



COURTESY OF SAMUEL GOLDWYN FILMS

Bernard Berkman (Jeff Daniels) ponders life, divorce and joint custody in director Noah Baumbach's delightful film, 'The Squid and the Whale.'

Comical 'Squid' takes on divorce

BY SEAN VONLEMBKE
STAFF WRITER

Never before has divorce and child custody been such a laughing matter.

But in Noah Baumbach's "The Squid and the Whale," the laughter is not uproarious or even healthy. It is short and defensive in the same unrewarding way one might laugh at an embarrassing memory. The film's intention is not to tell a traditional story, but to recall an all-too-familiar one in all of its embarrassment and terror.

When the movie opens, the Berkman family, an upper-middle-class New York family, is still whole. But Baumbach doesn't let that last for long. He rushes the audience through the nuclear family fallout, but he does it carefully.

Jeff Daniels and Laura Linney play the bad guys in the movie — or parents, for lack of a better word. They both hold doctorates in literature but that seems to be all they have in common. They also think primarily of themselves and, more importantly, vilify each other. That puts their children at ends.

They have two sons, who have their own problems after the breakup. Baumbach focuses more on the older son, Walt (Jesse Eisenberg), who is in high school. After the divorce he comes to emulate his father and to distance himself from his mother.

Frank (Owen Kline) also has problems, but his are much more devastating. The breakup leads to a lack of communication and connection in a pivotal developing stage of his life. The way in which

MOVIE REVIEW

"THE SQUID AND THE WHALE"
★★★★★

his story unfolds is truly grotesque and painful.

And through all of this we can still laugh?

Yes, somehow. It is not surprising that Wes Anderson helped produce this movie. The comedy parallels that of Anderson's "Rushmore" and "The Royal Tenenbaums," only it tackles more serious subject matter. In fact, it is easier to laugh at this movie because we have seen it all before, and we know how ridiculous it all really is.

It would be too obvious to mention that Baumbach based the movie on the events of his own childhood. The story isn't common only to him. The fact that it is set in New York in 1986 doesn't matter either. The characters may talk about divorce in a unique way, but the way they think about it and respond to it is universal.

There is no appropriate climax or any significant character development to make us feel good at the end of the movie, but still we do.

We are not offered some passable resolution or explanation. The unfortunate majority that has experienced the movie's events do not gain any knowledge or insights into divorce. What Baumbach does offer is a look back. He retells a common tale that is still painful, but not as much as it used to be.

Contact the A&E Editor at artsdesk@unc.edu.

Punk rockers revel in latest addiction

BY BETH MECHUM
STAFF WRITER

Western Addiction might seem like a breath of fresh air for the new post-hardcore music scene, but the truth is that it has all been done before — and better, by Black Flag.

"Cognicide," the group's full-length debut, even has a song called "The Church of Black Flag" on it.

The album is a kick in the mouth right from the start with its jarring melodies and unmistakable bass riffs.

It's chock full of aggressive lyrics with political undertones. The lyrics are surprisingly clever from a band with an unimpressive and original music scheme.

Western Addiction makes use of metaphors and similes to prove its point on several topics: The government doesn't work; parents suck; and everyone is going to hell.

In "Incendiary Minds," lead singer Jason Hall (although more of a screamer than a singer) uses a combination of politics and parents: "Like a Confederate flag/Dad reeks of kin."

Like Black Flag and other hardcore punk bands from the 1980s such as Minor Threat and The

MUSIC REVIEW

WESTERN ADDICTION
COGNICIDE

★★★

Circle Jerks, Western Addiction complains about all who are corrupt and about how human society has lost its morals.

In "Animals and Children," Hall laments, "I prefer the company of animals and children to adults/So I won't have to give up hope." While a majority of the punk rock scene probably agrees with the argument, Western Addiction is going to have to gain a lot more experience to get the full respect from such a fickle audience.

"Cognicide" is a good start to a hopefully prosperous group of kids releasing their frustration in music, but the band has a long way to go to reach the status of its predecessors.

Straight-up punk rock is a dying genre, but Western Addiction — along with a few other bands, such as Paint it Black — is trying hard to revive it and to ignite the hearts of outcast kids everywhere. The LP doesn't include the formula for a usually successful production



with songs shorter than a sleepy morning yawn, but it's obvious the members have an intense love for the music they're playing.

Western Addiction is most likely a better live band than studio band, as many punk bands feed off the energy of its angry audiences.

