

GROUND RULE DOUBLE

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MAY 21, 2009


ATENCIO, SCHWARTZ, MILLER DAZZLE IN SOCIAL STUDIES DEPT. PRODUCTION OF "CATS"

After smashing all kinds of off-Broadway records in its opening weekend, the WJ Social Studies dept's production of the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical "Cats!" has been called the hit of the year by countless publications, with the New York Times calling it "A Triumph" and the Pitch praising it as "mildly amusing". As a result of this unexpected success, some of the local teachers are finding their fame hard to adjust to.

Nico Atencio, SGA sponsor and the male lead in the play, "Gus", the theatre cat, has been particularly swept up by the increased attention after his star turn. "People have been stopping me on the

street and asking me to put on a pair of furry ears and dance for them," Atencio said in an interview with GQ Magazine earlier this month, "It's really quite creepy, actually, and it feels wrong on so many levels. But if it keeps the fans happy, I'll do it."

AP NSL and Economics teacher Steve Miller has embraced his fame more openly; playing the wealthy, suave fat-cat Bustopher Jones, Miller has often been known to break out into numbers from the show throughout the day. "It's Just awful," stepdaughter and WJ student Kate Duffy says, "I'll be trying to study or eat dinner, and he just bursts into a rousing rendition of 'Jellicle Cats'. I haven't

slept in four days because I hear him meowing in the basement."

While the former two teachers were met with universally rave reviews, US and World History teacher Nathan Schwartz, who plays the nefarious villain Macavity, was highly praised by some but mercilessly panned by others. "[Schwartz's] acting is quite superb," Entertainment Weekly wrote in its April issue, "but his singing makes you

want to claw your ears out." Still, Schwartz remains the only one to parlay his role into continued success, signing on to play an aging Batman in the sequel to last summer's smash box office hit *The Dark Knight*.

When called, Schwartz declined to comment, though he attempted to sing "Memory" for us, and we quickly hung up before he could do so.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Zack Snyder: Maybe this column would look good if we shoot it in unnecessary slow-motion
- New RIAA regulation requires all albums to be recorded using auto-tune
- This is your final notice that the factory warranty on your car is about to expire

INSIDE GRD SPORTS:

Manny Ramirez Expecting Twins

OPINION: "Dude, Just Hear Me Out, Radiohead is so underrated man" By Paul Fork, Local Althro

You know, man, there's lots of great music out there –you know, like *M.I.A.*, *Animal Collective*, and so on (I don't know if you've heard of them, I guess not everyone knows as much about good music as I do)- but you know when you get down to it, there's still one band that is really really special, y'know? Like, I don't think they get enough respect for the stuff they have the musical chutzpah to do, and the media ignores these guys way too much.

Of course, I'm referring to Thom Yorke's groundbreaking alternative rock band, *Radiohead*, and dude, they're so awesome, you've got to listen to these guys sometime.

I mean, dude, their stuff is

like, SO DEEP. They use so many different instruments, and like, things, and its like, awesome man. And all their stuff, is like, the most critically acclaimed music around.

Do you read Pitchfork™? Please tell me you do. If you don't, you obviously know nothing about music; they pretty much spell out that Radiohead might just be IS the best band of all time!!!! Dude, "O.K. Computer"? They gave it a TEN OUT OF TEN! Radiohead is so awesome!

And dude, they were so groundbreaking on "Kid A", by going and doing even more cool stuff with like electronic sounds and guitars and stuff and like, it was like, mind-

blowing man. Then of course they went and did something even more groundbreaking and awesome on "Hail to the Thief", when they completely took everyone by surprised and released an album full of cliché power driven singles! Those fellows just keep on coming up with new musical innovations, don't they?

And THEN, of course, THEN on their next album, they may have made music history by becoming, like, obviously the first band ever to release their music free on the internet (My friend keeps whining to me something about like, "DIY", and like, bombing the music industry or defying the state of Ohio, or something like

that; I think he's just crazy)! It was SO GROUNDBREAKING! Actually, it was only sort of free because you chose what you could pay for it; I decided to pay \$15 anyways, because like, it's so groundbreaking. I of course promptly went out and also bought the album in stores as well; a band like Radiohead needs all the fan support they can get, because the media clearly overlooks them. It's scary to think about, but if it weren't for fringe media entities like Pitchfork™, we would have possibly never known about Radiohead. Thankfully, FM radio was also there to help.

But yeah dude, check these guys out, just let me know if you need help finding their stuff, I know my obscure, counter-cultural music tastes are really hard to follow sometimes.

