

## Rosenberg eyeing Act 2 as SAG chief

By Carl DiOrio

SAG president Alan Rosenberg, who was mulling whether to stand for reelection, confirmed Thursday that he has decided to seek a second two-year term.



Rosenberg

"I'm proud of a lot of the work I've done this year, and I would love to be able to follow through on it with one more term," Rosenberg said.

Leading the nearly 120,000-member guild since September 2005, Rosenberg previously had said that he wanted to discuss his plans with his wife, actress Marg Helgenberger, and other family members. His unpaid post imposes great time demands, but his family has given him full backing to seek another term, he said.

But if some of the guild president's first term was less fun — he blasted the ouster of first national vp Anne-Marie Johnson in October, for instance — Rosenberg said he is looking forward to tackling the many remaining challenges.

Those include preparations for negotiations for the guild's main film and TV contract, which expires in June 2008. Specifically, new-media residuals are expected to be a key negotiating area, and SAG execs already are huddling over issue strategy.

## DiCaprio turns hat trick

Receives 3 SAG noms; HBO's 10 leads TV field

By Carl DiOrio

Leonardo DiCaprio was a triple threat in SAG Award nominations Thursday, when he was recognized for his leading role in "Blood Diamond" and supporting turn in "The Departed" and also figuring in a cast nomination for the latter, star-laden mob movie.

In the category of outstanding performance by a male actor in a leading role, DiCaprio is joined by Ryan Gosling for "Half Nelson," Peter O'Toole for "Venus," Will Smith for "The Pursuit of Happiness" and Forest Whitaker for "The Last King of Scotland."

Nominations in the leading actress category are Penelope Cruz for "Volver," Judi Dench for "Notes on a Scandal," Helen Mirren for "The Queen," Meryl Streep for "The Devil Wears Prada" and Kate Winslet for "Little Children."

See SAG on page 3

### All-star cast

#### Outstanding actor in a leading role



**Leonardo DiCaprio**

"Blood Diamond" (Warner Bros.)

**Ryan Gosling**

"Half Nelson" (ThinkFilm)

**Peter O'Toole**

"Venus" (Miramax)

**Will Smith**

"The Pursuit of Happiness" (Sony)

**Forest Whitaker**

"The Last King of Scotland" (Fox Searchlight)

#### Outstanding actress in a leading role



**Penelope Cruz**

"Volver" (Sony Pictures Classics)

**Judi Dench**

"Notes on a Scandal" (Fox Searchlight)

**Helen Mirren**

"The Queen" (Miramax)

**Meryl Streep**

"The Devil Wears Prada" (20th Century Fox)

**Kate Winslet**

"Little Children" (New Line)

## 'Good' times in store for Berlin fest

By Scott Roxborough

COLOGNE, Germany — Germany will revisit its wartime past at the 57th annual Berlin International Film Festival, with Steven Soderbergh's "The Good Ger-

man," a murder mystery set in 1940s Berlin, and Robert De Niro's Cold War CIA drama "The Good Shepherd" both picked for this year's competition.

The two films also will provide some much-needed star wattage at

this year's Berlinale. In addition to the high-profile directors, "German" star George Clooney, a Berlinale regular, is expected to



attend, as are, barring scheduling conflicts, "Shepherd" co-stars Matt Damon and Angelina Jolie.

Going up against Hollywood will be Chan-wook Park's "I'm a Cyborg But That's OK," which will have its international premiere in competition at Berlin. The celebrated South Korean director, who rocketed to international acclaim

## Comics gotta serve somebody

By Borys Kit and Tatiana Siegel



Wilson

MTV Films has picked up "Kanan Rhodes: Unkillable Servant of Justice," a comedy from Rainn Wilson and Bob Odenkirk. Wilson will star in "Rhodes" and Odenkirk will direct. Odenkirk is producing along with Naomi Odenkirk, his wife and partner at their newly formed Type-O Prods. shingle.

Written by Bob Odenkirk, B.J. Porter and Scott Aukerman, "Rhodes" follows the misadventures of a

