

"Office" matures, entertains

BY BRENNA MCDERMOTT
Opinions Editor

Season six of "The Office" has reminded me of all the things I miss about the old seasons. The big changes on this NBC half-hour mockumentary, which airs Thursdays at 8 p.m., are mostly work-related at the Scranton branch of Dunder Mifflin Paper Company. Adorable Jim Halpert (John Krasinski) has moved up to the position of co-manager with Michael Scott (Steve Carell), the two struggle to find a balance, and rumors fly about Dunder Mifflin filing for bankruptcy.

But I don't want change. I want more of the same.

It seems like some characters have taken even more of a back seat on the show this season—like my favorites, slow-talking Kevin Malone (played by the hilarious Brian Baumgartner—look up an interview with him online. He actually speaks like a normal person!) and the formidable petite Angela Martin (Angela Kinsey). I want some romance in Kevin's life.

What happened to the fling he met at a party during the season five episode "Blood Drive"? And what about Angela and Dwight (Rainn Wilson)? Will they ever rekindle their torrid romance? I firmly believe those two are just as meant for each other as newlyweds Jim and Pam (Truman alumna Jenna Fischer).

But now that Jim and Pam have finally tied the knot in probably the best episode of this season, "Niagara," I feel like part of their spark is gone. It's like they've grown up now that they have little baby Halpert on the way. No more practical jokes together, no more sly glances or inside jokes. I wish they had a little more interaction during the work hours.

But there have been some hilarious moments thus far in the current season. In episode two, "The Meeting," Toby Flenderson (Paul Lieberstein) and Dwight stake out Darryl's (Craig Robinson) house to see if he was lying about a work-related injury and mistake Darryl's sister for Darryl, making me hopeful that office she-nanigans always will be original on



Photo courtesy of tvguide.com

this show. My pal Kevin was the star of episode four, "Niagara," with his shoe debacle. After mistakenly setting out his shoes for a shoe shine, Kevin is forced to wear empty tissue boxes as shoes to the wedding. And the sight of Kevin sticking his large, smelly feet in the hotel ice machine after a long day

of dancing solidified his position as my favorite supporting office worker. Angela had her shining moment in the most recent episode, "Murder," when Michael orders everyone to play a murder mystery game, and Angela's character is "Voodoo Mama Juju." The sight of Angela holding a

voodoo doll head made my Thursday complete.

I think my favorite change to this season is crazy pregnant Pam. The opening sequence to "Niagara" has been my favorite Pam moment thus far. She goes from politely asking Dwight to remove his hardboiled egg lunch to staring him down as she pukes into her trash can, just to spite him. Right on, Pam, right on. Pam freaking out and mouthing off to Michael when she finds out he is dating her mother in the episode "The Lover" is another hilarious highlight. Apparently, pregnancy has done wonders for Pam's ability to stand up for herself.

Although the season on the whole hasn't been my favorite, there are some new aspects I enjoy. When main characters start settling down and having babies and the boy with no interest in his job starts working hard and gets a promotion, it usually signals the imminent end of the series. But "The Office," keeps finding ways to reinvent its tricks, its heart and itself.



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French film tackles AIDS and love



BY ANDY MOORE
Reviewer

Truman's International Film Festival showed the 2007 French film "Les Témoins" ("The Witnesses") Nov. 11. The film tells the story of the intersecting lives of several Parisians who become firsthand witnesses to the AIDS outbreak in the 1980s. For those who missed it, the film is available at Pickler Memorial Library.

French director André Téchiné creates a tragic account of the AIDS epidemic through the depiction of relationships among a few friends. "The Witnesses" won the Best Film award at the Czech Gay and Lesbian Film Festival for its extremely bold exhibition of sexual exploration in a time when many people were completely unaware of the AIDS virus.

"The Witnesses" immediately brought to mind the play and HBO miniseries "Angels in America," which similarly examines the fluidity of human sexuality and the devastation of AIDS. In fact, some aspects of "The Witnesses" and "Angels in America" are nearly identical, such as their subject matter and big city settings.

Characterization separates the two movies. "The Witnesses" successfully examines the often misunderstood duality of love and sex. "The Witnesses" focuses on five individuals whose lives seem relatively happy at the beginning of the movie. It begins with Sarah (Emmanuela

Béart), an author of children's literature who has just given birth to a child but seems to lack any maternal affection for her newborn. Her husband is a cop named Mehdi (Sami Bouajila), who is hell-bent on busting a prostitution ring that he has been investigating. At the same time, the couple's "open marriage" takes a more interesting turn.

