space is very difficult. There is no sound in space—no oxygen to carry your voice. It is extremely difficult to move. On top of that fact, if you are alone, nobody can help you. So how is it possible to make a gripping and entertaining full-length movie about characters in these circumstances? Well, Alfonso Cuarón's newest movie, *Gravity*, is able to do just that.

Gravity tells the story of how two astronauts on a space mission to repair the Hubble Telescope are suddenly hit by debris and stranded in space. In order to survive against all odds, they must work together. The movie stars Sandra Bullock as Dr. Ryan Stone, a rookie astronaut who is emotionally burdened by the death of her daughter and keeps to herself. *Gravity* also stars George Clooney as Matt Kowalski, a veteran and extremely confident astronaut on his last mission, who is much more prepared to deal with their crisis than Dr. Stone. Both of the actors are on top of their game here, especially Sandra Bullock. She perfectly captures the emotional despair and trauma that Dr. Stone suffers throughout her journey in space. Clooney, on the other hand, provides a lighter tone and even a slight comedic side to the story in order to both calm Stone down and keep the more lighthearted members of the audience interested in the plot.

But what makes *Gravity* such a great movie isn't the acting or the plot but Cuarón's directing. It took four long years to make *Gravity*, and it is easy to see why. No stone (no pun intended) is left unturned and everything down to the smallest detail is shown. The film also looks beautiful. An example of this is the view of earth and as it orbits; you can see all of the different continents and it feels almost too realistic. *Gravity* is also extremely accurate at capturing the silence and deadly beauty of space. It truly feels that you are with the astronauts as they fight for survival,

and through every twist and turn they must make to survive, the camera also moves with them, making you really feel that you are also in space with them.

After the release of *Avatar*, it seems that every new movie has tried to copy its commercial success by stamping an "in 3D!" every trailer, while very few movies actually get it to work. *Gravity*, however, doesn't use 3D as a way to further its box-office potential but as a tool to tell the story in as much detail as possible. From space you can see nearly every detail of Earth and that is what *Gravity* strives to do. Using 3D technology, Cuarón makes the Earth majestic and awe-inspiring to the viewer by enhancing each image as much as possible, giving a glimpse at just how beautiful and peaceful our planet truly looks from space as seen in the opening moonwalk scene. Cuarón grabs the viewers' attention and keeps their eyes glued to the screen by capturing every single detail imaginable and constantly providing exciting twists and turns to the plot. He has truly pulled off a remarkable individual achievement in filmmaking, and his new visual feats will definitely inspire many films to come.

Like most movies however, *Gravity*, isn't perfect. At some moments, the film moves at an extremely slow pace and loses the attention of the viewer. However, other gripping and terrifying scenes redeem these moments and keep the pace of the movie going at a very smooth speed.

I fully expect *Gravity* to be in contention for Best Picture at this year's Oscars. I even believe Cuarón will win the Award for Best Director, thanks to the perfection and beauty that he brings to the movie. *Gravity* is truly an excellent movie and will continue to please viewers for many years to come. I strongly recommend seeing it because of its excellent acting, deep story, and above all, its visual effects.





The End of an Era: “Felina”

by Vivaan Dave

The final episode of *Breaking Bad* surprisingly satisfied all of us. It's not always that the end of beautiful show has an equally beautiful end. “Felina” had quite a plateful to take care of in one episode: Will Walt be able to get his leftover money to his family? Will he be able to redeem himself? What will become of Jesse after all of this time stuck in the Nazi camp? Will Jesse and Walt's relationship be mended? Why is the show continuing Lydia and Todd's story line? What will Walt do with the ricin he got from his house? Will we ever see our beloved Saul Goodman again? In other words, where is it all going?

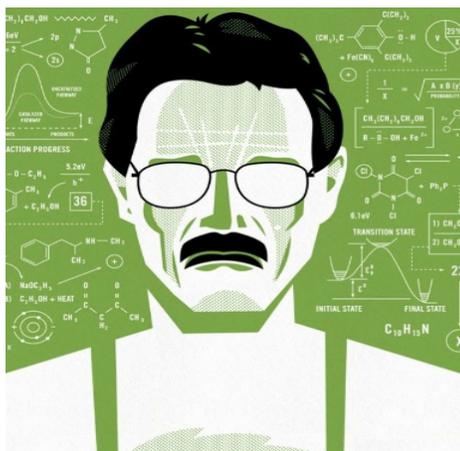
WARNING: The next paragraph begins a full synopsis of the episode, SPOILERS included. Pivotal moments in the episode

are mentioned throughout the rest of this article. If you do not want to know what happens, DO NOT read this article.