SPARKNOTES™ RELEASES STUDY GUIDES FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

First Titles in the Series include "Yertle the Turtle" and "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs"

CONTEXT:

Kids don't read anymore, their attention spans are too short and video games are too fun. Sparknotes has emerged as a savior for the apathetic and over-scheduled.

PLOT OVERVIEW:

Sparknotes announced yesterday that it would summarize kids' books; study guides would include analysis of important illustrations and explanation of rhyme schemes.

CHARACTER LIST:

Kindergarten teachers welcome the new study guides with open arms, saying, "Never again will I have to explain to a confused student why The wolf couldn't eat the third little pig. Thank you Sparknotes!"

THEMES, MOTIFS, SYMBOLS:

Each book will be summarized using purely monosyllabic words; if the book is already in monosyllabic words, stick figures will be used to describe actions and plot points.

IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS EXPLAINED:

"Look, students are not reading as it is," Sparknotes spokesperson John Naylor said, "We here at Sparknotes see what we're doing as a necessary evil; if it weren't for us, what would these lazy students do? I mean, do you actually expect them to read?"

"I'm worried about how this epidemic of educational apathy could result in a generational brain-drain; we could be facing a whole society led by individuals too lazy or too linear-minded to develop their writing, reading, and critical thought processes," said Cormac McCarthy, who wrote some book that everyone had to read in high school, "We could be looking at a veritable dark ages in literature, the media, and essentially all forms of human expression and ingenuity."

KEY FACTS:

Sparknotes also announced that it was currently in the process of developing its "No Fear Dr. Seuss" series of study guides.

Local Reality Show shocked to learn relatively unattractive people are capable of love; talent; friendship

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"It was just mesmerizing how well she sang in spite of her glaring lack of cover-up and breast enhancement procedures," noted Talk show personality Tyra Banks, "It was like, wow, you go Girl, maybe this will help people speak to you!" While some have decried the attitude of some of the singer's fans as "shallow", "derisive", "insulting", and "horrifyingly ignorant", most still are entranced by the rising star's inversely proportional ratio of talent to physical, material beauty.

"This woman is an inspiration for us all that being ugly does NOT mean we're entirely worthless as human beings," local resident Sally Antresek, a self described "butter-face", "we can maybe even fit in one day if our abilities prove beneficial or entertaining to our more attractive and superior peers!"

Local weathergirl Louise Mayfield said, "it's wonderful how television these days is encouraging positive values and depth amongst our children; I for one am pleasantly surprised to learn that ugly people have 23 chromosomes, just like everyone else! Its almost like they're human beings!"

The star in question declined to comment, instead rearing a hideous, un-womanly scowl and shaking her head in a violent, animalistic manner, most likely out of jealousy for this reporter's dashing good looks.

CHIPOTLE TRAFFIC REPORT:

Heavy traffic near the Soda Machine due to a Tabasco Spill heading southbound; Drivers are advised to purchase bottled water, forego the use of napkins or utensils unless absolutely vital.

NEWSPAPERS GO BYE-BYE, TWITTER FTW -8:32PM

NYTIMES: Ppl cncrnd abt quality dropoff, NYTimes will still be gud & keep u in the know -8:44pm

USATODAY: Check our facebook for our infographic on what We're barbecuing this summer! -8:51pm

Thufg_lyfe_in_301: My back really itches.

NYPOST: A-Rod's new

mistress possibly a horse? See flickr 4 pix! -8:55pm

USNEWS+WRLDRPT: College rankings 2k9! Harvard, + Yale > Everyone else! Cu nxt yr! -9:00pm

NYTIMES: Record budget cuts, 2500 staff laid off -9:01pm

USNEWS+WRLDRPT: Record Budget cuts, 1500

staff laid off -9:02pm

USATODAY:

Record Budget Cuts, 3000 laid off -9:03p,

NYPOST: New York's only print newspaper -9:05pm

Supa_Star_293: Getting some water, Brb.

NYTIMES: Studies show attn spans @ all time low-9:07pm



nprpolitics Senate Blocks Funds To Close Guantanamo <http://tinyurl.com/pd6ddzabout> 1 hour ago from twitterfeed

The Warning Track.

We're Too Hip for Times New Roman here. (Garamond is pretty chill though, it can stay.)

ALBUMS FROM THE VAULT: SUFJAN STEVENS' "COME ON, FEEL THE ILLINOISE!" Asthmatic Kitty Records, 2005

Question: What would happen if you threw Vince Guaraldi, R.E.M, George Gershwin, Garrison Keillor, John Updike, a history textbook, a full philharmonic orchestra, and a serial-killer clown into a blender? The result would be a dazzling, awe-inspiring, smooth yet mercurial compound that molds itself into Sufjan Stevens' crowning achievement, "Illinois" (Or as it is more affectionately known on the cover, "Sufjan Stevens invites you to Come on, Feel the Illinoise").

