

The depths of Johnny Depp



This is a gratuitous photo of Johnny Depp in *Once Upon a Time in Mexico*. Isn't he sooo sexy that he makes all finals worries disappear?

photo courtesy imdb.com

Once Upon a Time in Mexico is no fairy tale, but who needs happy endings anyway?

By Bradley Iverson-Long & Kay Nguyen

Once Upon a Time in Mexico (R)

B: Fervent followers of *S&B* movie columns can't possibly forget my cutthroat condemnation of Robert Rodriguez's kiddie spy movie, *Spy Kids* (vol. 116 n. 9, Nov 16 2001): "Every movie should have a gun somewhere." It seems Mr. Rodriguez is among my masses of followers, and took my hazardously uninformed opinion to heart when crafting his latest masterpiece, which has a beautiful guitar-gunfight within the first five minutes and an unending amount of blood and bomb blasts before the curtain falls.

Once Upon a Time is actually Rodriguez's third movie about El Mariachi (Antonio Banderas), last seen in *Desperado*. It wasn't seen by me, but my ignorance of the back story didn't hinder me watching this installment.

"El," the best gunfighter in Mexico, is hired by a renegade CIA agent (Johnny Depp) to prevent a drug lord (Willem Dafoe) from pretending to overthrow the Mexican president. His best friend is Enrique Iglesias, and Salma Hayek is his wife, but only in flashbacks. Perhaps none of this makes any sense to you—don't blame my public-school-based writing ability, the plot couldn't even have made sense to the stars of the film. But that doesn't mean it's a bad movie.

I really do admire Rodriguez as a filmmaker. He makes movies quite quickly—*Mexico* is his second movie of the year, after *Spy Kids 3D*, a trilogy he finished during the time George Lucas put out one *Star Wars* movie. He does nearly everything on his movies—he writes, directs, produces, edits, photographs and scores music. All this creative curiosity satisfies me to the point of having rather low standards. Granted, this personal phenomenon makes as much sense as this film's plot, but I'm calling them like I see them. *Mexico* isn't a Christmastime award winner. It is so full of gunfights and other wholly fun moments that the stilted pacing—the ending will hit you before you know it—and lack of plot can be overlooked. If all my talk about Rodriguez doesn't get you hot, then I should talk about Johnny Depp, who's almost as good here as he was in *Pirates of the Caribbean*. His character's motivation may not make sense, but few actors can fix bullfights with as much class and believability as him.

K: Temporarily ditch your Calc review or that Brit Trad paper for one long contemplation on true hotties and hottie-ness, you hardcore fans of Captain Jack Sparrow and the notorious spy Mr. Cortez!

Spider (R)

B: This movie really could be a Grinnell story: a man (Ralph Fiennes) is released from an extended stay in a small, insulated, medicated environment and forced to deal with his altered perceptions of the world, while having severe flashbacks to his childhood while back in his home town.

The only major difference is that our boy Ralph was in a mental institution, not an institution of higher learning (meaning that he was crazy before going to the institution as opposed to us going crazy in the institution), and it's a movie, so there can be a lot of wicked flashbacks to his wicked upbringing, ruined by his wicked parents (Gabriel Byrne and Miranda Richardson).

K: And directed by the master of the wicked art. David Cronenberg's *Shivers* still sends shivers down my spine with his creepy creepy parasites and *The Fly* totally made my high school bio labs quite distasteful. Cronenberg certainly has a multiple-legged-creature fetish. He makes films intermittently, but they tend to come out in such an amazingly good shape and *Spider* is no exception. And there is Mr. Schindler, not dictating Jewish names to his secretary, but instead pulsating desperately in the spider web of his mind when his memory thrusts him back to his suppressed childhood memories. Faithful to Freud, he was abused and misused and had problems with women, whose roles are played by one Richardson with three different believable femme fatale versions. This is an excellent movie about mental illness that you should watch whether you have already gone mad or not.

