

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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the Fine Print

Jeff Randall

Cartoonist challenges comic game

Since their inception, comics have been, generally speaking, little more than lightweight entertainment for kids and grown-ups who still have child-like tendencies.

A few morality tales may enter the superhero and cartoon-like atmosphere on occasion, and a few genuine literary and graphical geniuses have had their turns in the industry, but most comics have been little more than mere entertainment.

If this is the case, though, one has to wonder where Chris Ware fits into the scheme.

With his "Acme Novelty Library" series, Ware breaks down the previously established rules of the comic book game — rules that are frequently challenged in today's independent comics, but rarely challenged seriously.

"Acme Novelty Library," which will have its seventh volume released in June from Fantagraphics Books, is a well-illustrated and darkly themed gem of the comic book world. Filled to the edges with comic strips, narratives and parody advertisements that put anything "Saturday Night Live" has done to shame, this series is as close to literature as comics have gotten (with all due respect to Frank Miller and Neil Gaiman).

Ware's characters all contain real human elements of pain and suffering. And their pain is so subtle and seemingly minimal that it can affect the reader like no other characters' torments can.

Universal issues, such as death, the inevitable loneliness of life and a hopeless search for love, are parodied with little regard to sanctity except for a deep-seated appreciation of their effects.

The only problem is that Ware hits the mark so squarely on so many occasions that his work becomes genuinely depressing — not that wicked, cynical depression that is fostered by comics of maximum violence and emotional cruelty, but a depression that sinks in slowly and is difficult to shake.

The most effective of these efforts comes forth in Ware's "Jimmy Corrigan" series. In it, the tales of a young and twisted youth are interspersed with those of a middle-aged man whose life seems to be nothing more than an exercise in ineffective acts and hopeless relationships.

Other strips like "Quimby the Mouse" explore the same territory from more traditional comic book styles, but the results are still the same; depression still reigns supreme. Even in Ware's ad parodies, dark elements of lost childhood, self-humiliation and dysfunctional relationships serve as a dark overtone.

Ware offers no solutions to these problems because he seemingly has none. All he can do is dwell on them in the hopes that they will eventually dissipate.

Hopeless? Maybe. Interesting? Definitely. Entertaining? It depends...

But what Chris Ware does works, and at least there aren't any characters named "Wonder-" or "Super-" something.

Randall is a sophomore news-editorial major and the Daily Nebraskan arts and entertainment editor.



Jill Summerlin holds up one of her creations at "Just Pretzels," 2930 Cornhusker Hwy. The family-owned business is the only one in Lincoln that specializes in making the large, soft pretzels. Travis Heying/DN

Just Pretzels gets a new look

By Gerry Beltz
Senior Reporter

Just Pretzels, at 2930 Cornhusker, may have opened its doors a little more than two months ago, but it has been serving Lincoln residents for much longer.

"We've supplied U-Stops and bakeries," said Jill Summerlin, one of the co-owners of Just Pretzels, "and we've been serving at UNL football games outside the Big Red Shop for the past two years."

The newest part of the business — selling from its own location — has been an educational experience for everyone involved, Summerlin said.

"Our main push has always been the wholesale market," she said. "The retail part we have just started and are still learning."

"We're hoping to do well with it, but we didn't know what we would

get with it."

Just Pretzels is run by Summerlin, her sister, three brothers and mother, who started the business in another state.

"Mom has been doing this for the past five years for her own business in Colorado," Jill Summerlin said, "but since we came back to Nebraska, it's been Just Pretzels for four years."

Just Pretzels isn't just pretzels, either.

"We offer pretzel sandwiches, Swiss cheese pretzel sticks, bratwurst in pretzel dough, frozen pretzels, among other items," she said.

Having a store to work out of always has been in the plans, Jill Summerlin said.

"It's always been our goal to get a shop running," she said, "and it just happened to be now."

Another new addition to Just

Pretzels is an 18-foot concessions trailer, Summerlin said.

"We'll be going to fairs and festivals," she said. "It's a self-contained factory, and we can actually make our product in the trailer itself."

Business has been going well, she said, and regular customers have been popping up.

"We have a few faithful people who stop in between 6:30 and 8 every morning."

Future plans for Just Pretzels call for widespread availability of their product, Summerlin said.

"We want our wholesale business to move into grocery stores and pretty much anywhere we can put them," she said.

Store hours at Just Pretzels are 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays, and the store is closed on Sundays.

Panel takes a look at pornography issue

By Brian Priesman
Staff Reporter

What place does pornography have in society? When is the line between art and pornography crossed? What effect does pornography have on women and society?