The episode begins with Walt's escape from the police. He then takes care of problem number one: getting his money to his family. He falsely threatens Gretchen's and Elliot's lives and makes them promise to deliver the money to his family. He visits Skyler and tells her where Hank's and Steve's bodies are, and finally reveals that Uncle Jack is the one to kill Hank. This revelation is preceded by the heartbreaking scene where Walt says goodbye to Holly and watches his son from afar for the last time. After that business is taken care of, Walt meets Todd and Lydia in a coffee place on the false pretense that he

has a new, more efficient recipe to cook meth. While meeting with them, he switches Lydia's Stevia package with the ricin. Later, Walt pays a visit to the Todd's residence where the rest of his gang is and kills the group with a strategically positioned machine gun in the trunk of his car. Walt dives to protect Jesse, but gets shot himself. After the group is dead, Jesse refuses to shoot Walt, telling him to “do it himself,” and drives off crying and laughing. Finally, the show ends with the camera zooming out while Walt lies on the floor, bleeding out with sirens in the background.

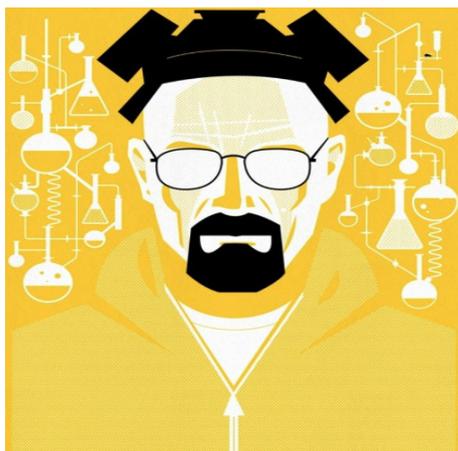
“Felina” is in no way surprising. Most events are expected, except for the sparing of Gretchen's and Elliot's lives. Although predictable, it is the



perfect ending to the perfect show. No other sequence of events could provide the closure that it did. The questions needing answering are answered. Walt is where he belongs, in a meth lab near “his life’s work,” awaiting his fate. Jesse brakes free and lives, as the audience wants, and all else is right. The only piece that is lacking is Saul Goodman. Although it is the perfect ending, it is not one of the best episodes of the show, which makes sense as some consider *Breaking Bad* the best show of all time. It ties itself up well, but there are no moments nearly as emotional and traumatizing as in “Ozymandias.”

“We’re all sad that *Breaking Bad* has finally come to an end, but I’m glad it did.”

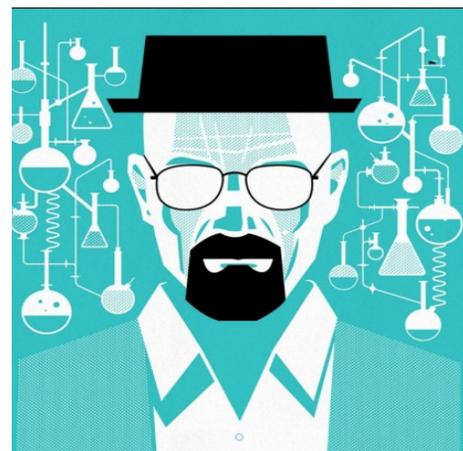
Breaking Bad is best described as a sprint: an exponentially growing show that is a piece of art as a whole. The final episodes defy the upward trend, however. The peak of the show was definitely “Ozymandias”; the responses were unbelievable. People said they “had an insanity within their chest that can’t be contained” and that there was a “smile etched across” their faces. After “Ozymandias,” the show came down to a slow but steady halt. All the acceleration and



momentum created couldn’t explode all in one final episode; it had to be brought down gradually. The two final episodes did this exactly. After the storm, “Ozymandias,” “Granite Slate” and “Felina” served as the calm. The last scene is a great float back to the ground: all the sounds in reality are drowned out by a perfectly out-of-place-song by Badfinger: “Baby Blue.”

Some of the best moments of the episode include when Walt confesses that the meth empire he had created was for himself. He stops using his family as a justification for his wrongs and admits that he was in it for his own selfish

desires. He was not only cooking meth to provide money for his family, but also for the rush and vitality it provides him. My personal favorite is when Walt cuts Uncle Jack’s sentence off with a bullet to the head: “You want your money back? You wanna know where it is? You pull that trigger you’ll never—BOOM.” Walt’s obsession with his empire and his money go away. He achieves a sort of redemption with this lack of concern for his money. And of course, the signature ending



as Walt lies there lifeless in a meth lab with “Baby Blue” playing in the background is truly an impeccable final shot.