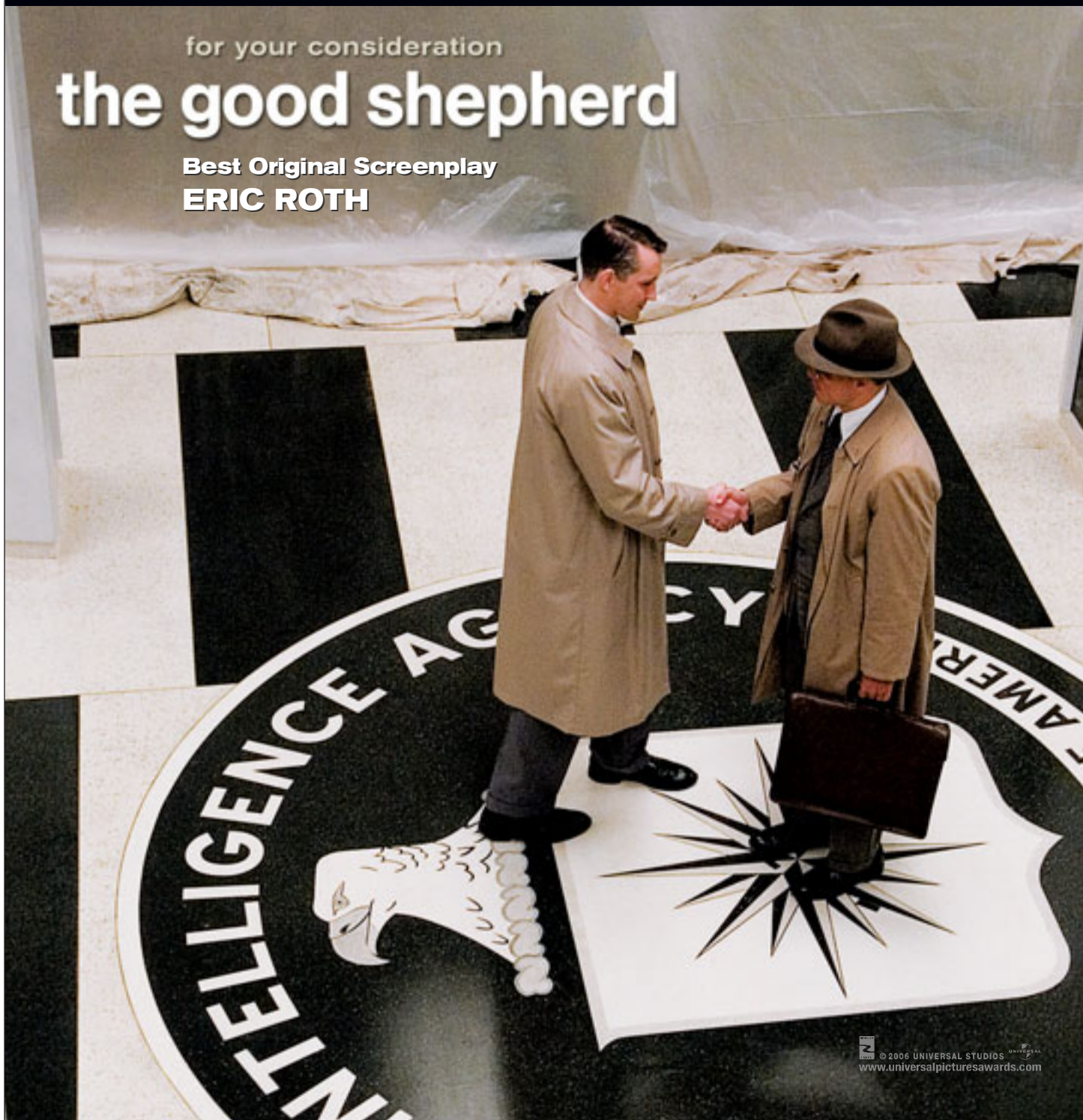
See "RHODES" on page 3

See BERLIN on page 3

for your consideration

# the good shepherd

Best Original Screenplay  
**ERIC ROTH**



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## SAG

*Continued from page 1—*

Other pictures figuring in the cast category are “Babel,” “Bobby,” “Dreamgirls” and “Little Miss Sunshine.”

Meanwhile, HBO’s “The Sopranos” and the AMC miniseries “Broken Trail” topped nominations in the TV categories with three apiece. Steve Carell — a member of the nominated “Sunshine” cast — also figured in two TV slots, drawing a comedy series acting nomination for NBC’s “The Office,” which numbered among comedy ensemble noms.

Mirren also drew a nomination for her performance in HBO’s “Elizabeth I.” Alec Baldwin, among the cast of “The Departed,” and William H. Macy, in the “Bobby” cast, drew noms for TV performances in “30 Rock” and “Nightmares & Dreamscapes,” respectively.

“The SAG Awards always seem like a celebration of what we do and not just sheer competition,” SAG president Alan Rosenberg said. “I am proud of the diversity of age and culture and race, which have always been a hallmark of SAG and also of the big ensemble casts. It appears that more writers are writing for bigger casts with varied characters, and that’s always good for our members.”

DiCaprio’s nomination for Warner Bros. Pictures’ “Diamond” follows a decision to push his leading role in the gritty African drama and place his work in “Departed,” also a Warners picture, in the SAG

Awards’ supporting actor category. DiCaprio is nominated for a Golden Globe as a lead actor for both pictures, and Oscar ballot rules allow members to nominate actors in either lead or supporting categories.

For now, DiCaprio’s forceful presence in the SAG Awards’ supporting actor category seems to have squeezed out “Departed” castmates like Jack Nicholson, who turned in a widely praised performance as the leader of an Irish mob in Boston. Matt Damon and Mark Wahlberg also numbered among nine actors in the SAG-nominated “Departed” cast.

Others nominated in the supporting actor category are Alan Arkin for “Sunshine,” Jackie Earle Haley for “Little Children,” Djimon Hounsou for “Blood Diamond” and Eddie Murphy for “Dreamgirls.”

Sacha Baron Cohen represented another interesting exclusion, with his starring comedic role in “Borat” nominated for a Globe but absent from the SAG Award noms.

Paramount Vantage’s “Babel” — whose toplining Brad Pitt figured only in the cast’s nomination — drew two noms in the category of outstanding performance by a female actor in a supporting role, for Adriana Barraza and Rinko Kikuchi. Other category nominees are Cate Blanchett for “Notes on a Scandal,” Abigail Breslin for “Sunshine” and Jennifer Hudson for “Dreamgirls.”

