

'American Beauty' sweeps Oscar top spots

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Sound, Sound Effects Editing and Visual Effects.

The night's Honorary Oscar went to Polish Director Andrzej Wajda, most famous for capturing war on film.

Warren Beatty walked away with the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award. Beatty's wife, Annette Bening, was nominated for Best Actress, and looked radiant, even being on the verge of bearing Beatty's fourth baby.

The second musical high of the show (no, not NSync's performance) was Burt Bacharach's classy, star-studded tribute to music in film, a sometimes overlooked gem.

The fever surrounding the Oscars was accompanied by a good amount of oddity this year, as a series of disasters seemed to plague the ceremony.

Four thousand ballots were lost in the mail and had to be re-mailed to most of the voting members, and the Academy's near fanatical secrecy was challenged not once, but twice.

First, on Feb. 15, the day before nominees were announced, a Web site claimed it had a list of potential nominees — which was later proven to be a hoax.

That same week, a Wall Street Journal story that polled Oscar voters to predict the award night winners left the Academy with a bad taste in its mouth.

The award winning moment of disaster came March 8, when 55 Oscar statuettes were stolen from the shipping company hired to deliver them. An employee from the company was charged with grand theft.

All but three Oscars were found last weekend in a garbage bin by Willie Fulgear, a trash scavenger. Fulgear was awarded \$50,000 and attended last night's ceremony.

If the show itself wasn't enough, the commercials rivaled those of the Superbowl — the rebirth of "The Pepsi Challenge" and the continuation of the mesmerizing Gap khaki ads, this time a parody of "West Side Story" — made the breaks glitz-filled.

The tired dance performances, eliminated from the Oscars by the keen eye of the Zanuck duo, spelled relief to 99 percent of the show's viewing audience, and gave us a chance to focus on what we really care about — the films.

In between our yawns, of course.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Bemis Center exhibits differ from art norms

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an afterthought and a good one at that. It's another way of communicating her vision. She thought of them more as her notes at first."

Warren Rosser's show also explores the process in which he creates his paintings. Prior to 1998, Rosser mainly utilized power tools to build sculptures and assemblages.

But in 1998, a fall from a ladder at his home left Rosser with a broken wrist and a concussion, an event that caused him to switch from three-dimensional sculptures and power tools to two-dimensional paintings.

Although Rosser's fall caused a dramatic shift in medium, Rosser continued to employ atypical tools to create his paintings.

"You won't see the stroke of a brush on any of his paintings," Stanley said. "He takes the conventional medium of paint on a canvas and uses squeegees and trowels to pull the paint across."

Stanley said Rosser's paintings also employ a layered effect.

"The underpainting has a bleeding effect. The paint soaks into the unprimed canvas, which causes the

colors to bleed together," Stanley said. "The next layer is more of a hard-edged geometric nature. The contrast comes between an organic use of color, and the top is almost mechanical. It's a neat contrast between underpainting and surface."

Rosser's work also takes advantage of vivid color that attracts the eye, Stanley said.

"It's about color and beauty and movement," Stanley said. "It's a visual feast almost on the verge of being eye candy, but it goes deeper than that."

Rosser and Allen's shows explore different facets of art, Goodall said.

"Both shows are very different, so they'll appeal to different people," Goodall said.

Stanley said the one thing the shows have in common is their size. The dimensions of Rosser's paintings are typically in the range of about 80 inches by 60 inches, and Allen's photographs are slightly larger than life, Stanley said.

Despite the differences in the two exhibits, Stanley said both are good examples of quality contemporary art.

"It's a great exhibit that people in the Midwest should see," Stanley said.

'Whatever' raises moral dilemma

By Samuel McKewon

Senior editor

It is one of the great ironies of teen movies that actresses are cast in the "beautiful girl" role based on their looks, and then their characters are summarily trashed in the screenplay for their beauty.

Most of these movies are, for whatever reason, written and directed by men, who flush their repressed high school feelings upon the production. There is always one smart (and, yes, beautiful) girl that can't seem to find a date. And there is the goddess wench. And a boy torn between them. It's like clockwork.

Do not see "Whatever It Takes." But if you do, ignore the movie and focus on Ashley from frame one until the end.

"Whatever It Takes," the latest in this long line, goes one step further in its portrayal of the school's No. 1 babe Ashley (Jodi Lyn Keefe). Keefe embodies a character that, if anyone really pays attention, could best be described as bipolar, possibly schizophrenic, certainly badly abused.

She lives in a mansion, but has no parents to speak of. She responds to only verbal abuse for come-ons. And she has sex with anything that moves.