The Big Lebowski (R)

B: If there ever were a movie that didn't need to be reviewed, this would be that movie. You've all seen it, I'm sure. Is that high praise, or just a damning indictment of the films today's youth choose to watch? It doesn't really matter, because you're probably already halfway to the Forum to get the "good" beanbag.

Wo De Fu Qin Mu Qin The Road Home (G)

K: You only need this movie and that crouching crackpot kung fu pseudo-epic in order to brag about the Far East movie industry, or the lack thereof. Let's see, there are familiar faces: the director is Zhang Yimou, one of the brightest leaders of the fifth generation in Chinese film history, the star is Zhang Ziyi; yes, she hopped from tree to tree in the aforementioned *Weird Postures of Two Endangered Species*. There are exotic and/or historically significant situations, including the local custom and the Revolution. The story begins with a ridiculous obsession with traditional funeral rituals and moves on to a long flashback of a love story with the backdrop of none other than Yimou's famous conspicuous protest against the Cultural Revolution. Virtually everything you think you need to know about China is in here! How convenient! Then again I warn you that my seemingly unfavorable review, together with other overwhelmingly enthusiastic online reviews about Asian movies, only serves to alert you to the fact that we may applaud the great and the mediocre indiscriminately when it comes to "exotic" things, and that you'd better go and see the movie for yourself. If you'd like to see and embrace Asian movies in general, there is some really

good stuff out there, Yimou is great and Asian movies can be great, too!

To [film]: let's not choose something that only confirms stereotypes people already have for another wildly different culture; we've already passed the ignorance threshold. How about more sophisticated portrayals of "the others?"

Finals Week

B: One of Films Chair Rachael Dreyer's best innovations I've noticed is playing finals week movies on multiple days. It's way better than her "innovation" of only playing two movies some weekends, because it gives you more varied chances to see these comfort films. Just remember to check your schedule before heading to Harris.

Monty Python's The Meaning of Life (R)

B: The final Python movie is a series of incongruent vignettes on the stages of life, from birth to death. Could've as aptly been called *The Meaning of Sex*. This movie blew my mind, and perhaps other parts of my body, when I first saw it seven years ago, and still elicits a strong response in several scenes. It also has several strong moral messages ... about sperm.

Ferris Bueller's Day Off (PG-13)

K: Finally, a high school guy (Matthew Broderick) who knows how to have fun. He takes a day off, illegally, and with the help of his hypochondriac best friend (Alan Ruck), carries away his girlfriend (Mia Sara) from class. The three go on an exciting adventure around the city of jazz. His sister and his principal, representing the moral and legal institutions of present-day Chicago, doggedly track down this playful fast-talking Jean Valjean to create a most hilarious *Les Miserables*. This is a great '80s kid classic by director John Hughes, whose name you probably so fondly associate with *The Breakfast Club* and *Sixteen Candles*.

Double Indemnity (NR)

B: Billy Wilder's classic film noir stars one of the classic femme fatales, the not-so-classicly-named Phyllis Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck), as a scheming wife looking to double her pleasure when offing her husband. Fred MacMurray is the suave insurance salesman suckered into helping her. Add a dash of voiceovers and shadows of Venetian blinds, and you get a well-done and hard-boiled suspenseful thriller.

The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (R)

K: Come see the fifth continent, the desert, the crowd, the drag queens, the prejudices, the ridiculing and the ridiculed. Three cabaret drag queens (Terence Stamp, Hugo Weaving and Guy Pearce), one of them a transsexual, travel in a bus christened Priscilla through the heart of Australia. Stamp deserves the credit for being so credible. It's a very good movie on socially deviance.

Movie Times

Once Upon a Time in Mexico

Fri. 4:30 & 7:30 p.m.
Sat. 1:30 p.m.

Spider

Sat. 4:30 & 7:30 p.m.
Sun. 1:30 p.m.