The couple's friend Adrien (Michel Blanc), a gay middle-aged doctor, meets a narcissistic young man named Manu, played by Johan Libéreau. Manu lives in a sleazy hotel with his sister, played by Julie Depardieu, an aspiring opera singer. The seemingly carefree Manu develops an intimate but platonic relationship with Adrien, but the relationship is shaken when Manu begins a love affair with another man. For his role as Manu, Libéreau was nominated for Most Promising Actor at the César Awards in France.

In any foreign film, it is important to note the cultural differences that are hard for an observant person to miss. The main one involves the relationship between Manu and his sister Julie. As brother and sister, they are a lot more affectionate and open than one would expect. Also, nudity is not presented as taboo, but used to show off Manu's healthy narcissism.

The film has many aesthetic qualities worth noting. The cinematography and direction are exceptional. However, it is difficult to judge the acting in foreign films when you consider how facial expressions and hand gestures, and nonverbal expressions in general, are often completely different in other cultures. The five main characters were still convincing enough, but the movie dragged on for a little too long toward the end. The film could have been improved by resolving the ambiguous conflicts that arose between several characters (which shall not be spoiled here), and then there is the most prominent problem of how some of them miraculously avoided contracting AIDS.

Disaster flick fails



BY KEN DUSOLD
Staff Reporter

During the last 15 years, director Roland Emmerich has become Hollywood's "Master of Natural Disaster." However, given his newest flick's shortcomings, I almost think he should soon be getting a new title in Tinseltown: "The Indefinitely Unemployed."

"2012" marks Emmerich's latest addition to his natural disaster film collection, which includes such films as "Independence Day," "Godzilla" and "The Day After Tomorrow." Using the doomsday theory that a cataclysmic event will destroy the world as we know it on the 2012 Winter Solstice, this movie seizes the chance to use the very latest in visual effects technology.

Within the first quarter of the movie, the entire western coast of the United States has been destroyed. Crumbling skyscrapers in

Los Angeles, disappearing five-star hotels in Las Vegas and the eruption of Yellowstone National Park's super volcano all try to prevent the movie's protagonists from reaching safety aboard a secret "ark" located somewhere in the Chinese Himalayas.

I did not expect the dialogue to be stimulating, which it isn't, but I was hoping the CGI (computer-generated imagery) would be worth the price of admission. Sadly, it is not. For \$250 million, Columbia Pictures Studios produced a film that proves sometimes mankind can take a step backward in technological achievement. During a scene in which washed-up novelist turned limo driver Jackson Curtis (John Cusack), along with his two children, ex-wife and her new plastic surgeon boyfriend, drive through the crumbling streets of Los Angeles, bursting through a falling building, we are subjected to what might be the single worst use of modern visual effects in film.

For only one billion euro, the human race's "finest" specimens can be saved, thanks to the newly constructed super ships, appropriately named arks, designed to withstand massive flooding. Wanting to keep their power despite the destruction of their nations, world leaders are assured safety from imminent danger, while the average person is left to suffer an apocalyptic death. The exception, of course, would be pure dumb luck. Fortunately for our leading characters, they have managed to accumulate all the remaining luck on Earth, exhibited during

Concert DVD kills



BY COREY BOMMEL
Reviewer

The Killers really do know how many rabid screaming fans it takes to fill Albert Hall. The Las Vegas natives recently released a live DVD/CD set of their two-night performance at the Royal Albert Hall in London, which took place earlier this year. The DVD consists of selections from all four of the band's studio records with 22 tracks in all.

The band shows their Las Vegas roots in their performance, and frontman Brandon Flowers is the epitome of showmanship. Flowers imbues each song with an intensity that makes the whole experience unique and one of the best live performances possible. By the end of the night, he is literally panting, worn out from wowing the crowd. During "Reasons Unknown," Flowers stops the song to speak poetically of love and loss—"You wake up one morning, the butterflies stop fluttering, but you want it back and you want to fight for it, you want to breathe that fire again, so you call for it, you call out"—before leading the crowd in a rising chant. Flowers even takes a moment to reminisce on the beginnings of the band before blasting into "Mr. Brightside."