Bryan Cranston and Aaron Paul’s performances are amazing in this episode. The insanity that occupies Jesse is perfectly embodied by Paul. Walt is all over the place. The final surrender to the mess he had created brings about a melancholy reminiscent attitude in Walt. Cranston has the look on his face the whole time: the look that tells us that it is the end. It is the end and Walt doesn’t care. All he needs to do is tie up loose ends. His facial expression while Jack is trying to convince him to spare his life and his ambivalence when Jesse has a gun pointed at him all show that he was done with his life, done and ready to die.

We’re all sad that *Breaking Bad* has finally come to an end, but I’m glad it did. The character development is unbelievable. An overqualified high school chemistry teacher turns into a nearly sociopathic meth-cooking Einstein; his former atrocity of a student becomes his apprentice and brother-in-arms for the better part of two years but then grows to hate his master chef: certainly an explosion of unadulterated artistic genius.



Season Premiere: *American Horror Story: Coven* by Danielle Resheff

As an avid fan of *American Horror Story*, I was anxious for the premier of the new season, after painfully waiting for months.

American Horror Story is not comprised of conventional seasons, nor does it have a continuous story line throughout all its seasons. Rather, it is a show broken up into multiple mini-series, each two seasons long and with a different storyline and a disparate set of characters, although some actors remain from previous series. That being said, one does not need to watch any of the past episodes to enjoy the new season, *Coven*. The premier of this season is far more exciting than the premier of the last one because there's no knowing what you're in for.

The past two seasons have featured highly acclaimed actors such as Jessica Lange and Zachary Quinto. The show also features some lesser-known, younger talents, such as Evan Peters and the younger sister of Vera Farmiga, Taissa Farmiga, who with nearly no prior experience did an excellent job as her character Violet in Season One, *Murder House*. Several of the show's acclaimed actors reprise their roles in *Coven*. The show was created and produced by Ryan Murphy and Brad Falchuk, best known for their work on *Glee* and *Nip/Tuck*. Ryan Murphy noted, "I went from *Nip/Tuck* to *Glee*, so it made sense that I wanted to do something challenging and dark. And I always had loved the horror genre. So it just was a natural for me."

WARNING: The next paragraph begins a partial synopsis of the episode. Some minor spoilers are included. If you do not want to know anything

about what happens, skip to the final paragraph, which contains only very minor spoilers.

The new season starts out on a morbid note in New Orleans, 1834. The first scene has a very old-time cinematic feel with lighthearted music paying and choppy transitions at what appears to be a small house party. We are introduced to a character based on a real person, Delphine LaLaurie (Kathy Bates). She engages in a grotesque routine involving the mutilation and objectification of African slaves. (I'm not going to get into that, so you'll have to see for yourself what I'm referring to.) Her dark engagements backfire, as one of her mutilated slaves was romantically involved with a powerful Voodoo Queen, Marie Laveau. Marie shows up at LaLaurie's door, and after having the door shut in her face, Marie is let in. LaLaurie allows her in because Marie has offered a fidelity potion to take to attract her unfaithful husband. She passes out upon taking the potion, and historians are never able to find her body. The episode flashes forward to the modern day, in which Zoe Benson, played by Taissa Farmiga, discovers she's not quite like most girls her age; she's a witch with an unsettling power. Her parents have just informed her that the witch gene in her family skips generations. They ship her off to Miss Robichaux's School for Exceptional Young Ladies in New Orleans. The school has been around for centuries, meant to be a refuge for young girls with supernatural abilities. A man and woman in sunglasses drop off Zoe at the gates of a large old building. Strange people with masks creep up on her and chase her until covering her head with

a cloth and laying her on a table, beginning a “sacrifice” to the dark lord. They miss her head with the knife and immediately reveal themselves as girls of the house, just playing a joke on their newest member. The blond who was leading the attack introduces herself as “Madison Montgomery, move star.” The one beside her, Queenie, responds, “When’s the last time you’ve been in a movie, girl?” The third one introduces herself as “Nan.” The headmistress (Sarah Pauslon) enters, introducing herself as Cordelia Fox. Cordelia has an agenda to teach the girls to control their powers and hide them at all costs.