South Lounge:

Monte Python: The Meaning of Life

Sun. 7 p.m. & 10 p.m.
Thurs. 7 p.m.

Ferris Bueller's Day Off

Mon. 7 p.m. & 10 p.m.,
Harris
Thurs. 10 p.m.

Double Indemnity

Tues. 7 p.m. & 10 p.m.

The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert

Wed. 7 p.m. & 10 p.m.

Free soda is available before each movie at the Harris Center.

Free popcorn is available before each movie at the Harris Center at 7:30 p.m.



Diversity in Community Chorus

This Saturday's performance will showcase not only a varied body of singers but also a music in different languages

by Josh Cooley

Grinnell has many singing groups, but only in the Community Chorus is can you find a carpenter, a former Grinnell college president and Grinnell students standing side-by-side singing in Latin and Spanish.

The Community Chorus is unique in that it is made up of not only Grinnell students, but also college faculty and staff, local townspeople and even residents of Newton, Iowa. This year's group contains roughly 65 members, with around 30 students, who will perform this Saturday, Dec. 13 at 7:30 p.m. in Sebring-Lewis Hall. Of the adults in the choir, fewer than half have any ties to the college. There is no audition required to join Community Chorus, which encourages a broad range of people to come together and sing without feeling intimidated by their lack of musical experience. "The last time I took organized music lessons was when I attended college during the 1970s," said Grinnell resident Claudia Beckwith. "[When I joined Community Chorus], I had to re-learn how to read music and follow a conductor's directing."

Director John Rommereim noted that the group's diversity is his favorite aspect of the choir. "For the students, Community Chorus is a nice opportunity to spend some time with non-students

in a relaxed atmosphere," he said. "Music brings together people from different parts of the community, which is important because there aren't that many things that bridge the college to the community where students, faculty and townspeople are interacting. Regular folks can directly collaborate in recreating some of music's most treasured masterpieces."

Molly Obsatz '05 likes the broad age range of members. "I like hanging out with the sweet old ladies," she said. One member of the choir, Pat Yungclas, sung in the a capella choir and the Women's Glee Club when she was a student at Grinnell almost fifty years ago.

When Rommereim became director in 1988, the Community Chorus was combined with Grinnell Singers. Within a couple of years, Rommereim felt that the Community Chorus was strong enough to form an independent choir and the two groups soon split into two distinct entities. Nevertheless,

the Community Chorus has frequently collaborated with both Singers and the orchestra for bigger projects.

The Community Chorus has been practicing every Monday night for two hours in preparation for its upcoming concert. It has already performed as part of Roots of Renewal, but has not yet showcased either of the pieces of Saturday's program. Rommereim admitted that it's frustrating not having the opportunity to rehearse more frequently since people tend to forget things from week to week. Still, Rommereim said he feels that after holding several extra rehearsals, he has prepared the group well for Saturday's performance.

The diversity of the Community Chorus extends to their musical selections for Saturday's concert. Accompanied by a string ensemble composed of professional players from the Des Moines Symphony, the choir will be tackling Mozart's *Solemn*

