

GUIDE TO THE MOVIES

Daniels takes a gamble on 'Escanaba in Da Moonlight'



Escapades in Escanaba: Actor Jeff Daniels wrote, directed and stars in the film version of his successful stage comedy about a northern Michigan hunter who can't bag a deer.

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At home in Chelsen, actor Jeff Daniels is gearing up for the statewide release of the comedy he wrote and directed entitled Escanaba in Da Moonlight.

The madcap adventures take place on the eve of the 1989 hunting season's opening day, at the Soady family deer camp, a ramshackle place just outside Escanaba. The movie also stars Harvey Prosenell, Joey Albright, Wayne David Parker, Randall Godwin and Kimberly Norris Guerrero.

'Escanaba' is opening this weekend. Is it a nationwide release?
A: We showed it to 30 national distributors and they all said it's funny, it's well-done, it's a good film, but not for New York and L.A. So we said, what about Detroit, Minneapolis and Chicago? But that's not how they're spread out, so we're doing it ourselves. We're opening in 26 screens throughout Michigan and hope to spread it out through the Midwest.

Q: You're disappointed?
A: I wasn't surprised. I knew this was a high risk. We're in the land of sequels because the industry plays it very safe. Our chances weren't good going in and we know that, but we were determined to make the best movie we could.

Q: This was your debut as a director. Was it what you expected?
A: It was exhausting, but as actor, writer and director, all three of you end up making the same movie. That was a great advantage.

Q: Do you think it was too much to take on acting and directing?
A: My advisors, agents, everyone told me if I wanted to make, forget about distribution. So I said what the hell, let's jump in with both feet.

Q: Since the play had such a successful run at the Gem Theatre, a lot of people in the area are familiar with it. How familiar will the movie be for them?
A: Everybody who was in the original production at the Gem is in the film. Jim Porterfield doesn't reprise his role, but he is in the film.

Q: Most of the cast and crew are from Michigan. I understand your loyalty to your home state, but wasn't that a bit of a risk, too?
A: It was a huge risk. How will the actors go from stage to film? We're about the crew. There is an industrial film industry in Michigan, but they haven't done 30 films like I have. I don't fore-

get hauling everyone out of Escanaba and staying at 55 faces wondering whether or not we could get this done, but it all worked. Harve Prosenell (who plays the role of Albert Soady) said it was the best damn crew he ever worked with. That said a lot.

Q: The play is very character-based, were you able to capture that in the movie, too?
A: I hang on Ruben a little more. When he's driving to camp, he's coming into town like he's the plague. People turn their heads and look down. He's not just unlucky, he's cursed. In that way, I'm able to tell the story better on film.

Q: Do you hunt?
A: No. Never did. My wife's family did. Now venison jerky, I'll drive for that.

Q: What's next for you?
A: Bob Brown, who's from Farmington, and I started this Purple Rose Films. I'm finishing a script that we'll start filming in the spring. It doesn't have a name yet, but it's about a door to door vacuum cleaner salesman.

Q: Where are you going to be for the Michigan opening?
A: I may drop into Ann Arbor, and there's a sneak preview in Birmingham on the 25th. I like to keep it low key, slip in the back and watch them laugh.

Escanaba in Da Moonlight opened Friday, Jan. 26 at the Birmingham Theatre (for times call 248-644-3456), AMC Livonia, AMC Forum 30 in Sterling Heights, Brighton Cinemas in Brighton, Circuit Cinemas West in Flint and The Quality 16 in Ann Arbor.

Grid of movie listings for various theaters including National Amusements, Showcase, Star Theatres, and others. Lists showtimes and titles for movies like 'The Wedding Planner', 'The Wedding Singer', and 'The Wedding Planner'.

BOOK HAPPENINGS

Book Happenings features events at suburban bookstores, libraries and literary gatherings. Includes listings for 'The WaldenBooks Mother and Daughter Book Group' and 'ANN ARBOR DISTRICT LIBRARY'.

nation's thinking about love, how we love, and who we love. 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 8, 5601 Mercury Drive, Dearborn, (313) 271-4441. Borders Books & Music Farmington Hills. Sacred Fragments: Theology for the Modern Jew, 10 a.m. Monday, Feb. 6 and Feb. 12. Part of a six-part Letts & Learning series with Rabbi Elliot Fischer. Gurdjieff/Ouspensky: multi-media discourse on the ideas of the Fourth Way School, 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 7. Live music, 8-10 p.m. Friday, Feb. 2. Barbara Ware, jazz vocals, 3099E Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills, (248) 737-0110.

Guide to Magazine Articles for Book Promotion and Profit (Mattilja Press). "What most authors don't realize is that, whether they have a traditional publisher or they self-publish, promotion is up to them," said Fry. In fact, she tells her readers that it's easier to get a publishing contract if your book proposal includes a strong marketing plan. Fry's books are available for \$6.50 each at www.amazon.com or visit www.mattiljapress.com. Find your way around the Detroit Zoo with the zoo's new guidebook. The 72-page book is packed with zoo facts, frequently asked animal questions and nearly 100 color images. The book also highlights practical information for zoo visitors, and includes a map and tips on what to look for when observing animals. The guidebook costs \$6 for the general public and \$5 for zoo members. Contact the Detroit Zoological Society office (248) 541-5717 to have one mailed to your home for only \$1.50 shipping and handling. Books are also offered for sale at the zoo gift shop. The Detroit Zoo is at the intersection of 10 Mile Road and Woodward Avenue, just off I-696 in Royal Oak. For more information call (248) 398-0900 or visit www.detroitzoo.org.