In one scene, the 17-year-old Ashley licks her lips around and around, purring like a kitten, awaiting her sexual feast. In another, she camps out on a boy's lawn in her bikini, praying he will ask her to the prom. She is screaming one moment, perfectly fine in the next. Her walk changes. She sucks on fingers.

The girl is insane. Insane, insane, insane.

And, no one, least of all the filmmakers or Keefe herself, seems to notice or care that Ashley is a lost relative to Maria Schneider in "Last

Tango in Paris," so loosely uninhibited is her character.

This is what I'd consider an irredeemable facet of film making, a mark against "Whatever It Takes" ever being made in the first place. Does it really matter that somebody falls in love here?

Should a PG-13-rated movie, directed clearly at an audience of teenagers, show a high school prom scene where thousands of students pour into a four-star hotel for a night of all-out debauchery? Is this what teen romance has come to? Sexual rampage as a setting?

I guess so. And if the movie were of a serious nature, like "Tango" or, at the very least, a parable or allegory of sorts, it might be acceptable. Or if the movie's theme had been the subjugation and dehumanization of women, while not a noble subject, it would have been a subject, nonetheless.

"Whatever It Takes" is a teen comedy.

At least "American Pie," the latest benchmark of raunch, had a genial sweetness at its core (plus some actual laughs), masturbating foreigners and apple pie thrusts notwithstanding. For a good duration of "Whatever It Takes," a far more desolate emotional landscape reigns.

The production notes say the plot is based on "Cyrano de Bergerac," and I suppose it is, in the sense that Ryan Woodman (Shane West) is helping Chris (James Franco) land Ryan's best friend, Maggie (Marla Sokoloff as the smart, yet beautiful one). In return, Chris helps Ryan bag Ashley. Chris and Ryan aren't friends, really, just partners in crime.

It takes very little time for nice guy Ryan to figure out that Ashley is, well, insane. It comes most pointedly in a scene where Ashley gobbles up some cake in a cafe, then calls a waitress over, telling her the cake was awful, then changes her mind, announcing to the entire cafe that the cake was actually good, upon which Ryan leaves the cafe, which prompts Ashley to scream she is getting "very scared."

The scene is not funny for many reasons, but I'm not sure it would be with the funniest comedienne. The point is to illuminate the awfulness of Keefe's character, then have the character engage in behavior that only a child would bother with.

Whatever it Takes

STARS: Shane West, Jodi Lyn Keefe, Marla Sokoloff
DIRECTOR: David Raynor
RATING: PG-13 (language, the subjugation of one female character)
GRADE: NA
FIVE WORDS: Script abuse eliminates grading possibilities.

Which means what, exactly?

I have tried, honestly and without pretension, to overlook scene after scene where a girl's entire persona is raped continually at the convenience of the plot. Toward the end of the movie, she has sex with an unknown gentleman caller, who slips into her hotel room for a quickie. Later, he leaves, smile on his face, proud of the geeky conquest.

I wonder how director David Raynor and screenwriter Mark Schwahn intend this scene to be interpreted. That Ashley was, in effect, raped? That she could not recognize a total stranger having sex with her? That she realized it, and didn't care, because she's a hedonistic hip grinder? I have no idea.

Moments like these make whatever charm the movie earned up to that point seem irrelevant. It is not an entirely awful film, and it has a few laughs. Alas, it is pitted side by side with one girl's obvious loss of reality. "Whatever It Takes" is not a film capable of being graded, worse than those gynecological loops on Cinemax. It has, in my view, an impenetrable flaw within the script — the unchecked, even encouraged, abuse of a character.

Do not see "Whatever It Takes." But if you do, ignore the movie, and focus on Ashley from frame one until the end.

Consider what type of abuse the character must have gone through to be who she is. Consider the abuse she will endure in her future without intense psychiatric care. Then consider the type of person — and what feelings he must have — to create such a character.

And understand why those people should not be allowed to make films.

Dropped Notes

Renowned classical trio to perform at Lied Center

Whoever first said "two is company, three is a crowd" must not have known about the Beaux Arts Trio.

Widely considered one of the world's best piano trios, the Beaux

Arts Trio is set to perform tonight in Kimball Hall, 11th and R streets, as part of the Lied Center for Performing Arts' 10th anniversary season.

The performance, which starts at 8 p.m., will showcase a tradition that started in 1955. Founded by renowned pianist Menahem Pressler, the trio also features violinist Young Uck Kim and cellist Antonio Meneses.

The group has played to audiences all over the world and will

undoubtedly entertain Lincoln audiences with its take on classics, such as "Variations in G Major on Muller's 'Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu,'" by Ludwig van Beethoven, and "Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor, Op. 67" by Dmitri Shostakovich.

Tickets for the performance are \$24 and \$20 and are half price for students with proper identification.

For more information, call the Lied Center Box Office at (402) 472-4747.

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