*A complete list of nominees is available at [www.hollywoodreporter.com](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com).*

## Berlin

*Continued from page 1—*

with revenge dramas “Oldboy” and “Sympathy for Lady Vengeance,” first competed in Berlin with his 2001 political thriller “Joint Security Area.”

“Cyborg” centers on a woman who checks into a psychiatric hospital, believing herself to be a combat cyborg. There, she falls in love with a man who believes he can steal people’s souls.

Another Berlinale regular, German art house favorite Christian Petzold, returns to competition with his latest, “Yella,” starring German actors Nina Hoss, Hinnerk Schoenemann and Devid Striesow. Petzold’s “Ghosts” was in competition at Berlin in 2005.

“Yella,” which will have its world premiere in Berlin, is a slice-of-life

drama about a man who tries to escape unemployment and an unhappy marriage by moving from Eastern Germany to the West.

“Irina Palm,” from Belgian newcomer Sam Garbarski, also has been picked for Berlin’s competition. Garbarski’s follow-up to his feature debut, “The Rashevski Tango,” stars singer-actress Marianne Faithful as an aging widow who takes a job in a sex club.

“We are delighted to be able to present a number of new works by renowned directors and interesting young filmmakers again,” Berlinale Festival director Dieter Kosslick said Thursday. “Many of the productions selected for this year’s competition link modern historical processes to personal, intimate and extremely emotional stories.”

The 57th annual Berlin International Film Festival runs Feb. 8-18. ■

## Fear not: Scribes get ‘Tingler’

By Tatiana Siegel

Columbia Pictures has tapped Patrick Melton and Marcus Dunstan to pen a page one rewrite of its horror remake “The Tingler.” Neal Moritz is producing through his Sony-based Original Film shingle.



Dunstan

Based on the 1959 Vincent Price classic, the film centers on a scientist who in the search for a medical cure for fear, unleashes the Tingler, an entity that kills its victims with fear. Greg Pace wrote an earlier draft.

Sony’s Elizabeth Cantillon and Doug Belgrad are overseeing “Tingler” for the studio.

Partners Melton and Dunstan launched their writing careers after they were named winning scribes on the 2004-05 season of



Melton

“Project Greenlight.” They wrote last year’s supernatural monster pic “Feast” for Dimension Films.

Dunstan also is attached to direct Dimension’s horror film “Midnight Man,” which is based on a pitch by the writing team. They also sold their teen horror pilot “The Vineyard” to Fox Broadcasting Co.

Melton and Dunstan are repped by APA, Underground Films’ Trevor Engelson and Will Lowery and attorney Dave Feldman.

## ‘Rhodes’

*Continued from page 1—*

man who serves subpoenas with the suaveness, intensity and conviction of James Bond, though that’s where the similarity ends.

“It’s a souped-up ‘Pink Panther’-slash-‘Ace Ventura’ and overflowing with comic characters,” Odenkirk told The Hollywood Reporter. “The appeal of Rainn is that Rainn can play a character who is absolutely sure of himself, who is full of bravado and braggadocio, and in the course of being that guy, he’s hilarious and extremely sympathetic.”

Odenkirk said the script was written seven years ago and sat on the shelf “because we couldn’t find anyone who could pull it off. Until we got Rainn in our brain! A lot of

actors would come off as dicks, but when he does it, it’s sweet and kind of sad.”

The plan is to do a quick rewrite and then to shoot in May during Wilson’s hiatus from NBC’s “The Office,” in which he plays one of the show’s breakout characters, the fascist assistant Dwight.

Odenkirk said he also will be looking for a “superpowered” young comedy cast. “I want to people this movie with the best that’s out there and get an amazing ensemble,” he said.

Luke Ryan is overseeing “Rhodes” for MTV.

Wilson is writing “Bonzai Shadowhands,” a ninja comedy that Jason Reitman will direct for Fox Searchlight. His next feature outing will be in New Line Cinema’s “The Last Mimzy.” ■

## ‘Family’ writers back in action

By Nellie Andreeva

After a two-month delay, production on Season 6 of Fox’s hit animated comedy “Family Guy” got under way this week.

The writers for the 20th Century Fox TV series were supposed to begin work on the sixth season Oct. 23, but the studio asked them to stay home while it was negotiating a new deal with series creator/executive producer Seth MacFarlane.

On Tuesday, the “Family Guy” writers were asked to report to work Wednesday and are now breaking stories.

20th TV’s decision to proceed with production on the series’ sixth season comes as MacFarlane’s deal, in the works for about a year, is said to be finally reaching the finish line, with both sides close to an agreement.

20th TV declined comment Thursday. ■

## clips

**Good cookie**

A "supersized" episode of Bravo's "Top Chef" averaged 2.2 million total viewers from 10-11:10 p.m. Wednesday, making it the culinary competition's most-watched episode ever, according to Nielsen Media Research. Meanwhile, FX's "Dirt" got good news Thursday. Because of a Nielsen error, the show's premiere numbers actually were higher than reported, with 3.7 million total viewers and 2.4 million adults 18-49 tuning in to its 10 p.m. debut Tuesday.

**Global warming**

Drew Barrymore, Hugh Grant and Terrence Howard have been added to the lineup of presenters who will hand out trophies Jan. 15 at the 64th annual Golden Globe Awards, to be telecast live from the Beverly Hilton on NBC. In addition, members of the cast of NBC's "Heroes" — Ali Larter, Adrian Pasdar, Hayden Panettiere, Sendhil Ramamurthy and Milo Ventimiglia — also will serve as presenters.