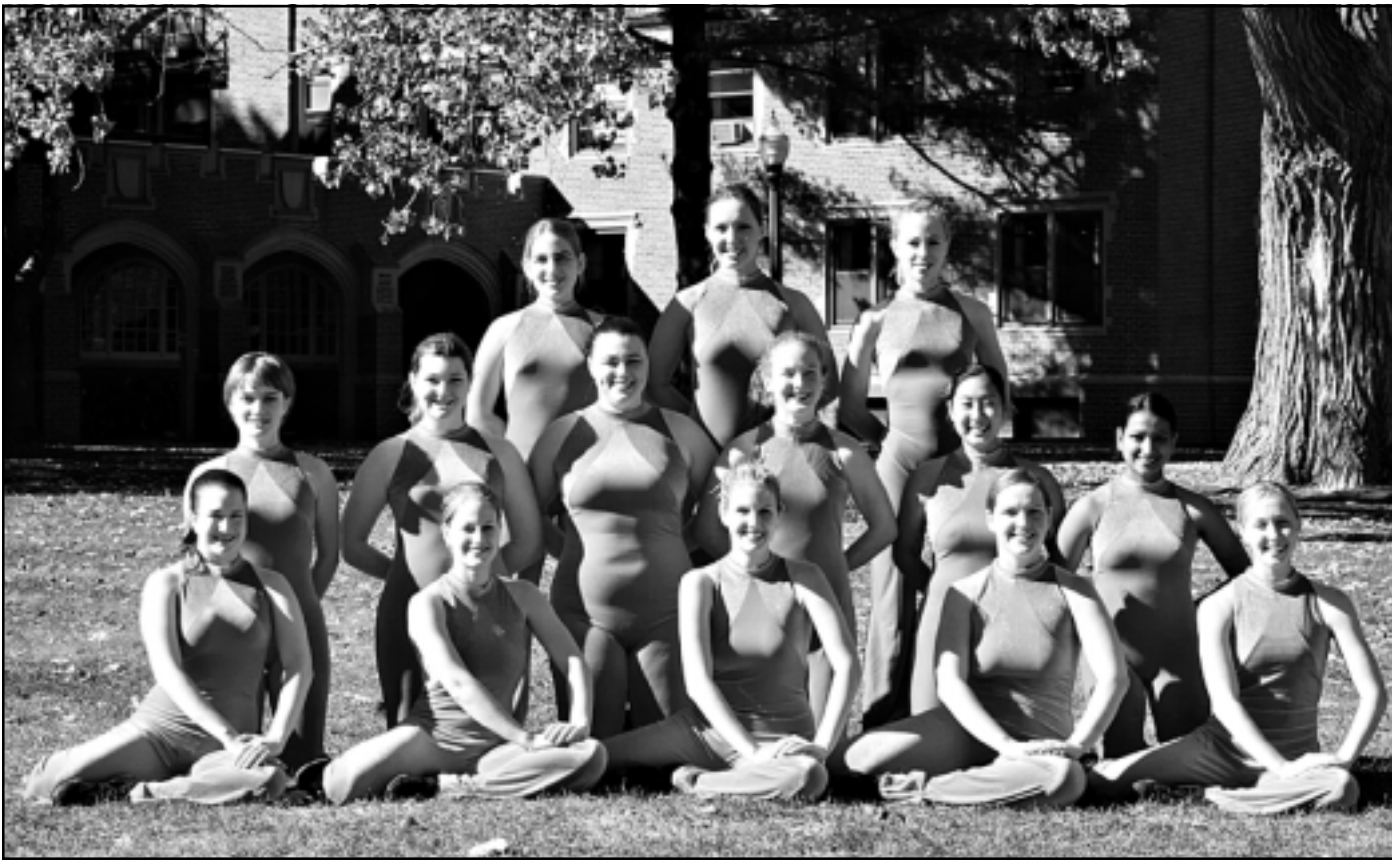
Vespers, a six-movement piece for choir and strings sung entirely in Latin that was a precursor to Mozart's *Requiem*, originally composed for the Archbishop in Salzburg, which according to Rommereim, makes it especially challenging.

"When Mozart was commissioned to compose *Solemn Vespers*," he said, "there were guidelines he had to follow. The length of the piece couldn't be too long, but [Mozart] had to get through certain prescribed texts. In order to accomplish this, different sections of the choir are singing different texts." Despite the diversity of texts, the piece is unified melodically, allowing the music to join together the differing ideas presented in the verses.

The chorus will also perform a set of carols by Conrad Susa. Susa, a 20th century American composer, used folksongs of a Hispanic background and wove them into a composition, with the text set in Spanish and Catalan. It features the accompaniment of a guitar, marimba, and a synthesized harp. Rommereim found that the Community Chorus enjoys singing in foreign languages and believes that it actually easier for them than singing in English. "In English there are so many different ways of pronouncing words that it's hard to find the same diction," he said, "but with a foreign language, we're all starting from the same place."