We are then introduced to the Supreme Witch (a witch with all the powers), Fiona Goode, talking to a man in a lab coat. He is discussing some sort of injection that shoots new life into old monkeys. It’s only experimental, but Fiona is intrigued and wants the medicine before the researcher is prepared for human trial. “What I need is an infusion of vitality, of youth,” she says to him. She goes on to manipulate him by pointing out her connections, saying she can help him win the Nobel Prize if he helps her out. Five days later,

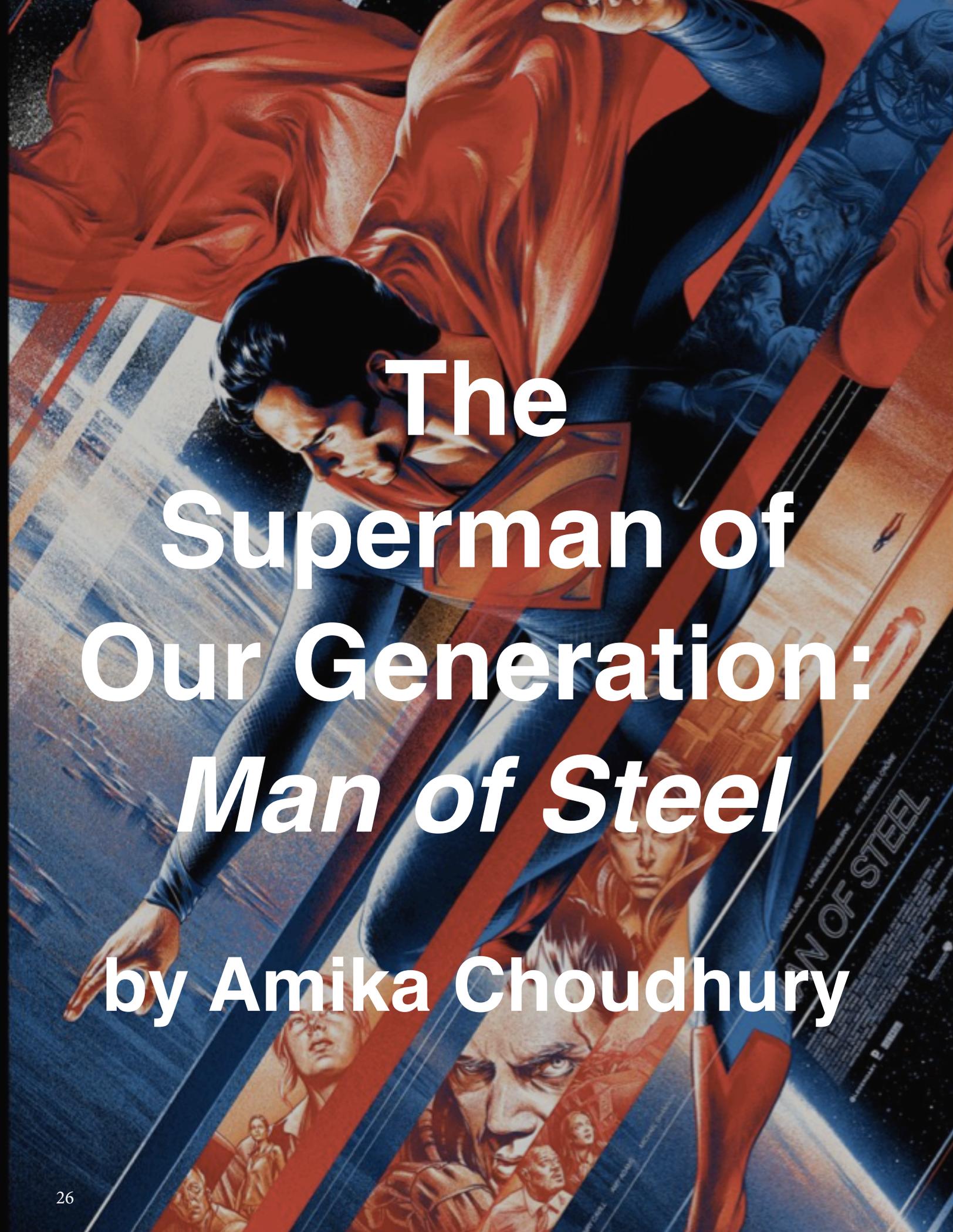
could be ruling the world!” Fiona tells Cordelia with disappointment in her eyes. “I like my little kingdom here, thank you,” Cordelia responds. The circumstances are not realistic in the show, but something about the relationships between characters makes it all feel very real. There are some aspects of a mother-daughter relationship that are universally understood, and when you see it in the show, characters don’t seem so fantastical anymore.