Stevens, as you may already be painfully aware of, began to embark on an incredibly ambitious project to write an album about every state in the union. After finding critical success with his first entry in the project, "Michigan", he took a year to create a pseudo-Christian folk album ("Seven Swans", which I also recommend), only to return in 2005 with the masterpiece of an album that sits before us today. Frustratingly enough, he has failed to follow up with any legitimate new efforts since then, and his increasing isolationism is approaching Salingeresque levels. Nonetheless, it makes "Illinois" all the more powerful, as what (for now) seems like the swan song for Sufjan's heyday, the pinnacle of his brilliance.

The first thing that strikes you about "Illinois" is the titles of the songs themselves; rife with cultural and historical allusions, they serve to almost paint a small story within themselves, similar to the manner in which the entire album serves to create a fascinating and powerful portrait of a state's quirky history, and the tales of humanity that shaped it. The album opens with the calm and effervescent, "Concerning the UFO Sighting near Highland, Illinois", a sub-

dued track that creates the atmosphere of a young, serene frontier state, setting the stage for a small quasi-chronological retrospective of the state's maturation that establishes the album's opening tracks.

From here, Stevens transitions into one of the most beautiful instrumental pieces I've ever heard, "The Black Hawk War", or as it is officially known, "The Black Hawk War, or, How to Demolish an Entire Civilization and Still Feel Good About Yourself in the Morning, or, We Apologize for the Inconvenience but You're Going to Have to Leave Now, or, 'I Have Fought the Big Knives and Will Continue to Fight Them Until They Are Off Our Lands!'". The piece reminds me the most of Dimitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5, as it is piece that at the surface level sounds like a monument to the grandeur and glory of American expansion. When more closely scrutinized, however, the piece is a lamentful and brooding ode to the obliteration of the identity of an entire group of peoples; the innocence and beauty of the minimalist woodwind opening is joined by the militaristic blare of the horns, the two at first contrasting in equilibrium until the triumphant croon of the trumpet drowns out the flutes and oboes to only a faint whisper of their former prominence.

"Illinois" suddenly and swiftly turns into its title track, a two part epic that evolves from an upbeat, syncopated portrait of the industrial revolution and the glory of the World's Fair era to a blossoming, poetic, and highly personal examination recounting a perceived encounter with the ghost of poet Carl Sandberg, punctuated by one of my favorite lines on the album, "Even in his heart the devil has to know the water level; are you writ-

ing from the heart?" From here, Stevens moves into the haunting "John Wayne Gacy, Jr.", a harrowing and graphic profile of the clown who worked the night shift as a serial killing pedophile, focusing intensely on the idea of hidden and unsuspected secrets, capped off by the chilling line, "And in my best behavior I am really just like him/ Look beneath the floorboards for the secrets I have hidden". It's enough to send chills down anyone's spine.

Sufjan then takes a turn into a more intimate profile of the human element behind the urban legends and local histories, a look at the inner person behind it all. "Decatur, or, Round of Applause for Your Step Mother!" is truly beautiful in its minimalism, and Sufjan's use of short, "punctuation" tracks such as "One last Woohoo! For the Pullman" serve to create a completeness and continuity through the album's thematic development.

The album then moves into its most fertile and magnificent portion; when I first heard "Chicago", I was simply mesmerized. "Illinois" was a good album up until this track. "Chicago" made it a truly great album; my words cannot do the song justice, you really just have to listen to it. The track that follows, however, cemented this album in my personal musical pantheon. "Casmir Pulaski Day" is arguably the single most beautiful piece of music created in the past twenty years; the minimalist strumming guitar and plucking banjo, juxtaposed against the soft, passionate, haunted vocals by Sufjan is a soul-baring, heartfelt masterpiece about loss and persistence of memory. The subdued croon of the trumpet at the 2:25 mark creates an ethereal atmosphere that almost puts you within the intimate memories without penetrating the prevailing minimalism. It is a truly touching expres-



Image Courtesy of <http://hallelujahhallelujah.blogspot.com/> And Asthmatic Kitty Records

sion of the emotion and memory that accompany loss; the last lyric, "And he takes and he takes and he takes" harkens upon the prevailing Christian and religious overtones that punctuate much of Sufjan's music. "The Man of Metropolis Steals Our Hearts" examines Superman in the context of a Christ-like figure, and its contrasting hard-edged guitar chorus with the subdued harp during the verse creates a somewhat surreal and otherworldly atmosphere. "The Predatory Wasp of the Palisades is Out to Get Us!" builds upon this idea of the prevalence of memory along with a sense of loneliness, the result of Sufjan's minimalism combined with one of his best lyrical efforts on the album ("Thinking outrageously, I write in cursive/ I hide in my bed with the lights on the floor").

