



NICK PARKER
DO YOU SMELL WHAT THE MIZ IS COOKIN'?

Reality provides TV's top material

Drama has its place. Filmmakers stuff their stock with it; novelists pour it on like gravy; Shakespeare's got it in spades.

Dramatic conflict is the driving force behind the world's most meaningful entertainment, and when it's done right, there's an emotional hook that's concrete, contextual and powerful.

It taps into some semblance of what it feels like to be hopeful, heartbroken and human. It has a resonance that feels familiar.

It might not be real life, but it's close.

Cinema accomplishes true drama through its almost limitless, free-form potential and instant accessibility. And there's a lot to be said for good cinematography.

Theater was founded on drama, the simplicity of humans acting and reacting in reality. Viewers are personally and profoundly involved just by being there.

Novels are the best. No other media engages the you in such a raw, clean fashion. Drama and conflict are felt through a sort of psychic transportation — a fusion of two individual imaginations.

That's why I hate "E.R." That's why "Touched by an Angel" is biblical diarrhea. That's why Jerry Bruckheimer should be tied to the Hollywood sign and burned alive, his limbs shipped to Peter Engel and Jonathan Murray as a warning.

Trying to capture true drama in a half-hour or even an hourlong television show is like trying to catch a butterfly with a tennis racket.

It swings wildly at the idea, branding the belief that hitting the audience with death, drugs, love or hope is the same as nurturing an emotional investment.

The brutality, fragmentation and patness of television make it impossible to convey real feeling.

Advertisements crowd the narrative line. Brevity rushes epiphanies. Network censorship saps away at truth and humanity. Sorry, television, you just don't stand a chance.

But we did save you a seat on the short bus.

Dumb, violent, lowbrow programming is television's true saving grace. Yes, I understand the inherent negation of dumb grace.

And thankfully, there's a whole army of shows capitalizing on human stupidity and a lack of basic motor skills.

Shows like "Most Extreme Elimination Challenge," a screwy interpretation of the '80s Japanese import "Takeshi's Castle," are perfect. "Real TV," which features videos of things blowing up, people falling down and people blowing up while falling down, is dead on.

"The Real World v. Road Rules" shows (take your pick) should be commended for their unveiled sexuality, dehumanizing challenges and repetitive casting of the same ox-headed jocks, stumbling drunks and über bitches/sluts.

They're not breaking new ground; they're not socially significant; they're not beautiful or heart-warming or even any good.

But they are deconstructive genius — filled with silliness and stupidity so rampant that they become self-referential and redeeming as a result.

"MXC" isn't going to make you think, make you ache or make you weep. Then again, it isn't trying to, and its ability to take itself as a joke is what makes it the perfect fit for the television format.

Plus, there's something satisfying about seeing a skinny Japanese guy in a cape getting hit square in the nuts. It just feels so right.

That isn't to say that drama is a dead art. It's everywhere, and it's absolutely necessary. But on television, drama never really existed. Its frivolity and commercial feel make dramatic television an oxymoron.

No matter who's on trial, "Law and Order" is milking a dry cow. No matter how long it ran, "Friends" never had genuine characters. No matter who dies, "CSI" sucks.

Get in touch with television's true self. Indulge in the drama of the absurd. Laugh at stupid people. And don't get eliminated.

Contact Nick Parker, a senior journalism and English major, at panic@email.unc.edu.

Mismatched bits mar 'Beauty' Sans three MCs, one DJ delivers

BY SALEM NEFF
STAFF WRITER

"Stage Beauty" flows like a sleazy piece of live theater.

Seventeenth-century English theater saw a transition from stiff gender barriers to the loosening of the proverbial girdle for actresses. As a period piece and film, "Stage Beauty" has fancy speech and little character development — but memorable love scenes.

Billy Crudup portrays an actor of female roles, and Claire Danes, who steals his bit as Othello's Desdemona, seems to desire him — although there is never a true clarification of his bisexuality.

Appropriate gender roles are stressed at the film's end, when Crudup's character plays the Moor, a male role.

Operating under the 1660s paradigm, Ned Kynaston (Crudup) by law must step down as Desdemona and retreat to either a male role or nothing at all. His former dresser, Maria (Danes), helps him find the suppressed man inside of him that has lain dormant since childhood.

The transition from men to women playing female roles should be a victory for women's rights. How unrewarding it was for women when men believed they were more capable of representing women on stage than women themselves.