Overall, the first episode was incredible, exceeding my expectations. That’s the show’s greatest asset: you have no idea what to expect. The cast members have mentioned how even they don’t know what is planned for them until they receive the script for the next episode. I steered away from revealing some of the grotesque, spine-tingling moments in the show; the mystery makes it more exciting. Even the promos each time around for the season premiers are designed to give no indication of what the storyline is. Despite the dark and horrific aspects of this show, this season brings something new to the table: campy humor. With a predominantly female cast and a focus

“Overall, the first episode was incredible, exceeding my expectations. That’s the show’s greatest asset: you have no idea what to expect.”

we see Fiona, dressed in all black, dancing around a hotel room with all the windows open. She calls the researcher into her room claiming there’s an emergency. He yells at her for the inconvenience while she yells that the injections he gave her have been ineffective. When he is resistant, she shuts all the windows with her mind and slams him against the ground. She kisses him passionately against his will, and next thing you know he is a dying old man and she has been revitalized with youth. She looks the same, but Jessica Lange’s phenomenal acting skills come into play and she is perceivably years younger. It appears she has quite literally sucked all the life out of him. Cordelia is brewing up a potion, which is her power, when Fiona sneaks up from behind her, making her spill the potion everywhere. “I don’t have a broom,” Cordelia says, to which Fiona responds, “Hah! That’s ironic.” Their not-so-friendly banter reveals itself right away. The hostility between the two is apparent, and we can immediately put together that Fiona is Cordelia’s mother. “You are the only child of a Supreme. You have royal blood. You

on some mother-daughter relationships, it makes sense for there to be some attitude and comedic undertones in the series. We see these predominantly between Cordelia and her mother in their very tense relationship and among the girls of the house who come from all different backgrounds. Fiona says to the girls upon meeting them, “I’ve read all your files and you’re never going to become great women of our clan sitting around here at Hogwarts under the confused instruction of my daughter.” There’s a snappy flamboyance about Fiona, so a lot of what she says comes across as sarcastic and comedic. The comedy in the relationships between the girls in the house comes through each time they interact, and they are at each other’s throats most of the time. I’m excited to see the character development in all of these intriguing characters. Each one has a distinct flare in his or her persona, making them easy to love or hate (in the best way possible of course). I highly recommend that anyone reading this article considers watching the show.



The Superman of Our Generation: *Man of Steel*

by Amika Choudhury

Superman has been the world's favorite superhero for generations. From the original *Superman* series starring Christopher Reeve, to the more recent *Superman Returns* starring Brandon Routh, each depiction of the Superman story from Hollywood offers a different interpretation. So what does our generation's Superman have to offer?

Unlike past depictions of Superman in film, *Man of Steel* does not start with Clark Kent as a journalist with a hidden identity. It starts from the beginning. It tells us the origins of Superman and why exactly he is on earth. The film begins with the planet Krypton crumbling into ruins. While Krypton is falling apart, General Zod (Michael Shannon), the head of the Kryptonian military, attempts to take power in order to secure the continuation of the Kryptonian race. Jor-El (Russell Crowe) sends his infant son, Kal-El, to earth with the Codex, a tool to create Kryptonian DNA, in order to stop Zod from growing Kryptonians under his command. Once on earth, Kal-El is taken in by Jonathan (Kevin Costner) and Martha Kent (Diane Lane) and is renamed Clark. In the meantime, General Zod and some of his followers are sentenced to 300 years in the Phantom Zone, a dimension in subspace used by Kryptonians to house and recondition outlaws.

While growing up, Clark struggles to keep his powers a secret. Several years later, Kal-El (now portrayed by Henry Cavill) discovers a 18,000 year old anomaly buried deep in a frozen tundra, where the U.S. government has recovered it. Upon investigating, the Daily Planet reporter Lois Lane (Amy Adams) encounters Kal-El. He saves her from a security drone they encounter, in the process convincing her that he is not of earth. Meanwhile, General Zod and his imprisoned followers reveal themselves. They break through the Phantom Zone via the shift in space created by the destruction of Krypton and have only now reached Kal-El's new home. Zod threatens to kill the entirety of the human race if they fail to hand over Kal-El. It is now up to Superman to defend our species.

There are a number of aspects of *Man of Steel* that prevent it from reaching its full potential. Every superhero has a weakness. However, Superman seems to be invulnerable—there is no mention of Kryptonite whatsoever. Even without Superman's vulnerability being Kryptonite, David S. Goyer and Christopher Nolan, the film's screenwriter and executive producer, respectively, don't truly give Superman an obstacle. We don't really see the substantial growth most heroes undergo in order to master their powers. The script is sometimes incredibly cringe-worthy. There are pieces of dialogue that seem like a failed screenwriter wrote them: "I think he's hot," "they say it gets worse after the first kiss." These are some really awful lines that are completely below the standards of Goyer.

Lois Lane's character exists purely for exposition. Amy Adams seems to pull off being an inquisitive hard hitting reporter, but the writing doesn't make her character stand out. The length of the movie, taking an entirety of about two and a

half hours, is completely unnecessary. The last forty-five minutes is just a repetition of smashing and crashing. Zack Snyder, the film's director, could have easily cut out at least 20 minutes from this scene. Though all super hero movies need action, they need to eventually come back to the storyline. However, we don't see a payoff until the last three minutes.

