



NICK PARKER
HE ONCE USED THE BATHROOM AT MY HOUSE

King of Pop's trial is media insanity

I tried my best to stay away. I tried to avert my eyes. I thought if I ignored it long enough it would just go away, like Hanson, or head lice, or that creepy guy sleeping on my couch.

But, after almost six weeks of constant media coverage, I can't dodge the umbrellas, dark sunglasses and collapsed nostrils anymore: Michael Jackson is everywhere. The beast has grown too big, and I can't stay silent any longer.

Earlier this week, a judge in Jackson's sexual assault trial ruled that testimony about five previous sexual assault accusations would be admitted in the courtroom. That will include two cases on which he made multimillion-dollar settlements and, possibly, questions about his relationship with then-child star Macaulay Culkin.

If there was ever any doubt that Jackson is going to lose this case, it's buried now. In February 2003, he freaked out the world with his bizarre behavior, on camera, while the BBC's Martin Bashir tailed him.

He's facing an all-white jury, he dangled his baby off a balcony, and he's got half the Vienna Boy's Choir testifying against him. For the past decade the King of Pop has faded away, and Wacko Jacko has taken the throne. It's not looking good.

But if things don't change, testimony won't matter. The public will be the swing vote.

Since the trial began, Jackson's been on the front page of The New York Times at least two dozen times, and he consistently fills hours on cable news channels.

Political experts — that's right, educated lawyers with suits and everything — play the guessing game with every unfolding chapter of the trial. There's more media vans parked at the Santa Barbara County Courthouse than at the Florida hospital that holds Terri Schiavo, which, in contrast, is an issue that actually matters.

It's been said a billion times, but it bears repeating: This is a media circus, and we're buying into it.

This unholy, endless obsession is dangerous. Jackson's celebrity star is glowing brighter than ever, all because he possibly drugged, seduced and molested several boys between the ages of 10 and 13.

His record sales are the highest they've been in years. His new box set is selling faster than stores can stock it. Hundreds of fans have camped outside the courthouse, shouting out praise as he dashes for the front door.

I saw an interview recorded near the start of the trial in which a woman told the reporter she had actually moved down to Santa Barbara to support Jackson. She'd been there, living in a tent, since day one, and said she planned to stay until the verdict is announced.

That means she quit her job, sold her furniture, stocked up on canned goods and diet cola and literally set up camp to see a man she's never met for a few fleeting moments a day. I don't know if she's been showering, and she scared me so much I had to turn off the television. And she's not alone.

If the trials of O.J. Simpson and Martha Stewart taught us anything, it's that celebrities can get away with it. Even if they're found guilty, they end up playing shuffleboard with the prison warden at a country club with jump suits.

And Jackson was never going to federal prison. He's too rich and his lawyers are too good for that. But if this surreal saturation in his trial doesn't ease off, he's going to walk before the jury even deliberates.

I don't want Jackson to be guilty. He's weird — so very, very weird — but I can forgive eccentricity. I can forgive naming your kid Blanket, throwing a Ferris wheel in your front yard and spending millions on transforming your body into a bleached sideshow special. He had a pretty messed up childhood. I actually like Jackson.

All I want is a fair trial, in which the facts mean more than the face. I hope he is innocent.

After all, the man made *Thriller*. *Thriller*.

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

Sequel misses out on successes of original

BY AMY JACKSON
STAFF WRITER

It's not like if you missed the first one — and didn't happen to watch it one of the 500 times it played on TBS — you have anything to worry about.

"Miss Congeniality 2" is not that hard to follow.

The sequel to Sandra Bullock's 2000 comedy picks up just three weeks after the Miss United States pageant, where the beloved FBI agent Gracie Hart (Bullock) is now back in action.

The recently crowned Miss United States, Cheryl Frasier, and the show's emcee, Stan Fields (William Shatner), have been kidnapped — and Gracie and her new partner, Sam Fuller (Regina King), are on a mission to help them.

Like the first film, the movie focuses on Gracie overcoming personal obstacles and learning to believe in herself, all the while saving someone's life — in heels, for that matter.

"Miss Congeniality 2" is basically another version of the first, but with a few different characters and new criminals. This time around there's a more materialistic side to Gracie as she is now the face of the FBI, and she spends more time with her Chanel quilted bag than with her gun.

The first film also featured Benjamin Bratt as Agent Matthews, who was Gracie's co-worker and eventually her love interest. But just as the relationship is starting up, by the beginning of the second movie it's already over.

The movie is cute and worth watching, but like most sequels it just doesn't measure up to the original. Most of the funnier parts are given away in the preview, which takes away from the surprise element that accompanies a good comedic performance.

In general, sequels are better



Sandra Bullock stars as Gracie Hart, an FBI agent working undercover as a showgirl to save the new Miss United States and William Shatner.

when there is major character and plot development. In the first film, the audience watches Gracie evolve and become more of a woman. She gains confidence and respect from her co-workers and saves the life of her new best friend.

"Miss Congeniality 2" might have picked up where the original left off, but there is no sense of change or growth.

The cast delivers a great performance. Both Bullock and King execute their roles with flair. The movie might even be a gateway for King's march toward more leading roles.

Even though the actors do a

MOVIE REVIEW "MISS CONGENIALITY 2: ARMED AND FABULOUS"

★★★

superb job, the movie is not one people will want to watch more than once.