Keeping the argument gray, Kynaston argues that there is no art in women playing themselves. The hand movements and innocent demeanor of women take many years to perfect.

Unfortunately, these lessons are not easily unlearned, as Kynaston discovers when he can only perform as a woman in a seedy tavern after the new law has been passed. The real-life Kynaston ultimately goes on to play male roles.

At the film's climax, Crudup



COURTESY OF LIONS GATE FILMS

Feeling a bit saucy, period-piece tart Billy Crudup prepares to acknowledge that all the world is, in fact, a stage and it's better experienced in a corset.

MOVIE REVIEW "STAGE BEAUTY"

★★

remains lightweight, not only in his demeanor but also in his believability. He helps Danes with her acting like Sean Patrick Thomas helps Julia Stiles dance in "Save the Last Dance."

The two films should never be compared otherwise.

And as usual, the leading man saves the day, or in this case, play just in the nick of time. What a surprise!

Danes' character is more a spokeswoman for actresses than a dynamic artist; thus, the story is carried by minor roles.

Hugh Bonneville as the theater manager, has more personality than Danes, and the true leading lady is Zoe Tapper, who plays Nell Gwynn, King Charles II's mistress. Vibrant

and properly manipulative, Nell convinces the king (Rupert Everett) that women's roles should appropriately be played by women.

The advantage of the screen over the stage is the use of accurate scenery and realistic characters to make the audience emotionally involved.

Richard Eyre directs this adaptation of a play as though it were a play, and his artistic attempt fails. The sets are obvious, and over-dramatic acting by the film's nobility appears too stressed.

"Stage Beauty" endures just long enough. An interesting concept and historically valuable, the film's plot had potential. The surprising lack of strong performances from Hollywood A-listers disappoints.

More chemistry hopefully exists between Danes and Crudup in their off-screen affair.

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

Guests' album serves up sonic feast

BY NICOLE BOBITSKI
STAFF WRITER

With their hot new album, *LAWOKEINACITYASLEEP*, The Honored Guests can be guests at my dinner party anytime.

LAWOKEINACITYASLEEP — I'll give you a minute to process it — is the first LP served up by the newly formed band based in Chapel Hill.

The Honored Guests, an indie-rock, grunge-inspired trio composed of former members of the disbanded group Milo, transcend reformed-band clichés with thoughtful vocals and a complementary blend of bass, drums and guitar chords.

Co-produced by The Honored Guests and Robert Sledge, formerly of Ben Folds Five, *LAWOKEINACITYASLEEP* not only continues the Milo legacy but goes above and beyond by conveying the group's hard-earned maturity.

Russell Baggett, lead vocalist and guitarist, is back and armed with former Milo band mates Jeremy Buenviaje and Andrew Kinghorn to combine the crafted harmony of their instrumental talents.

The beginning track, "Postmarked," showcases Baggett's illustriously gravelly voice, similar to Eddie Vedder's, and is the perfect

MUSIC REVIEW THE HONORED GUESTS LAWOKEINACITYASLEEP

★★★★

first course for the LP as it offers up a carefree strum-and-bass melody.

"Flashlight" cleanses listeners' palates with a light and airy approach as Baggett's voice slides in and out of a hazy ode to solitude accompanied by the airy backup vocals of Buenviaje and Kinghorn.

The fourth song, "The Punch," shocks the taste buds like a spiked fruit cocktail at an aunt's wedding. It's a drastic change from the rest of the album, with vocals that seem to be emitted from a tunnel and choppy instrumental interludes.

"I Can't Keep You" drifts in and out of forceful guitar but offers an effortless bass line and catchy chorus worthy of a single, with the sad twang of the requisite lovelorn lyrical premise:

"If you think my love is just a joke/
It's the thing that haunts me forever/
And I'm thinking of giving up."

The title track is probably the

most bland track on the album but is made up for in the next few dishes — I mean, songs.

Infused with the sleepy rock sensibilities that the kids dig nowadays, the last track, "Days Are Getting Brighter," is the perfect fade-out song to finish the LP.

With sickly sweet love lyrics like "No one even knows it's you that I love," the album ends with what you could call a rich dessert.

With *LAWOKEINACITYASLEEP*, The Honored Guests serve up a full-course, four-star meal with their new album, leaving listeners craving for more.

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

The Lumina 620 Market St. Chapel Hill 932-9000

Take 15/501 South towards Pittsboro Exit Main St./Southern Village

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