"In English, there are so many different ways of pronouncing words that it's hard to find the same diction, but with a foreign language we are all starting in the same place."

—John Rommereim,
Music



Dance Team's performance will showcase many kinds of music and represent the culmination of a semester of rehearsal.

photo by David Kennedy

Renegades of Dance Team

by Erin Sinogba

ren-e-gade *n* 1. One who rejects a religion, cause, allegiance or group for another; a deserter. 2. An outlaw; a rebel.

This Friday, Dec. 12, at 7 p.m. at Harris, the Dance Team plans to be renegades of dance in Grinnell.

From the offset, Dance Team already stands apart from fellow dance groups on campus through its open membership and variety of dance styles. Members Jennifer Tran '06 and Betsy Root '06 said that the upcoming show will showcase these qualities.

Seven numbers will be performed, including one featuring all the first-time members. "A lot of [members] have never danced before," said Root. However, she said she has been impressed with how the members have progressed.

Dance Team also prides itself on its independence. "We are one hundred percent student-run," said Tran. "We organize everything, from our lighting to our sound." Root herself helped choreograph a tap dance and part of a hip-hop number. Tran is also looking forward to *Bring Me To Life*, choreographed by Dance Team co-founder Dree Cullopy '04 and *Crazy Love* by Maria Stanislaw '04.

"We have a variety of dances," said Root. Tran and Root explained

that practice started at the beginning of the semester, taking five days to learn each dance. "We do everything from jazz, tap to lyrical, hip-hop."

"A lot of the stuff we're doing this year is more challenging," she also said. "It doesn't require as much skill as it does endurance."

Along with their independence, Dance Team is also unique in Grinnell for being the only dance group involved in competition. Root said that the group will be returning early from winter break to take part in one competition and are looking forward to more in the coming semester.

Despite the efforts of Dance Team to be distinctive and make a name for themselves, Tran and Root feel that dance in Grinnell needs to develop further. "For one thing, there's no dance major," said Tran, "and we can't dance at games."

"I think the problem is that some people think our dances are cheerleader-like," said Root, "But these dances take time and effort, and we know they're not something silly."

Both Tran and Root express excitement about Friday's show. "If the audience is into it, it makes it more fun," said Root.

"I enjoy Dance Team," she added, "it's full of good people, and it's good exercise."

Revitalized Jazz Band to perform upbeat concert

by Trymore Magomana

Instruments have been wiped clean, guitars elaborately tuned and musical skills honed for the upcoming Grinnell Jazz Ensemble concert. Come Friday 7:30 pm, the group, conducted by Sandy Brent, is slated to stage its first concert this academic year in Bucksbaum's Sebring-Lewis Hall.

"The good thing about the concert is that you can dance if you want to," said Amy Donahue '05, the only female in the ensemble.

It is widely anticipated in the campus music circles that the concert this year will be utterly different from the previous ones. Problems that the group experienced last year when they staged the same concert haven't recurred, members said. Last year, the group had no bass player.

"The good thing about the concert is that it's short and upbeat," said Sam Cramer '04, one of the saxophone players in the ensemble. The concert is expected to last a little less than two hours.

"Anyone can come and join" as long as he or she is "able to play an instrument or have some idea about how it works," Cramer said.

The jazz ensemble holds its practice lessons every Tuesday evening in Arts 102. Those interested in watching practice are welcome.

Con Brio: full of vigor

by Carly Schuna

"We're definitely not as cheesy as your average a cappella group," said Lorin Ditzler '06 of Con Brio, Grinnell College's only coed student-run a cappella group.

The rest of the group laughed and Jonathan Horowitz '04 added, "Grinnellians do not realize how little Grinnell a cappella names suck, really," he said. "All of these other a cappella groups from other universities have the lamest names."