So what did I like? Snyder's great reputation as a visual storyteller is certainly apparent in this film. As someone who has been waiting for a true Superman movie full of the action that's only been seen on television shows like *Justice League* and *Justice League Unlimited*, there are two really standout scenes that I enjoyed. One is of Kal-El recovering after his foray to destroy the McGuffin mechanism. This scene is similar to the iconic shot in Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* comic series in which Superman recovers while absorbing the sun's rays. While the final action scene isn't as riveting as it should be, the brawl between Kal-el and Faora truly comes together well.

The acting is solid. Michael Shannon has some great scenes as Zod; he did well at personifying a bred nationalistic soldier. Russell Crowe as Jor-El is also quite riveting. His role turns out to be more of a recurring character than just a cameo. Henry Cavill as Superman does well; we get to see plenty of Kal-El and Superman, but virtually none of him as Clark Kent. Overall though, Antje Traue as Faora is probably the breakout star in this one, considering that her character did not have much depth but she still gives a solid performance, especially in the action scene between her and Kal-El. In general, Snyder directs in a darker tone than previous Superman movies, giving Superman a darker and more mysterious effect.

WARNING: The next paragraph contains a major spoiler. If you do not want to know about the climax of the film, skip to the final paragraph.

To put to rest whatever other criticism the film received, here's my take on some of the biggest accusations. "Why doesn't he save everyone? Why does he level the whole city?" Simple, he isn't quite the Superman we love yet. This first movie is still about his genesis. In the same way Batman isn't quite Batman in *Batman Begins*, Kal-El/Clark isn't quite Superman in this movie. "Why did he kill Zod?" Being told by Zod that he will not stop until he's killed everyone and everything Kal-El loves is a sound motive. Also, in the comics, he traps him for eternity in the Phantom Zone. It's arguable whether death as a punishment is better or worse than being trapped for eternity. Several people do not like the idea of Superman killing someone. However, they fail to accept the fact that in this film Superman has not yet adapted the "no-killing" rule that Batman has made so popular in *The Dark Knight*.

So what's my verdict? Well the movie isn't the piece of garbage so many critics and bloggers are making it out to be. It's good, not great, and hopefully the start of a successful series of blockbusters.

The Not-So-Spectacular Now

by Gabriel Broshy



WARNING: Pivotal moments in the movie are mentioned throughout this article. If you do not want to know what happens, **DO NOT** read this article.

The Spectacular Now is a film about two high school seniors who at first seem very different. Sutter Keely (Miles Keller) is an outgoing teenager who recently broke up with his longtime girlfriend, is a failing student, and is always consuming alcohol. His mantra is to “live in the now.” He meets Aimee Finecky (Shailene Woodley) after she finds him unconscious on her backyard. The reserved “good girl” helps him, and their friendship begins. The two get to know each other in school afterwards, despite their differences in social status. After Sutter invites her to a party,

preparing to make in his life. It left an interesting twist as he sees Aimee at school and the viewer is left to wonder what happens next. However, I found the film average at best due its lack of realism, randomness, and lack of relatable and likeable characters.

After seeming like a love story between two very different teens, we learn of the serious problems both must endure. Out of absolutely nowhere, Aimee announces her father is dead, and while being yelled at by Sutter is all of a sudden hit by a bus. These actions are so sudden and unexpected that at least for me, they carried little to no impact. Despite the fact that Aimee’s accident is primarily Sutter’s fault, he begins to drink even more. Oddly enough, only when he hits a mailbox

“I found the film average at best due its lack of realism, randomness, and lack of relatable and likeable characters.”

