MOVIES

Reviewers give 'A Dog of Flanders' two paws up

BY CHARLIE AND SANDY NAHRA
SPECIAL WRITERS

Sandy Nahra:

I am 9 years old and like going to the movies a lot. At first I thought I wouldn't like "A Dog of Flanders." But at the end I thought it was cool. I changed my mind because the movie was sad but had a happy ending. It had a lot of action like fires and people yelling. This movie does not have a lot of laughs though so if you are looking for a funny movie, this isn't it.

Charlie Nahra:

I am 11 years old, I did not want to go see this movie because I thought it looked dumb. But I was wrong. The movie was good. What I liked best was where it took place, in another country (Flanders) a long time ago.

It showed how people lived back then and that was neat. Also, the story had a lot going on in it. The ending was kind of a surprise. I recommend you see this movie.

Film synopsis

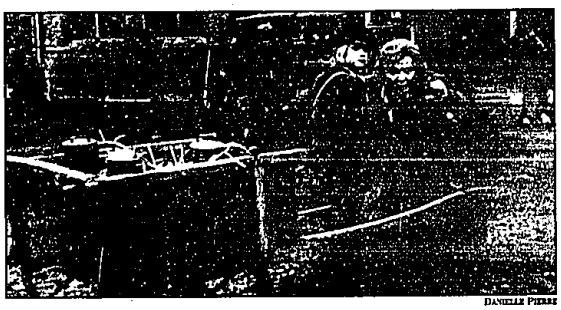
"A Dog of Flanders" is about a boy named Nello whose mother dies. He doesn't know his dad and grows up very poor with his grandfather. Nello and his grandfather find a dog who is almost dead from being beaten. They save the dog and name him Patrash. Nello and his dog are always together and Patrash helps save Nello from bad men, bad weather, and bad luck.

Nello is an artist, like his mother. He meets a real artist in the city near where he lives. The artist, Michel LaGrand, helps Nello and tells him he can become a great artist like his hero, John Paul Reubens.

Nello's best friend is a girl named Eloise whose Dad doesn't want her to see him because he is poor.

Will Nello become a great artist? Will he be able to keep his best friend? Who will look out for him after his grandfather dies? See the movie. The answers may not be what you think. The ending of the movie will keep you guessing.

"A Dog of Flanders" is now playing at metro Detroit movie theaters. The movie is rated is PG.



DANIELLE PIERRE

Special dog: *Young Nello (Jesse James) and Michel (Jon Voight) star in "A Dog of Flanders."*

Charlie Nahra and his sister Sandy live in Plymouth Township. This is their first movie review for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC

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MUSE (PG13)
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BOWFINGER (PG13)
RUNAWAY BRIDE (PG)
SIXTH SENSE (PG13)
THOMAS CROWN AFFAIR (R)
IRON GIANT (PG)
BLAIR WITCH PROJECT (R)
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'Love Stinks' laughs at those romantic clichés

BY CARRIE COOPER
SPECIAL WRITER

Some say that "beauty is only skin deep," that "all is fair in love and war," and that there is such thing as "love at first sight." But are these are simply cliches or are they reality?

One thing's for sure, they are the right mix for the comedic fatal attraction, "Love Stinks," presented by Independent Artists. Directed by Jeff Franklin and produced by Craig Baumgarten, Adam J. Merims and Todd Hoffmanm, the film gives you an inside look at "a relationship that's worse than yours."

"Love Stinks" starts out with TV comedy writer Seth Winnick, played by French Stewart ("3rd Rock From the Sun"), meeting Chelsea Turner, played by Bridgett Wilson ("I Know What You Did Last Summer"), at his best friend's (Bill Belamy) wedding. There is an immediate attraction which leads to a night of flirting, games and three full meals — a combination some might want to try on the next date. Within 24 hours Seth finds himself unknowingly committed to Chelsea. Everything seems to be moving along nicely. She's beautiful, sexy, lots of fun to be with, and she even goes so far as to do an Elvis Presley impersonation knowing that Seth is a big fan.

It looked as if the only problem Seth would have was with Chelsea's cat, "Gracie," of whom he is greatly allergic. Even Seth's television comedy appears to mirror his budding relationship.