The simple fact is that movies like this are simply designed for people to sit down and have a good laugh, and in that respect, "Miss Congeniality 2" delivers.

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

Flashy self-help book advances misconceptions

BY SALEM NEFF
STAFF WRITER

"Party Girls," "Worker Bees," "Chameleons" and "Body-Conscious Babes," rejoice! Your already stereotypically condensed personality is about to be even more generalized.

Alison James has written "The 10 Women You'll Be Before You're 35" so post-graduate women can identify themselves through her 10 stages — beginning, of course, with the "New Graduate."

Why should anyone stress individuality if only to group themselves as image-starved women with even stereotyped favorite songs?

The book divides itself by each type of woman, beginning with an at-a-glance depiction of each. The categories range by nicknames and look to phrases, friends, life goals, favorite songs and activities to define each category.

For example, if you are the "Crisis Chick," your love interest would be "absolutely no one but your beloved pet." If you are a "Dollarless Diva," your nickname is "Credit Card Queen." And if you are a "Worker Bee," classical music is your groove because, supposedly, Mozart increases brain power.

The rest of every chapter includes mini-paragraphs with their own personal headlines, all in peppermint green and the occa-

BOOK REVIEW

ALISON JAMES
"THE 10 WOMEN YOU'LL BE BEFORE YOU'RE 35"

sional cursive font for inspirational quotes. Light green backgrounds offer extra tidbits of encouragement or opportunities for the reader to relate to.

In case you weren't sure if "Wirl — Half Woman/Half Girl" was your phase of the moment, try the checklist. If a professional athlete looks like they've just erupted from the womb, yet dating them is not out of the question, whirl away in "Wirl" land. But please don't get too wrapped up in it.

For lovers of magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Seventeen* or *Glamour*, the book will be similar to articles you have read. Stick to the magazines. They're cheaper and are not labeled "Self-Help."

Women do not need a book to place them in imaginary groups and then describe them in glossy detail. Magazines cover the emotional quick fix for the body-conscious or relationship-worrying quick fix necessary on occasion.

This 240-page, overly obvious self-help book can stay off your shelf.

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

STARSYSTEM

- ★ POOR
- ★★ FAIR
- ★★★ GOOD
- ★★★★ EXCELLENT
- ★★★★★ CLASSIC



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31 TH TODD SNIDER w/ Hayes Carl** (\$10/\$12)

APRIL

1 FR BLUEGROUND UNDERGRASS** (\$10/\$12)

2 SA WHO'S BAD (Michael Jackson Tribute)** (\$8/\$10)

3 SU LESS THAN JAKE, Allister, Hidden In Plain View, Days Away** (\$15)

5 TU HANK / ASSJACK w/ Artimus Pyle/driver** (\$15)

6 WE And You Will Know Us By The Trail of Dead** (\$15) w/ The Swords & Octopus Project

7 TH M WARD, Norfolk & Western, Devil/ta** (\$10)

8 FR FANTOMAS, The Locust, Trevor Dunn** (\$15/\$17)

9 SA MASON JENNINGS w/ Johnathan Rice** (\$12)

12 TU DON DIXON**

13 WE AMY RAY w/ Gretchen Phillips** (\$12/\$14)

14 TH Jump, Little Children** (\$10)

15 FR SOUTHERN CULTURE ON THE SKIDS w/ Jule Brown and Chrome Plated Apostles** (\$10)

16 SA AGNOSTIC FRONT w/ Martyr AD, All Shall Perish**

17 SU CARDINAL DIRECTION w/ Trip** (\$8)

18 MO FLICKER (Local short films) \$3; 8:30pm

20 WE GOGOL BORDELLO** (\$10/\$12)

21 TH DIZZEE RASCAL w/ DJ Wonder** (\$15)

22 FR EDWIN MCCAIN BAND w/ David Ryan Harris** (\$16)

23 SA LITTLE BROTHER** (\$12/\$14)

27 WE STRAYLIGHT RUN, Minus The Bear, The Honorary Title, Gratitude, Spitfire** (\$12)

29 FR SPENCERACUFF w/ Pico Vs. Island Trees

30 SA WXYC 80's dance

MAY

2 MO MOUNTAIN GOATS w/ Shearwater** (\$10/\$12)

3 TH THE EXPLOSION, THROW RAG, The Loved Ones

4 WE URBAN SOPHISTICATES, BOXBOMB, CODE 7, CLASSIC CASE, House Of Fools

7 SA NEIL DIAMOND ALL-STARS w/ Mary Prankster** (\$8)

9 MO THE GOOD LIFE, Make Believe** (\$8)

11 WE BRITISH SEA POWER w/ Feist**

12 TH PATTY GRIFFIN** (Tix on sale 4/1)

13 FR THE REVEREND HORTON HEAT / SUPERSUCKERS / MURPHY'S LAW** (\$15)

14 SA THE BLACK KEYS w/ Hentchmen** (\$12)

16 MO HEADPHONES** (\$10)

17 TU MASTODON w/ DEATH BY STEREO, CULT OF LUNA** (\$12/\$14)

19 TH BUILT TO SPILL w/ Mike Johnson** (\$17)

20 FR SLIGHTLY STOOPID w/ Fishbone and Mishka** (\$14/\$16)

21 SA THE COMAS**

27 FR RAVENNETTES w/ Autolux and Peels

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