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THE WARNING TRACK!

The Warning Track is Donald Borenstein's personal ramblings, with a little help from Mike Radack.

Check out Mike's blog at

<http://hallelujahhallelujah.blogspot.com/>

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CAN YOU DIG IT?

Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds - Dig!!! Lazarus!!! Dig!!! Anti- Records, 2008

BY GUEST CONTRIBUTOR MIKE RADACK

Nick Cave is best known for his brooding, slow, piano-y music. This newest CD, however, was a complete change of pace. The guitars were pulled right out of the 70s, cranking the volume to 11 for a classic rock feel. The bass grooves in time with the syncopated drum beats, and of course, the organ stabs. Now, of course, this can't all be *too* normal, so there's some weird tape sounds and feedbacking instruments that occasionally play so low in the background that you have to strain to hear them. All of this, of course, is under Nick Cave's commanding voice.

Cave nearly raps the entire album; his speak-singing only slightly tuneful, like he's an actor reciting his lines, using his intonation to let you know the emo-



tions. Utterly fantastic. He's a storyteller above all else, and his ability to spin the classic tale of Lazarus (the man Jesus brought back from the dead) as a new story (in this version, Lazarus wakes up in 2008, lost in New York City, ready to take all of the drugs he can and have sex with all of the

women) is just so animated in its exploration. You should get this album, whoever you are. It's ear-opening.

Recommended Tracks:
Dig Lazarus Dig, Albert Goes West, Lie Down Here (And Be My Girl)

FEEL THE ILLINOISE!

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"Palisades" also serves as a transition piece of sorts, as the album from here moves into a colder, more serious introspective of memory and history more in the tone of "John Wayne Gacy, Jr". The song "They Are Night Zombies!! They Are Neighbors!! They Have Come back from the Dead!! Ahhhh!" creates a chilling atmosphere defined by the razor-sharp hum of violins. There is a sense of atmospheric emptiness in this part of the album; "In this Temple as in the Hearts of Man for Whom He Saved the Earth" gives, as the title suggests, the feeling of aloneness in the presence of a larger force; it is inspired by the famous inscription on the Lincoln memorial, and there is a truly ethereal feeling about the entire piece. "The

Seer's Tower" (a twist on the famous Chicago skyscraper) is a chilling song filled with religious allusions, and it creates a sense of isolation and coldness; Stevens croons, "Still I go to the deepest grave/ where I go to sleep alone", and the song fades out into a haunting chorus of oohs and aahs, fading into oblivion.

Stevens then jumps back into an upbeat, jazzy mood with "The Tallest Man, the Broadest Shoulders", a two-part piece that serves as a counterpoint of sorts to the title-track earlier on; the allusions to Abraham Lincoln are blatant, and the 5/4 time creates a Brubeck-ian feel to the first part. The second part moves back into 4/4, and it's almost dreamlike in its examination of the plights Chicago has faced in its storied history and its resilience in the face of them. It fades into the ethereal "Riffs And Variations On A Single

Note For Jelly Roll, Earl Hines, Louis Armstrong, Baby Dodds, And The King of Swing, To Name A Few", a beautiful, expressionistic piece that stays true to its name. The album comes to a close with the upbeat, mystically repetitive, percussive "Out Of Egypt, Into The Great Laugh Of Mankind, And I Shake The Dirt From My Sandals As I Run". The collective of looping instruments is calamitous yet strangely beautiful, and the manner in which the final seconds of the album fade out in the minimalistic clinking of a xylophone captures the real heart of this album, as a raw testament to the fortitude of man.

In the end, "Illinois" is nothing short of a triumph; it is arguably the best album of the past 20 years; it is a minimalistic monument to Sufjan Stevens' multi-instrumental genius. Oh,

right, I almost forgot to mention that; HE PLAYS NEARLY EVERY SINGLE INSTRUMENT USED ON THIS ALBUM. There are too many allusions and connections to keep track of; I suggest consulting Wikipedia if you want to make even an attempt at it. On paper, the album looks like an oversaturated mass of too many instruments, too many concepts, and too many stylistic shifts. However, the result is nothing short of a masterpiece, and as such, "Illinois" is a work of sheer brilliance, and anyone who loves music truly needs to hear this album.

Recommended Tracks:
Casimir Pulaski Day, Chicago, The Black Hawk War, The Predatory Wasp Of the Palisades is Out to get us!, Decatur, or, A Round of Applause for your Stepmother!, The Tallest Man, The Broadest Shoulders; Aw, just listen to the whole thing.