But for Chelsea, things are not moving fast enough. She has her sights set on marriage and on Seth. Along with help from her friend (played by Tyra Banks), Chelsea devises a plan to rope Seth into marriage.

INDEPENDENT ARTISTS

Comedy: *Bridgette Wilson (left), Tyra Banks, Bill Bellamy and French Stewart in a scene from "Love Stinks."*

As Chelsea's plan unravels, Seth starts to realize how crazy she really is. She manipulates him into letting her move in, bringing along her cat. Things take a drastic turn for the worse when Seth presents Chelsea with a pair of diamond earrings for Valentine's Day, instead of an engagement ring she was expecting. Chelsea blows up. A lawsuit, cat-napping, and hair removal follow. It's all out war now until Seth finally starts to crack and proposes to her.

An underlying Elvis theme is woven throughout the film. Elvis songs are played in the background, a collection of Elvis plates is mentioned, and that Elvis impersonation scene proves unforgettable. The theme of "The King" fits within the film's climax, which evokes laughter and disbelief.

Stewart's performance is very different from that of the goofy alien he portrays on "3rd Rock from the Sun." This film allows Stewart to break away from any preconceived notions the audience might have had about him, by acting as a funny-yet-normal guy.

Wilson portrays the abnormal — and a bit psychotic — character in the film. She is sexy and likable one minute and controlling and manipulative the next.

"Love Stinks" is more than just boy-meets- girl, boy-gets-girl, then boy and girl break up. You never know if Seth and Chelsea are going to reconcile or keep the war going, until the end of the film. Stewart provides plenty of laughter and unforgettable scenes that caution you to "be careful who you give your heart to." The film shows that there is more to a relationship than love at first sight. When love is good, it's really good, but when love goes bad, it can get mean and dirty.

SCREEN SCENE

Show takes multi-media approach

BACKSTAGE PASS

ANN DELISI

One of the things I like best about hosting Detroit Public TV's "Backstage Pass" is the access it gives every viewer to the visual and performing arts. Hey, doesn't everybody own a TV set? Still, for all the show offers in availability and affordability, it can't pretend to offer the comprehensive listings and features of this newspaper's entertainment section.

■ The arts are worthy of a prominent place in all media, including the World Wide Web. Although it doesn't possess the accessibility or affordability of TV and newspapers, it is unmatched as an archival resource.

■ One of the most appealing features of the "Backstage Pass" Web site, www. backstagepass. org, is a video vault, which puts on-line users just a few clicks away from dozens of performances by local and national recording artists.

■ While many bands have established Web sites to get information out to existing or curious fans, the video vault is a fresh approach that gives exposure to emerging groups that may not have the advantage of a huge promotion budget.

■ The "Backstage Pass" Web site breaks performances down by music genre. In the pop/rock category, you'll find established bands like Sponge and Dog's Eye View, along with growing favorites The Volebeats, Hoarse and Tiles. Jazz fans can sample music from Rodney Whitaker, Bess Bonier, James Carter and other standouts on the local and national scene. An unforgettable "Backstage Pass" performance by Maxim Vengerov is among the classical offerings. The R&B/ Blues category features The Braxtons, Roomful of Blues, Robert Bradley's Blackwater Surprise, Mudpuppy and many others. There's a big selection of alternative artists, including Edwin McCain, Dar Williams, and the Articles. Fans of folk, country and world music may want to sample tunes by Patty Griffin, Jill Jack or BR5-49.

■ Each video vault artist also is given an introduction which provides just the right amount of information. The point is the music, and the convenience of being able to see and hear a performance by a favorite or an unknown band from your computer.

■ Put into the most practical use, the video vault might not only help you discover a new band, but encourage you to visit a club or concert hall to see the performers live.

■ You won't often see me write about a way to enjoy the arts that isn't immediately accessible to everyone. Not everybody owns a computer, and those that do, know the beast's limitations. Seeing a video vault performance isn't as exciting as witnessing it on an edition of the "Backstage Pass" television program. To be honest, a live performance beats television any day. But the arts are about opportunities and choices, not limitations.

If you choose to watch "Backstage Pass" on Detroit Public TV 5:30 p.m., Thursday, or Friday at midnight, you'll learn more about the arts on the Web with cyber artist Lowell Boileau. The possibilities are limitless. Remember. You saw it here first.