Horowitz was referring to the other a cappella groups that Con Brio competed with at a Truman State a cappella festival several weeks ago in Missouri. "We had a wild, great time," he said.

Con Brio received high honors at the festival for their performances and student arrangements. All but three members of the group have arranged songs at one time or another, and Aycoc, Rohan Mandelia '05 and Alex Leach '06 have arranged songs to be performed at Con Brio's concert at 8 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 12 in the Forum North Lounge.

"Something that's sort of unique is we're

doing lots of student arrangements this time," said Mandelia. Con Brio's performance will include five old songs and five new ones, such as *Wonderful Tonight* and *The Who's Pinball Wizard*.

"[Like the G-Tones], we both do contemporary pop songs," said Ditzler.

"[But] we can sing different parts and more music, [since we're coed]," added Mandelia.

The group uses a democratic process to decide on which songs to perform, but always gives first priority to student arrangements. "We decide on all our songs as a group and then we vote if we need to," said Ditzler.

"[But] if a student arranges something, we'll do it," said Aycoc. "We start at the beginning of the year ordering a lot of music [and] seeing what we like, and then those give way to student arrangements."

"We're still pretty laid back," said Ditzler.

"Jonathan does all the rehearsal stuff," said Mandelia, explaining Con Brio's practice routine. "He figures out when we're

going to have rehearsals, and he figures out the schedule for each rehearsal, when we do each song, [and] how long we spend on each song. It's quite scheduled; we follow it pretty well."

Con Brio was founded in 1998 by Nate Gagnon '02, Gina Difino '01 and Adam Gratch '01. "They decided they wanted to sing a whole bunch of jazz-gospel arrangements, and they couldn't do it in [Grinnell] Singers, and so they got together," said Horowitz. "They picked some really stupid name, like 'Walkin' on Sunshine' or something, [and] almost dissolved several times during their first year."

The name *Con Brio*, meaning "with vigor" in Italian, was devised by later members of the group.

Group names at the Truman State a cappella festival included the University of Chicago "Ransom Notes," the Truman State "True Men," the Truman State "Minor Details," the Southern Missouri State University "Bear Tonz" and the same university's "A Cub Bella."


RjD2
Mac Lethal
Approach
dj gonZo
Saturday, Dec. 13 at 9:30 p.m.
Harris Center

RjD2 combines the hip-hop tradition of raw, gritty samples with song structures based on more traditional approaches to music in a unique style. His music has been acclaimed for pleasing hip-hop fans while *maintaining* dance floor aesthetic.

On Saturday, Dec. 13, the hip-hop artist RjD2 will perform at Grinnell in the Harris Center.

From 1998 to 1999 RjD2 acted as DJ and producer for the group Megahertz. During that time, he released two singles on the New York label Fondle 'em Records. The release of these two singles resulted in tours of Europe and Japan and mention in Vibe magazine's *History of Hip-Hop* issue.

In 2001 RjD2 formally established himself as a solo artist with his contribution to a compilation released by the hip-hop record label Definitive Jux Records. The compilation also included performances by popular New York City underground artists such as Company Flow, Cannibal Ox and Aesop Rock.

RjD2 continued to be successful in 2002 with the release of his debut album *Dead Ringer*, which The Roots named one of their favorite albums of the year. His track *Ghost Writer* was also featured in a Saturn commercial.

"He's a great introduction to the world of hip-hop because of the fact that most of the music doesn't have lyrics," SGA Concerts Committee Chair John Chavez said. "Many people are turned off by the raunchy rhymes of modern MC's."

"The fact that he can manipulate four turntables simultaneously means it will be one of the most entertaining hip-hop shows around."

In addition to the performance by RjD2, the artists Mac Lethal, Approach, and dj gonZo will each perform. More information about RjD2 can be found at www.rjd2site.com.

—reviewed by Evan Petrie