**Tiny batters**

Little League Baseball will continue on ESPN under an eight-year contract extension announced Thursday. Financial terms of the extension, which will run through 2014, weren't disclosed. ESPN and ABC have carried the Little League Championship since 1963. The new deal includes multimedia rights and 49 games in the eight divisions of Little League Baseball.

**Sondheim shakes**

Stephen Sondheim will write some of the music for the Public Theater's upcoming production of "King Lear," starring Kevin Kline. Sondheim will share the revival's music credit with Michael Starobin, best known in the theater as an orchestrator. "King Lear," which will be directed by James Lapine, opens March 7 in Manhattan.

**Celine splits**

Celine Dion's Las Vegas concert extravaganza at Caesars Palace will close Dec. 15 after a nearly five-year run. The Grammy-winning singer, who signed a \$100 million contract, started the splashy gig, titled "A New Day," in March 2003. Producers said nearly 2.5 million people have seen Dion's show.

# 'Beauty' hot, ABC comedies not

## But Fox wins Wednesday on strength of Sugar Bowl

By Paul J. Gough

ABC's new comedies "The Knights of Prosperity" and "In Case of Emergency" got off to a slow start Wednesday, finishing fourth in the 9-10 p.m. hour, while CW's "Beauty and the Geek" was hot in its third-season premiere.

But the night belonged to Fox, whose coverage of the Sugar

Bowl topped the competition.

The debut of ABC's "Knights" was anything but rich in the ratings. The heist comedy starring Donal Logue averaged 7.2 million viewers and a 3.0 rating/8 share in adults 18-49 and was beaten by a repeat of CBS' "Criminal Minds" (11.9 million, 3.5/9) and NBC's "Deal or No Deal" (11.3 million, 3.5/9), according to Nielsen Media

Research.

"Knights" did build on its lead-in of "According to Jim" by 11%. "Emergency" (6.3 million, 2.7/7) fared worse, though the new comedies didn't have the benefit of "Dancing With the Stars" as a lead-in as "Help Me Help You" did in the time period earlier this season.

The CW had good news with the two-hour season premiere of "Beauty," which averaged 4.9 million viewers and a 2.2/6 in adults 18-49, hitting series highs in the female demographics, including women 18-34 (3.5/9).

The Notre Dame-LSU matchup on Fox averaged 14.6 million viewers and a 5.2/14 in adults 18-49. The game's peak was at 10 p.m., when 15.3 million people tuned in, and it reached a 5.7/14 in the demo.

For the night, Fox had 14.4 million viewers and a 5.0/13 in the demo, followed by CBS (10.3 million, 3.2/8), NBC (9 million, 3.0/8), ABC (6.3 million, 2.5/7) and the CW (4.9 million, 2.2/6). ■

## Comedy series go off-net

### 'Reno,' 'Chappelle' ready for fall

By Kimberly Nordyke

Two new comedies are entering the off-net syndication arena for the fall.

MGM Studios Inc., New Line Television and Comedy Central said Thursday that the network's "Reno 911!" and "Chappelle's Show" will be available for a syndication launch in the fall.

MGM, which will handle all station and national ad sales, will be selling the two Comedy Central series at NATPE's 2007 Conference & Exhibition, taking place Jan. 16-18 at the Mandalay Bay



Chappelle

Resort in Las Vegas, on an all-barter basis. The syndication of the shows will be overseen by Jim Packer, president of worldwide television distribution at MGM, and John Bryan, executive vp broadcast strategy at MGM.

The shows marks the first new off-net programs to be syndicated by MGM under its new strategic relationship with New Line announced in October (HR 10/9).

Packer said that MGM has been talking to stations about the two Comedy Central shows for a couple of days and has had "enthusiastic" response thus far. He also pointed to the scarcity of off-net sitcoms from broadcast networks on the horizon.

"The sitcom arena is always one that works well for stations, but there's not as much product coming down the pike," Packer said. ■

## NFL deal splitting goal posts

By Paul J. Gough

Last year was a good one on the gridiron for the NFL in its first year of the long-term TV rights deals it struck last fall. It also has been good for the league's TV partners as each showed ratings gains last year compared with 2005's regular season.

This fall was the first of the multiyear rights deal that saw ESPN take over "Monday Night Football" and NBC try to start its own dynasty with "Sunday Night Football." CBS and Fox continued their Sunday packages as they have since the 1990s.

Leading the list is Fox, which saw viewership jump 6% to 16.6 million for the 2006 season from the 15.7 million who tuned in during 2005, according to data from

Nielsen Media Research. It's the largest audience for Fox's NFL telecasts since 1999 but there are other superlatives as well.

Fox Sports' national games averaged 21.8 million viewers, which Fox Sports said Thursday made it the highest-rated, most-watched show on television so far this season. (A record that won't last presumably thanks to the Super Bowl on CBS and Fox's own "American Idol.") And that's 6% more than a year ago, when the national games averaged 20.4 million viewers.

A surge late in the season gave CBS a slight increase as well. Nielsen Media Research said an average of 15.2 million viewers tuned in to the regular-season CBS coverage, up 1% compared with 15.1 million in 2005 and up 2% compared with 2004's 15 million. ■

## As syndie gig ends, Rivera returns to FNC

By Kimberly Nordyke

Geraldo Rivera has signed a new multiyear deal with Fox News Channel

that will see "At Large With Gerardo Rivera" return to the network and signals the end of his syndicated news-magazine "Geraldo at Large."