"Cognicide" is not a necessity to a good punk rock music collection, but a listener will not be disappointed or embarrassed with it.

The 21-minute album goes by so fast that it's easy to miss the insightful lyrics and catchy guitar riffs, but do not give up on it: It's worth a second listen.

Contact the A&E Editor at artsdesk@unc.edu.

Irish folk songs fall flat on Duggins' debut album

'Undone' better left unfinished

BY HARRY KAPLOWITZ
ASSISTANT ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

Taking T. Duggins' debut album, *Undone*, at face value might get you in some geographical trouble.

Though the album sounds like it was recorded with the rolling hills of Ireland in mind, the truth is that the native Chicagoan's album is about as unauthentic and derivative as a Pogues cover band.

Frontman for the Celtic-punk band The Tossers, Duggins undertakes an ambitious effort: a 13-song set of traditional Irish folk songs, Pogues covers, Tossers originals and even an interpretation of Bob Dylan's "Boots of Spanish Leather."

Adventurous though it may be, the album is plagued by its own concept.

Duggins sounds less like an Irish folksinger and more like a brash young punk stumbling toward an appreciation of his Celtic roots, a pint of Guinness in hand.

Undone struggles through its frame, with few songs that pass

MUSIC REVIEW

T. DUGGINS
UNDONE

★★

for appreciable.

Indeed, what the album lacks is the sense of playfulness the genre necessitates.

Duggins takes himself and his musical transformation too seriously, resulting in an unintended tongue-in-cheek quality that outweighs the effort's sincerity.

Recorded as if it were a live performance without an audience, *Undone* does instill a sense of musical intimacy that helps to lend an air of authenticity to an otherwise hackneyed outing.

"Children's Potential," originally a Tossers song, is the album's standout track, and that isn't saying very much.

Locking in at just shy of seven-and-a-half minutes, the track ambles through a generic story of working-class plight.

With the track, Duggins manages to step out of himself and his self-created brand of Irish carousing to reinterpret a track with ample gravitas.

But Duggins' aching and unpolished faux-Irish accent



doesn't help to make the album any more listenable. Lacking any sense of melody, timing or rhythm, his acoustics come off as unaffected at best.

In just under an hour, Duggins creates a loosely woven knit of songs that more reflect a desire to be something he inherently isn't than any kind of earnest attempt at musical ingenuity. The album stands out only in its creative aspiration.

By its tail end, *Undone* becomes something of kitsch. As a concept album, Duggins fails to make anything noteworthy that transcends the genre.

Instead, what results is a poorly crafted amalgamation of songs that lacks any semblance of legitimacy and feeling.

Contact the A&E Editor at artsdesk@unc.edu.

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MOVIES

'MUNICH' Spielberg gets controversial with latest epic. page 7

'BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN' Lee gets controversial with story about man-love. page 7

'HOSTEL' No controversy here. Just lots and lots of body parts. page 7

'THE SQUID AND THE WHALE' Oh, divorce. So funny. page 8

ALBUMS

WESTERN ADDICTION This concept was better when it was called Black Flag. page 8

T. DUGGINS Luck of the Irish doesn't bode well for folk upstart. page 8

THE STROKES America's band rebounds from weak 'Room on Fire.' page 6

AVETT BROTHERS Hometown rockers weave convincing album. page 6

THE PLAYWRIGHTS What the deuce? This 'lofty' LP has no substance. page 6

dive recommends

[THE LEFT-OVERS]

2005 was chock full of excellent movies and albums. Here are some more that are worth checking out:

In movies: "2046," "Good Night, and Good Luck," "Me and You and Everyone We Know," "No Direction Home: Bob Dylan," and — for all you college kids — "Crash."

In music: *The Woods* by Sleater-Kinney, *Feels* by Animal Collective, *LCD Soundsystem* by LCD Soundsystem, *The Runners Four* by Deerhoof, and *Beauty and the Beat* by Edan.

['24']

A Jack Bauer hour of power is nothing to be taken lightly. Now in its fifth season, Fox's hit counter-terrorism thriller, shown in real-time cuts, is addictive. At the rate at which he's going this season, Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland) is on pace to kill at least 100 people before the day is through. And there's just no justice like rogue justice.

[STEPHEN CHBOSKY, 'THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER']

Forget that this book was published by MTV and that the concept (following a malcontent through adolescence) has already been done better by J.D. Salinger — "Perks" offers an interesting peek into the life of an interesting character and drops nostalgic '90s pop culture references as gifts along the way.

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