

Carell, Fey come together



BY KEN DUSOLD
Reviewer

Michael Scott of "The Office" and Liz Lemon of "30 Rock" are two of the most dysfunctional and outrageously funny bosses in television history. The reason is because, if you look beyond the unbelievable antics and situations in which they find themselves, Steve Carell and Tina Fey are relatable.

In "Date Night," director Shawn Levy brings the situation comedy king and queen together for the first time. And while the script, written by Josh Klausner, is not what one would have hoped for when seeing Carell and Fey finally working opposite one another, the duo succeeds at delivering a very funny product.

Carell and Fey play Phil and Claire Foster, an overworked couple frustrated by their routine life in the New Jersey suburbs. Between their children, a book club from hell and their careers — he's a tax attorney and she's a real estate agent — the Fosters are craving a bit more excitement. An excursion into Manhattan for some fine dining at a trendy new eatery feeds that craving. After stealing an absent couple's reservation, which becomes a recurring joke throughout the story, they quickly become entangled in a web of blackmail, deceit and corruption.

Klausner's script is subpar for a romantic/action comedy. Mob boss Joe Meletto (Ray Liotta) is a walking cliché. While Liotta's imitation of Robert DeNiro might be humorous, it is also unoriginal and disappointing. It might have been much funnier to see DeNiro cast in the role and spoof himself.

The story has huge holes. For example, we are given the impression that Miletto "owns" the city of New York and is one dude you do not want to cross, yet there are only two goons chasing the Fosters, despite the couple's countless escapes. Where are the rest of his men?



Also, former black-ops agent Holbrooke Grant (Mark Wahlberg) knowingly gives information regarding the unfortunate couple's whereabouts to the two corrupt cops. As he is never a bad guy and is an expert at evading assassins, it does not make sense for him to act so irresponsibly. While a small error, it is nonetheless an example of Klausner and Levy's lack of attention to detail.

"Date Night" does work, however, because of its comedic stars. Both former members of the famed Second City troupe in Chicago, Carell and Fey improve most of their lines. In some scenes, their verbal exchanges and reactions are enough to invoke side-splitting laughter, such as when they crash into an innocent taxi while driving a luxury sports car down the streets of New York at break-neck speeds and subsequently drag it along for a thrilling police chase through late-night traffic. Their sheer presence in other scenes make them instant classics, such as when Phil and Claire are forced to "perform" for the visual enjoyment of the perverted District Attorney (William Fichtner) at a strip club.

It is impossible to think of many comedians in show business today who could have taken such a weak script and transform it into a modern screwball



Photo courtesy of rottentomatoes.com
"Date Night" makes up for a lackluster script with superior acting from two of Hollywood's best.

comedy, comparable to classics like "Bringing Up Baby" and "Arsenic and Old Lace."

Then again, most comedians aren't like Carell and Fey. Their characters are real. They are attractive, but they are not unnaturally glowing when they wake up in the morning. They are adequate workers in conventional careers. Their children are cooperative at some moments and uncooperative at others. They are willing to try to fix any problem when faced with a complication but fearful of going too far. They have daily routines but still make one

another laugh. The Fosters are normal people living a normal life, which is what saves the movie. Once you connect with them, the film cannot lose.

Carell and Fey have earned their place among comedic greats like Bob Newhart and Mary Tyler Moore with their popular, well-written and brilliantly performed television roles. Now, working side-by-side, they join the likes of Cary Grant and Katharine Hepburn or Jack Lemmon and Shirley MaLaime, bringing their equally funny personalities together to make for a great time.

'Ladies' lose singer, vary song styles



BY COREY BOMMEL
Reviewer

Barenaked Ladies

Sometimes when members leave a band, lyrics can turn cynical. The Barenaked Ladies are no exception to this rule.

Canadian alternative band Barenaked Ladies recently released their 11th studio album in more than 20 years. The album, "All in Time," marks a turning point in the band's career.

Times have been hard on the group recently. First, they suffered the departure of founding member Steven Page after a very public drug bust. Then, there were struggles in singer Ed Robertson's life — including the crash of his private plane.

The wisecracking Canucks took these changes as an opportunity to turn their music in a new direction, a sort of candy-coated maturity not seen in earlier releases. Robertson lost his main co-writer but gained a new collaborative level with the rest of the Ladies.

Despite Page's departure, it feels like the Barenaked Ladies has gained members. They sound like a real rock group instead of a duo with backing musicians. The vocals are not the centerpiece as they once were with multi-instrumentalist Kevin Hearn and bassist Jim Creeggan now sharing the spotlight. The harmonies produced weave themselves into the vocals, creating a melodic level not heard before "All in Time."

Robertson is the principal vocalist in the group, yet he is not the only singer on "All in Time." Hearn and Creeggan lend their voices to five of the tracks, and drummer Tyler Stewart does some rapping on one track. Page's absence is most apparent in the vocals, because his back-and-forth singing with Robertson was one of the band's trademarks.

Robertson was not afraid to criticize Page in the lyrical content of "All in Time," although Page is never mentioned outright by name. In "You Run Away," Robertson sings "I tried to be your brother/ You cried and ran for cover/ I made a mess,

who doesn't?" and he asks the song's subject to take a look in the mirror. Not-so-subtle references like this abound on the album.

However, not every song is a cynical jab at Page. "Another Heartbreak" and "I Have Learned" are self-reflective songs about love and life.