Production on "Geraldo at Large," which is distributed by Twentieth Television, will shut down this month, continuing to air through Jan. 26. The staff was informed of the decision Thursday.

The Fox Television Stations group said it will explore "new syndicated fare."



Diana

## Nonfiction post at A&E to Sharenow

By Kimberly Nordyke

Robert Sharenow has been named head of nonfiction and alternative programming at A & E, where he will oversee the nonfiction programming and development teams.



Sharenow

In his new role as senior vp nonfiction and alternative programming, Sharenow also will be responsible for the development and creation of A&E's nonfiction programming, including the network's real-life series, justice franchises, A&E IndieFilms, lifestyle block, documentary series and specials.

Sharenow replaces Nancy Dubuc, A&E's former senior vp nonfiction programming and new-media content, who recently was named executive vp and general manager of sister network the History Channel (HR 12/12).

## Thiessen is all about 'Brian' as an ABC regular

By Nellie Andreeva

Tiffani Thiessen has joined the cast of ABC's drama "What About Brian" as a regular.

On the ensemble show about a group of supportive friends in various stages of romantic relationships, Thiessen will



Thiessen

play Natasha Dylan, a former intern of Dave's (Rick Gomez) who becomes his new boss at KC Gaming.

Sexy, manipulative and a shrewd businesswoman, Natasha loves playing mind games with all the friends. ■

# 'Old bulls' atop key committees

*Berman, Markey eyed to chair showbiz-related panels*

By Brooks Boliek

WASHINGTON — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi promised a new way of doing things after she was sworn in Thursday, but the committees with which the entertainment industry mainly deals will be in control of a bunch of "old bulls."

Long-serving, powerful law-

makers have been given that nickname as opposed to the up-and-coming "young Turks." One such bull, Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., the House's longest-serving member, administered the oath of office to the California Democrat, who made history as the nation's first female speaker.

Dingell will take over as chair-

man of the House Commerce Committee, a job he held before the GOP takeover of Congress in 1994.

Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., who was first elected to Congress in 1964, will chair the House Judiciary Committee.

"The Democrats are back," rejoiced Pelosi, and she immediately set the rank and file to work passing tougher ethics rules.

Next week, the committees are expected to fill out their subcommittee rosters. Unlike in the Senate, most of the work in the House gets done at the subcommittee level.

Read an extended version of this story at [www.hollywoodreporter.com](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com).

## WHV DVD plays both sides

*Works with either high-def format*

By Erik Gruenwedel

With both sides of the high-definition packaged media format war seemingly entrenched for the long haul, Warner Bros. Home Entertainment Group and LG Electronics announced Thursday plans to bow dual-format software and hardware, respectively, at next week's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

Warner's Total HD will feature a movie in both the HD-DVD and Blu-ray Disc formats on one disc — a move designed to thwart consumer confusion and reluctance toward choosing between competing high-def formats.

"While Warner Home Video has enjoyed a market advantage by producing products in both high-definition formats and it continues to support HD-DVD and Blu-ray, we believe the Total High-Defini-

tion Disc will ease the way to mainstream consumer adoption of these formats," Warner Home Video president Ron Sanders said. "In addition, THD offers a much-needed solution to our retail partners by providing some relief to the current inventory and space issues presented by having to offer consumers standard DVDs as well as two separate high-definition formats."

South Korea's LG Electronics said it will launch the world's first dual-format high-definition disc player, capable of playing both Blu-ray Disc and HD-DVD content. The unit will be released in the U.S. early this year.

HD-DVD, which bowed with Toshiba players and major studio content in April, and Blu-ray, which followed suit in the fall, thus far have both experienced stagnant results at retail. ■

## Study: Digital fuels primetime

By Alex Woodson

As consumers become more connected to broadband and digital television, they are more likely to become engaged in primetime television programming, according to a report released Thursday by CBS Corp.

According to the report, which was conducted by CBS chief research officer David Poltrack, 30% of the population was "fully connected" by last fall, meaning they have both a broadband and digital television connection at home, up from 22% in fall 2005. The network's research found that this group, which they describe as "upscale" and "better educated," is 20% more likely to watch the top

10 primetime programs than the national average.

"This sector of the audience is growing," Poltrack said. "By offering them new ways to connect to their favorite shows — whether it's Web sites, podcasts, ringtones or other mobile features — we've been able to deepen the bond these fully connected viewers have with our programming."

Furthermore, 56% of those surveyed were aware that you could stream network television programs over the Internet, and of this group 46% have streamed at least one program. When the segment that was not aware of the streaming option was told about it, 62% said they would stream programs in the future. ■

## CinemaNow, Intel burn deal

By Erik Gruenwedel

Online video download hub CinemaNow announced Thursday an updated alliance with Intel Corp. that give consumers using media PCs equipped with Intel Viiv technology the ability to legally burn movies to DVD discs for playback on standard DVD players.

Founded in 1999, CinemaNow in April began offering burn-to-DVD downloads of feature-length films, shorts, music concerts and TV programs from more than 250 licensors, including the major studios.

Viiv-enabled media center PCs allow users to watch a movie on the desktop, transfer it to a portable device and remotely control content on a home network, including flat-panel TV.