The energy level is always high, despite whatever tempo the song has. Even an acoustic version of "Sam's Town" fails in its attempt to bring the intensity of the show down. Near the end of the performance the entire crowd echoes, "I've got soul but I'm not a soldier!" from "All These Things That I Have Done," possibly one of the most engrossing moments in all of The Killers' musical repertoire. The rest of the band is in top form as well, exciting the crowd with their stage presence and mastery of their instruments.

The direction of the recording is amazing, from tight shots that display every detail of Flowers' face to wide shots capturing the pyrotechnics and special effects. The DVD also includes several older live recordings of the band from various music festivals, an awesome addition for any Killers fanatic.

The included CD has a shortened



Photo courtesy of thekillersmusic.com

17-song set and a few minor studio tweaks but still conveys an audio firestorm that can't be experienced with a studio recording. Not one low point exists during this performance—it is the definition of what a live concert should be. For anyone who enjoys music at all, this set is a must buy. Drop everything and go buy this right now. As Flowers puts it, "It's good to have you with us, even if it's just for the day."

One of the defining albums in all of progressive rock just had its 40th birthday and, in lieu of cake, the band re-released one of its most well-known albums. King Crimson's debut album, "In the Court of the Crimson King," is heralded as one of prog-rock's defining albums, one of the first of the genre.

The band made several versions of the re-issue, ranging from a one CD re-mastered version to a five CD set consisting of dozens of rough cuts. I reviewed the two CD set, consisting of the original recordings plus a handful of bonus tracks and early takes. The re-mastered versions of the first five tracks are excellent quality, better than many earlier CD releases. The original album consisted of only five tracks but ran about 45 minutes long, with experimental instrumental interludes drawing the album out. Periods of non-structured free jazz rock are punctuated by the planned lyrical elements. Flute solos and one of the first major uses of the mellotron make this a classic example of what many prog-bands eventually would draw influences from.

Fanciful, out-there lyrics define each song, such as the titular track in which we hear, "The yellow jester does not play / But gently pulls the strings / And smiles as the puppets dance / In the court of the Crimson King." The extra tracks bring to light the creative process the band went through while recording the album, as well as showing various remixes after the album was created. However, unless you are a long-time King Crimson fan, these tracks just weigh down a classic. Fans of bands such as Yes, The Moody Blues or Jethro Tull who have not yet listened to this album should pick up one of the normal, non-cluttered versions or, better yet, go find an original release on vinyl and fire up that old Crosley.



Photo courtesy of rottentomatoes.com

not one, but three occasions when Curtis and his family take off in airplanes just before they are engulfed in powerful balls of fire and debris, reminiscent of Air Force One's mad-dash takeoff in "Independence Day."

There is only so much a filmmaker can do before our suspension of disbelief comes crashing down like the U.S.S. John F. Kennedy on top of the White House, with a little help from a 1,500 foot tidal wave. Did no one in the editing room catch the absolutely ridiculous? Like when a scientist makes a cell phone call to his friend and White House scientist Dr. Adrian Helmsley (Chiwetel Ejiofor) just as the Indian Ocean wipes out a populous city below him? The fact that the shifting of the Earth's crust doesn't throw off satellite reception seems to go unnoticed by all of the experts with whom Helmsley and the White House Chief of Staff (Oliver Platt) surround themselves. Platt becomes our film's antagonist—preventing the release of any information to the public prior to the day of

reckoning and then refusing to show compassion during the film's climax.

Now, I will be a little fair. This film cannot be compared to those of great American cinema. It is meant for fans of the action-adventure genre. The sole mission of "2012" is to entertain its audience with death-defying situations, destruction of famous monuments and subtle jokes. One of the most humorous moments has our heroes driving a 2009 Bentley Mulsanne out the back of a cargo plane, only to land unharmed on a snow-covered plain at 20,000 feet and briefly traverse a Himalayan mountain. There also are scenes of emotion, such as when an aging cruise ship entertainer (played by George Segal) attempts to contact his distant son. However, the sentimental moments seem too forced and far short of genuine.

Needless to say, "2012's" most significant achievement is its ability to predict the future of its director and cast. If this film does not destroy their careers, then they will know, come Dec. 21, 2012, that it is pure dumb luck.