"Miss Autobody," the latest production from the UNL Theatre and Dance department tackles questions like these head on.

And on Wednesday afternoon, on the same set where "Miss Autobody" is being performed, a group of UNL students, faculty and community figures met to discuss these same questions and more.

"What's Sex Got To Do With It: Power and the Politics of Pornography," a panel discussion, was developed by the play's director, Karen Libman, in conjunction with "Miss Autobody."

Libman said she organized the discussion to bring the subject of pornography to an organized dialogue.

"You'd have to live somewhere in a hole in the ground to not have come in contact with pornography," Libman said.

Included in the panel were Danny Ladely from the Mary Riepmann Theatre, Helen Moore from UNL's sociology department, Charlyne Berens from the College of Journal-

ism and Mass Communications, Ann Hoschler from the Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition and the Rev. Patsy Moore, formerly of Nebraska Wesleyan University.

Bonnie Coffey from the Lincoln-Lancaster Commission on the Status of Women served as moderator of the panel, which focused mainly on pornography's effect on women.

"It's not about sexuality," Helen Moore said. "It's about the enslavement of women."

The general consensus was that pornography was wrong, but so was censorship. Panelists said they hoped that by focusing on the core belief system of people, society could begin to change.

"We cannot solve in 1996 what has happened for 5,000 years," Patsy Moore said.

The panel became quite heated toward the end of the discussion as pornography and the treatment of women on campus was brought up.

Spectators objected to advertisements in the media for strip bars and clubs.

"Shut down the purveyors of porn," Berens said.

But the heart of the issue was summarized by one female audience member.

"How do we eliminate the need?"

A capella DogPipes to perform

By Gerry Beltz
Senior Reporter

The Crib will have music tonight at 9.

But there will be no instruments for the DogPipes, a six-man a capella group, in an event co-sponsored by the Health Center Advisory Board.

Rich Caruso, coordinator of Campus Programs, didn't just book the group, he's also a member.

"I've been with the group for about eight months," Caruso said, "but the five of them have been together for a couple of years."

DogPipes performs a variety of music, ranging from "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" to Huey Lewis, Caruso said.

"We even threw in a couple from the doo-wop era," he said. "We do the '50s through the '90s and even do some Boyz II Men."

Although schedules sometimes present problems, the band will continue to perform, he said.

"We all work, and a couple of us are going to school," Caruso said, "but when our schedules make it possible to do shows, we do them."

Admission to the event is free.

Comedy redeems simple plot

By Cherie Krueger
Film Critic

Find true love now, or you will die.

This is the situation that therapist Lucy Ackerman (Sarah Jessica Parker) and her best friend, Joe MacGonagall (Eric Schaeffer),

Movie Review



are facing. Years ago they made a death pact that they would jump off the Brooklyn Bridge if they did not find love before turning 30, and Lucy's 30th birthday is one month

away.

Joe has not dated in the past five years because he has been infatuated with his beautiful neighbor (Elle Macpherson), whom he has been watching and painting from his bedroom window.

Lucy has been hiding behind an unfulfilling relationship with her boyfriend to avoid commitment.

The two decide that by the end of the month Joe has to talk to Jane, his neighbor, and Lucy has to agree to go out with any man who asks.

Lucy meets eccentric painter Bwick Elias (Ben Stiller) and decides he could be "the one." Joe invites Jane to the opening of his art show and charms his way into her heart. Both of them just might avoid the plunge from the bridge.

Although the story is pretty predictable and cheesy, it does have enough humorous little scenes to redeem it.

Parker's portrayal of a woman who is unsure about what she wants in her personal life is convincing. She knows what she wants out of her

The Facts

Film: "If Lucy Fell"
Stars: Sarah Jessica Parker, Eric Schaeffer, Ben Stiller
Director: Eric Schaeffer
Rating: R (adult subject matter, language)
Grade: C+
Five Words: Love equals comedy equals predictable

professional life, though, and does what it takes to get it.

Her character is a lot of fun and even has trouble remaining serious when she is with clients. Parker must have had a good time with the role.

I have trouble seeing Joe as a painter. He just does not come off as an artist. His character does work well as a teacher, and he seems to mesh with the children he teaches.

Stiller definitely produced the best performance, though. He showed every stereotype that people have of those involved in the arts, and it was great.

If you don't know how this film is going to end after the first five minutes, you might as well just leave, but then you would miss the only parts that are actually worth watching.

If you can get past the predictability factor and just watch the characters interacting with each other, you just might find the movie worth your time.