The band even lets its earlier style show on the Vaudeville-inspired rap "Four Seconds."

"All in Time" is a new direction for the remaining Barenaked Ladies. They have shown they still have something to offer even with the loss of a principal member.

Talking Heads

"Here Lies Love" also was released this past week, a double album collaboration between Talking Heads member David Byrne and English DJ Fatboy Slim. "Here Lies Love" is a concept album based on the rise and fall of former first lady of the Philippines Imelda Marcos, as well as the parallel story of Imelda's nanny, Estrella Cumpas. Byrne wrote the album as a disco-rock tribute that could hold its own as an onstage musical performance.

The album is a cavalcade of guest stars — 22 different vocalists perform on the double album's 22 tracks. Every guest singer is female, except Byrne on a couple of tracks, and they run the gamut of musical influences. Collaborators include Tori Amos, Cyndi Lauper, Martha Wainwright, Natalie Merchant and Kate Pierson of the B-52s.

The vocalists each represent one of the female subjects of the album. Most songs follow Marcos' privileged life, and the rest document Cumpas' life of servitude. Each song emphasizes the bubble in which the privileged live in regard to their treatment of the poor. The album doesn't try to legitimize Marcos' tainted regime but rather tells a story of a politically charged human being.

The collaboration of Byrne with Fatboy Slim varies in its quality. Some songs have a groove that fits Slim's musical influence. Others fail to utilize Slim and relegate him to repetitive background beats.

"Here Lies Love" won't have any biting singles that become club beats and probably would have fared better as a single album comprised of the highlights. The varied vocals are beautiful though, and that's where the album shines.

Chaotic action thriller keeps gamers playing



BY ALEX CARLSON
Reviewer

Ever since "Grand Theft Auto" opened up the free roaming, mission-based game structure in the late 1990s, games across all platforms have been taking advantage of "sandbox" gameplay.

The most recent example of this is "Just Cause 2," the sequel to the original 2006 sleeper hit, "Just Cause." With a grappling hook, a huge world to explore and plenty of over-the-top, action-movie antics, "Just Cause 2" is easily one of the best open-world experiences in a long time.

Players take control of Rico Rodriguez, a member of a covert organization known as the Agency and protagonist of the original "Just Cause." With a brand-new mission, the player departs to the fictional island of Panau, an ocean paradise run by an oppressive dictator named Baby Panay. To make things worse, former Agency member Tom Sheldon is said to have joined up with Panay and broken ties with the Agency. It's up to the player to stop Baby Panay, find Sheldon and stop the Panay regime from taking hold. Unable to take out the leader with a full-frontal as-



Photo courtesy of gamespot.com
"Just Cause 2" plays like an action movie, giving gamers an exciting ability to roam throughout the level and cause destruction virtually anywhere.

sault, the player must infiltrate three criminal organizations and cause enough destruction to find the truth behind Panay's regime. Although the typical political rebellion attitude is prominent in "Just Cause 2," it's not the focus. The focus is chaos.

And there is a lot of chaos in "Just Cause 2." Destructible environments are everywhere, and there are plenty of opportunities to unleash ruin on fuel containers, radio towers, vehicles and the like. Causing enough mass destruction rewards the player experience points — aptly called Chaos — and cash to spend on new weapons and vehicles on

the black market. Earning more Chaos lets the player take on new missions. Although many other sandbox titles have had issues with mission variety, "Just Cause 2" focuses on destructibility and running riot throughout the massive environments, which keeps the action constant with exciting and bombastic mission design.

A major contribution to the game's stellar design is the game play itself. The player has full access to a grappling hook, which can be used in a number of unique ways. Scaling tall buildings, yanking enemies closer to you, dashing through forests and

so much more is available from the get-go. Also, the ability to "stunt jump" lets the player ride atop cars, swing from helicopters or even leap from vehicle to vehicle with the push of a single button. It's a fluid and easy-to-master game play element that pushes the over-the-top, action-movie vibe further. Thanks to incredibly well-designed mission structures, fun methods of transportation and an unquestionably bombastic atmosphere, the game play of "Just Cause 2" captures an action-oriented spirit that few sandbox titles have been able to achieve.

The only element holding

"Just Cause 2" back from serious greatness is the presentation, which is victim to pop-in graphics and some glitches throughout. Players might get stuck inside rendered objects, and certain environmental aspects suffer from the expansive nature of the game space. While parachuting, trees and buildings will randomly appear across the vistas. Still, the world is so massive that these problems are pretty easy to overlook. The voice acting and music is solid, and the sound effects are full of powerful impact. Explosions are common in the world of "Just Cause 2," so it's good that they sound strong. Despite some bugs and technical issues, the presentation of "Just Cause 2" is simply beautiful.

With the spirit of an action movie blockbuster, "Just Cause 2" nails the feeling of mindless destruction and expansive exploration. Whether the player is skydiving from 1,000 feet, causing explosion after explosion at a local military base or simply zipping through the forest with the grappling hook, the amount of variety in "Just Cause 2" is simply astounding. The presence of some technical issues is disappointing and distracting, but if you can ignore those small problems, "Just Cause 2" will engage and impress at every turn.

It might not be the new "king of the sandbox" because "Grand Theft Auto" still maintains the title, but "Just Cause 2" makes plenty of good strides toward a better open-world adventure, with plenty of destruction along the way.