The deal helps expand CinemaNow's presence in digital home distribution by using Intel's 40% stronger Core 2 Duo processor for faster burning of rich media content, including high definition.

"This technology will dramatically improve our burn-to-DVD consumer experience," CinemaNow CEO Curt Marvis said.

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**"LOVE YOU I DO"**

Written by: HENRY KRIEGER & SIEDAH GARRETT  
Performed by: JENNIFER HUDSON  
Produced by: THE UNDERDOGS

**"PATIENCE"**

Written by: HENRY KRIEGER & WILLIE REALE  
Performed by: EDDIE MURPHY — ANIKA MONI ROSE — KEITH ROBINSON  
Produced by: THE UNDERDOGS

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risky

business

Anne Thompson

## Tolkin's new 'Player' in everyman territory



**M**ichael Tolkin, author of the new novel "The Return of the Player," is a member of a venerable Hollywood club: the screenwriter-novelist. It makes sense: If you suffer years of indignity writing scripts by committee inside the studio industrial complex, where you have little control over the results but make a handsome living, why not turn overnight into an omniscient novel writer with absolute power over your domain? "The novel is the last place in Western civilization where the writer has complete freedom," Tolkin says. "You can say more in a novel than you can anywhere else because your imagery is not constrained by the marketplace."

Novel writing must fulfill a deep need indeed, as several talented screenwriters who could easily earn higher incomes by sticking to scriptwriting for hire have become rather fine novelists. They include David Freeman ("Street Smart"), who made his name with razor-sharp portraits of thinly disguised Hollywood moguls like the late Don Simpson in his classic short story collection, "A Hollywood Education: Tales of Movie Dreams and Easy Money," and writer-director Bruce Wagner ("Women in Film"), who has crafted six novels that delicately skewer Los Angeles' upper classes, including the trilogy "I'm Losing



Tolkin

You," "Still Holding" and "I'll Let You Go," a Dickensian tome featuring a homeless man named William Morris.

Top screenwriter Wesley Strick ("Cape Fear") so enjoyed the experience of holing up in his home refusing to take script meetings while writing his Douglas Sirk-inspired look at the Tinseltown past, 2006's "Out There in the Dark," that he's embarking on another novel that has nothing to do with Hollywood. To write something with "enormous latitude, with no parameters at all" that was not contracted, pitched, rejected or accepted was "an easy trade-off," Strick says, though "the downside was that there was always a chance that I was wasting a year of my life."

Writer-director Tolkin ("The New Age," "The Rapture") is the best-known of these screenwriter-novelists because he adapted his first novel, 1988's "The Player," into a hit 1997 movie directed by Robert Altman. Tolkin's ruthlessly ambitious Ripley-like production executive Griffin Mill was brought to vivid life by Tim Robbins, while "Player's" hilarious movie-within-a-movie starred Bruce Willis and Julia Roberts. Rumors circulated around Hollywood about who had inspired Tolkin's edgy climber who sells his soul by murdering an angry screenwriter — and gets away with it. While ex-Warner Bros. executive Billy Gerber has been dining for years on being the basis for Tolkin's anti-hero, the writer insists his model was non-Hollywood Washington insider and Iran-Contra star Elliott Abrams.

In the decade since "The Player," while Tolkin has written two other novels that have nothing to do with Hollywood ("Among the Dead" and "Under the Radar"), much like Al Pacino in "The Godfather: Part III," he keeps being pulled back in. For one thing, Griffin Mill was still in his head, demanding his return. "When a novel has come alive in me, I've had to write it," Tolkin says. "It has happened four times and takes precedence over everything else." So he brought back his novelistic alter ego, much as Philip Roth and John Updike did over the years with their Zuckerman and Rabbit series.

In real life, Tolkin — who is a profoundly spiritual family man still married to his non-pro first wife, with an oldest daughter already

See RISKY on page 9

## Academy's Sci-Tech nods designed and developed

### 15 winners to be honored Feb. 10

By Gregg Kilday

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences on Thursday unveiled the 15 winners of its Scientific and Technical Academy Awards. They will be presented Feb. 10 at the Regent Beverly Wilshire.

Technical Achievement Awards, which carry Academy certificates, have been awarded to:

- Joshua Pines and Chris Kutcka of Technicolor Digital Intermediates for the design and development of the TDI process for creating archival separations from digital image data.

- Bill Feightner and Chris Edwards of E-Film for the design and development of the E-Film process for creating archival separations from digital image data.

- Albert Ridilla, Papken Shahbazian, Ronald Belknap and Jay McGarrigle for the design and development of the Hollywood Film Company Brumagic MPST Densitometer.

- Klemens Kehrer, Josef Handler, Thomas Smidek and Marc Shipman Mueller for the design and development of the Arriflex 235 Camera System.

- Florian Kainz for the design and engineering of OpenEXR, a software package implementing 16-bit, floating-point, high dynamic range image files.

- Walter Trauniger and Ernst Tschida for the design and engineering of the Arri WRC wireless remote lens control system.

- Christian Tschida and Martin Waitz for cmotion for the design and engineering of the cmotion Wireless Remote System.

- Peter Litwinowicz and Pierre Jasmin for the design and development of the RE: Vision Effects family of software tools for optical flow-based image manipulation.

Scientific and Engineering Awards have been awarded to:

- Phillip J. Feiner, Jim Houston, Denis Leconte and Chris Bushman of Pacific Title and Art Studio for the design and development of the Rosetta process for creating digital YCM archival masters for digital film restoration.