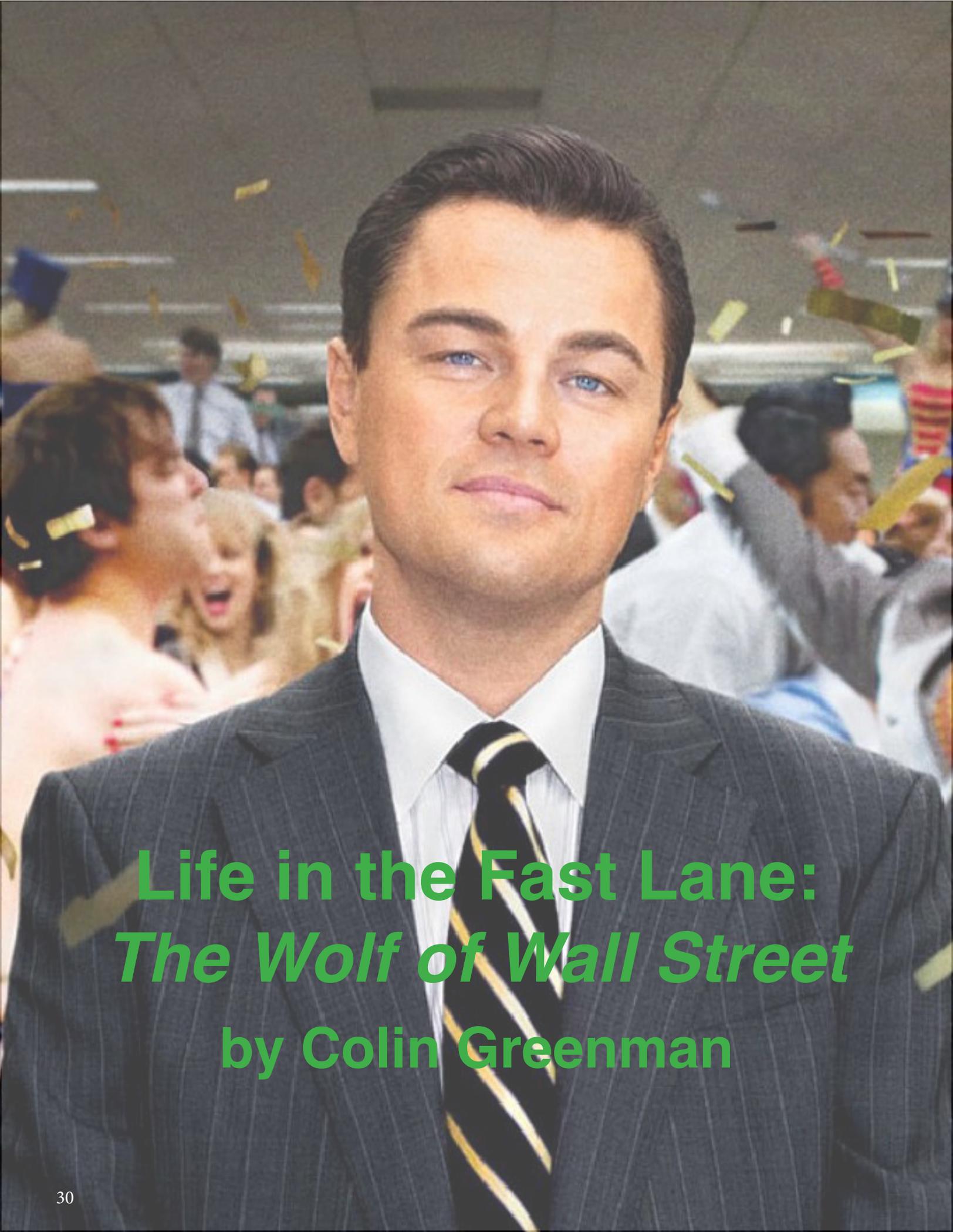
the two kiss, and it is revealed that both are dealing with their own internal troubles.

Aimee’s mother, whose profession is delivering newspapers, is not permitting her daughter to go to college because she wants her daughter to support her. As we later find out, her father died, while Sutter hasn’t seen his dad since he was a small child and his mother refuses to give him his father’s phone number. Together they vow to stand up to their respective authorities. Sutter’s poor influence on Aimee becomes evident through her significant increase of alcohol consumption as their relationship continues to develop.

While the movie received excellent reviews including ones from renowned critics Richard Roeper and Roger Ebert, I didn’t connect with it. The movie provides an intriguing message with the similarities between an alcoholic teen and his father and what could result of Sutter if he falls down his father’s path. It has a captivating plot capturing the issues two teens have and their attempts to overcome them together. I also appreciated the ending as it acknowledges its message by having Sutter talk about the changes he was

does he finally break down and decide to change his ways. Furthermore, Aimee suffers only a broken arm after being struck by a bus and appears fine in the next scene with essentially no explanation. It’s also very unrealistic that it takes 10 years for Sutter to approach his sister in order to gain access to his father’s phone number.

In part due to the randomness of the events that occur in the movie, I found it difficult to connect with any of the characters. While it is unrealistic to make even one character flawless (even more so for the protagonist), no character is charismatic, likable, or even relatable, perhaps as a result of the actors’ portrayals of the characters. Because of this, I felt no significant emotional reaction during the movie. Even when Sutter breaks down to his mother with his eyes filled with tears in what was intended to be the emotional apex of the film or when he committed himself to taking responsibility and turning his life around, I didn’t feel a connection. I felt no sympathy or happiness toward him or toward any of the characters at any point.

A close-up shot of Leonardo DiCaprio as Jordan Belfort from the movie 'The Wolf of Wall Street'. He is wearing a dark pinstriped suit, a white shirt, and a black and gold striped tie. He has a slight, confident smile and is looking slightly to the right. The background is a blurred party scene with people and falling gold confetti.