- Steve Sullivan, Colin Davidson, Max Chen and Francesco Callari for the design and development of the ILM Image-based Modeling System.

Read an extended version of this story at [www.hollywoodreporter.com](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com).

## Wilson one of Mandate's 'Passengers'

By Tatiana Siegel

Patrick Wilson has signed on to



Wilson

star as the male lead in the supernatural thriller "Passengers," being produced and financed by Mandate Pictures.

Anne Hathaway already has boarded the Rodrigo Garcia-helmed film, which Columbia Pictures will release domestically.

Penned by Ronnie Christensen, "Passengers" centers on a grief counselor (Hathaway) who helps six plane crash survivors and develops a special connection with one of them. When the survivors begin to disappear mysteriously, she suspects a conspiracy and becomes determined to uncover the truth.

Wilson, who stars opposite Kate Winslet in the Golden Globe nominated "Little Children," will play Eric, the survivor who becomes romantically involved with Hathaway's character. ■

## YEAR-END WRAP



"Scary Movie 4"



Studio reports are in today's issue and at

[www.hollywoodreporter.com](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com)

The Indies

RAMONE AND FLO GET READY TO CRUISE MAIN STREET, RADIATOR SPRINGS

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION...

# CARS

**BEST ORIGINAL SCORE**  
Randy Newman

**BEST ORIGINAL SONG**  
"Our Town" Music & Lyrics by Randy Newman, Performed by James Taylor

**3 GRAMMY AWARD NOMINATIONS**  
INCLUDING  
**BEST SONG "OUR TOWN"**  
WRITTEN FOR MOTION PICTURE, TV OR OTHER VISUAL MEDIA

**GOLDEN GLOBE**  
NOMINEE  
**BEST ANIMATED FEATURE FILM**

**NOMINEE**  
BROADCAST FILM CRITICS ASSN.  
**BEST ANIMATED FEATURE**

**WINNER**  
NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW  
**BEST ANIMATED FEATURE**

**9 ANNIE AWARD NOMINATIONS**  
INCLUDING  
**BEST ANIMATED FEATURE**



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*"Whether it's the thunderous excitement of the big races that open and close the film or an Oscar®-ready Randy Newman tune called 'Our Town' that James Taylor sings with heart-catching beauty, CARS is a class act all the way."*

Peter Travers, **ROLLING STONE**

film

reporter

Gregg Kilday



## The avant-garde finds a voice in Wilson docu

The 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles have long since faded into memory. And with it, the surrounding Olympic Arts Festival, presided over by director Robert Fitzpatrick, also has disappeared into the mist.

But that long-ago arts fest resurfaces in writer-producer-director Katharina Otto-Bernstein's new documentary "Absolute Wilson," a nuanced portrait of the groundbreaking theater director Robert Wilson that New Yorker Films opens today in Los Angeles. And as part of the film, the Olympic Arts Festival is resurrected, providing the dramatic high point of the documentary: Wilson had been commissioned to create an epic theater piece, "The Civil Wars," on which he was working with such collaborators as Philip Glass, David Byrne and Jessye Norman. But at the eleventh hour, the arts festival withdrew its promised funding, and the project collapsed.



Otto-Bernstein

Wilson found the whole experience one of the most painful and bitter of his career — in 1986, "Civil Wars" was chosen by the Pulitzer Prize jury for the drama prize but was then rejected by the Pulitzer board. "That was one thing going into this film that I knew he wasn't going to talk about,"

Otto-Bernstein says of Wilson's lingering distaste of talking about the project.

But Otto-Bernstein, who hadn't made a film since the 1998 documentary "Beautopia," about the international fashion industry, seemed to have a knack for getting Wilson to talk. The two met at a cocktail party several years back. "We met in my bathroom, literally — I went off to hide from my husband to have a cigarette, when I turned around and met this guy, Robert Wilson, who asked if he could have one," she says. "I knew his work, but I'd never met him before."

At the time, Otto-Bernstein was contemplating a film about artists and their muses, and as she explained it to Wilson, their conversation turned into a three-hour marathon, with him inviting her to visit his experimental theater workshop Watermill Center on Long Island, N.Y.

Eventually, Otto-Bernstein convinced Wilson that he should sit as the sole subject of a documentary. From the first interview she filmed, they had an unusual rapport. Otto-Bernstein was nine months pregnant at the time; an hour in, her water broke, and Wilson ended up taking her to the hospital. "That broke the ice," she says, laughing.

Although Wilson's work can look austere and occasionally forbidding onstage, on camera he comes across as relaxed and forthright in response to Otto-Bernstein's questions.

The film traces the influences on his life as they surface in his work: his childhood in Waco, Texas, from which he escaped to New York's gay and avant-garde theater circles; his lifelong search for his withholding father's approval; his work with brain-damaged children, which influenced the movements he brought to the stage; and his collaboration with a deaf-mute black child, Raymond Andrews, who he adopted.

Wilson is now much more well-known in Europe, where he regularly works, than in the U.S., where his celebrity is restricted to more high-brow circles. And with "Absolute Wilson" earmarked for eventual airing on HBO, that presented Otto-Bernstein with a challenge as she shaped her film.

"It was not a mystery to me," she says. "I knew I had to satisfy sophisticated European audiences, who know his work well, and at the same time, create a story for an American audience that doesn't know him so well."