**Life in the Fast Lane:
The Wolf of Wall Street
by Colin Greenman**

From the opening shot of the trailer for *The Wolf of Wall Street*, which is accompanied by the pulsating beat of Kanye West's "Black Skinhead," one can already get a feel for what to expect from this movie. It will grab you and thrash you around from plot development to plot development just fast enough to keep you processing but not so fast that you lose track. It's the typical Scorsese treatment: keeping you as close to the edge of your seat as possible without falling off. For this next movie, the director (Martin Scorsese) pairs up with his longtime collaborator Leonardo DiCaprio.

The Wolf of Wall Street is based on the memoir of Jordan Belfort, which details his rise and fall amongst the Wall Street royalty. Belfort's greed eventually leads him to making money off less than legitimate business tactics and flat-out-illegal practices. This spectacular income leads to a life of excess: drug use, hard partying, and sports cars all become part of his daily activities. But a lifestyle that consists of speeding in the fast lane is prone to crash and burn sooner or later.

Right off the bat, we are introduced to Jordan Belfort (DiCaprio) with the quotation, "My name is Jordan Belfort, and the year I turned 26 I made 49 million dollars, which really pissed me off because it was three short of a million a week." Belfort is pitched to us as smart, witty, and funny despite his recklessness and shameless greed, and while overtly reckless and greedy, is still a likeable character. Belfort's character bears a noticeable similarity to Gordon Gekko, something that should not be surprising in a movie with a narrative so similar to that of *Wall Street*. The trailer introduces Matthew McConaughey as a fellow stockbroker who serves as an eccentric but wise mentor to the young Belfort. It also features some comedic quips by a noticeably thinner Jonah Hill in the role of Donnie Azoff, who appears to run the illegal portion of Belfort's business. Jonah Hill seems perfectly cast in the most comedic role in what may otherwise be one of his most dramatic films to date.

As the trailer progresses, it becomes clear that Belfort's illicit operation is under investigation by the FBI. Belfort, however does not seem concerned in the slightest and, with a charming tone that only DiCaprio is equipped to deliver, seems to take every opportunity he can to dangle his dirty money in front of the bureau's faces. However, his life begins to unravel as a result of his desperate attempts to cover-up his illegal activities, and we see Belfort become increasingly disheveled and erratic, exhibiting behavior which is also

described in his memoir. It seems as if some other sort of organized crime syndicate such as the mafia plays a role in the story as well.

DiCaprio and Scorsese met with Belfort on several occasions and had long discussions with him over his history, beliefs, and mistakes. When comparing Belfort to other notoriously "greedy" characters, particularly the legendary Gordon Gekko, Scorsese described him as a man who "enters this world, masters it brilliantly, has a great time and spins out of control. Jordan was a guy who got around every obstacle and every regulation and then, because of drugs and the sheer addiction to wealth and what it brings, couldn't bring himself to stop."

It is through these conversations, DiCaprio says, that he was able to get a grip on how he planned to portray Belfort in this feature. "The attitude, the lingo, the type of music he listened to, the drugs he took, how he took those drugs, the effects that it had on his mind and his psyche": all of this is lifted from just a few conversations with Belfort and truly speaks to the amazing talent, determination, and precision of Leo DiCaprio. However, this should come as no surprise, as DiCaprio has spent just over five years developing the project and securing its funding.

The film is also Scorsese's first to be shot digitally as opposed to on film. Scorsese was one of the last major contemporary directors to stick with film as opposed to digital filmmaking, the latter currently being the favored method as it is far easier to edit and less expensive to produce. Scorsese also opted to shoot on location, on Wall Street and in other areas of Manhattan, something that the studio was not in favor of due to higher shooting costs. Nevertheless, Scorsese pushed for it because he felt that the film had to be completely authentic. Given Scorsese and DiCaprio's previous experience with each other, they both have described this film as their most improvisational yet.

While this ambitious project may sound too big to fit into one movie, with the eclectic and diverse cast of Leonardo DiCaprio, Jonah Hill, and Matthew McConaughey, as well as the Oscar-winning direction of seasoned veteran Martin Scorsese, I do not doubt that *The Wolf of Wall Street* will accomplish what it sets out to do. Overall, this film promises a suspense-ridden journey of one man's willingness to ride the American Dream as far as it will take him, and then to attempt to push it a little further.

The Oscar statuette is the central focus, standing on a red carpet. The background is a warm, golden-yellow curtain. The text is overlaid in the center in a bright blue, sans-serif font.

**Coming Soon:
The Oscars Issue**