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## Risky

Continued from page 7—

ensconced at a respected eastern college — is observing Hollywood's ruling class, not a member of it. The book's funniest moments happen at an over-the-top bar mitzvah that Tolkien swears is not an exaggeration. "Return of the Player" provides a moral dissection of the values of the entertainment world's moneyed elite. It's about how panic, selfishness, greed and fear can "drive you to do things you shouldn't do," he says. "It's about the difference between panic and confidence and social responsibility. I'm writing about real conditions. I don't think there's much exaggeration in the book. It's not satire. To me, that means mocking and parodying things. I don't think I'm exaggerating or derisive. Read the New York Times, and there's an article about how to customize a Boeing 767, about redecorating your jumbo jet."

In his latest incarnation, Griffin Mill at age 52 is still venal and ambitious and has outgrown the confining walls of his studio office. In a moment of crisis, he prays to the God he isn't sure he believes in, just in case: "I ask you God to give me clarity so that when an opportunity for something real in this town shows up, I can recognize the opportunity and grab that chance, God, grab that chance and make it mine."

While he is weighed down by the guilty secret of his earlier murder, he is no longer married to the man's widow, and he is fully capable of killing again, when necessary. His second marriage is in trouble, and he is going broke: He is down to his last \$6 million. "Between the collapse of the technology bubble and the attack on New York of Sept. 11, 2001, I felt a feeling of malaise and unreality in Hollywood," Tolkien says. "The entertainment industry has been unsure of where things are going, how to conduct business, what movies should be or what entertainment is. It is TV, or a download? Everyone was grabbing at what the Next Thing should be. I was interested in that anxiety, fear and panic. That's what this book is about."

Only one man can take Mill to the next level so that he can escape his terror of the end of the world by finding refuge on his own island in Fiji. He's a player on a far grander scale, David Gef-

fen-like billionaire power-broker Phil Ginsberg: "Griffin trembled at the idea of Ginsberg because the man was everywhere and nowhere, now owning the music division of that company, which he sells and then buys an Internet store that he convinces the investment bankers will make a zillion dollars, and he sells the stock at its highest, six months before bankruptcy; having learned the Internet business he buys a cable system in New Mexico and returns to Hollywood and starts a cable channel dedicated to soccer, with English and Spanish commentary. He had also managed to slip between a few best-selling novels and the films made from them. He had started with a little more than nothing and was now worth \$750 million but, lacking his first billion, suffered a manic insecurity ensorcelled with his manic confidence, a chemical bond for brutality. He was mean and worked alone like a troll beneath a bridge, demanding of everyone who passed: money, gold, cattle, a first-born child."

There are really three major players in the book: besides Mill and Ginsberg, the other chillingly memorable character is formidable former president Bill Clinton. "It's a book about marriage and guilt," Tolkien explains. "For the problems Griffin is having there is no one else to talk to except Bill Clinton. More than anyone, he's capable of understanding any action and forgiving it, because he understands that everyone can make mistakes: He's made them."

Tolkien sees "Return of the Player" as being about the provincial city of Los Angeles more than the entertainment industry. If the book were to be made into another movie (the author sent a galley to the ailing Altman before he died), Tolkien thinks it could easily be set outside the confines of Hollywood. "The book is about a man who thinks he needs a fortune to survive the coming end of the world," he writes in an e-mail. "There are only two or three scenes in studio offices, and no movie stars anywhere. It might work just as well in Cupertino."

Clearly, Hollywood screenwriters are given a close-up look at a group of bigger-than-life characters who fuel their imaginations in ways that their day jobs will never do.

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FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

**BEST ANIMATED  
FEATURE FILM**

Directed by George Miller

**BEST ORIGINAL  
SONG**

"The Song Of The Heart"

Performed by Prince

Written by Prince Rogers Nelson

Produced by Prince

**2 GOLDEN GLOBE  
NOMINATIONS**



**BEST ANIMATED FEATURE FILM**

**BEST ORIGINAL SONG - "THE SONG OF THE HEART"**

Music & Lyrics by PRINCE ROGERS NELSON

# HAPPY FEET

**"'Happy Feet' is one of the most wonderful  
films in years. It transcends animation.  
A miracle of originality and imagination."**

Gene Shalit, Today Show

**"Exhilarating music with catchy songs and  
Broadway-worthy dance numbers."**

Claudia Puig, USA Today

**"Easily the best animated film of the year.  
The visuals can be both  
intimate and breathtakingly grand."**

Christy Lemire, Associated Press



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# Big holiday draws hang in there

*Three newbies unlikely to crack top spots in first weekend of '07*

By Nicole Sperling

None of the new releases set to hit theaters today will be much of a threat to the strong holdovers that dominated the marketplace during the holiday season. In fact, none is likely to hit the \$10 million mark or get into the top three for the first frame of 2007.

Those positions should go to 20th Century Fox's "Night at the Museum," expected to earn an additional \$20 million this weekend; Sony Pictures' "The Pursuit of Happyness," which is eyed to generate grosses in the teens; and Paramount Pictures' "Dreamgirls," which could earn an additional \$10 million.

Paramount unveils the Hilary Swank starrer "Freedom Writers" in 1,360 theaters. The familiar plot line of the young, enthusiastic teacher who comes in to rescue a group of inner-city students (see "Dangerous Minds" or "Take the Lead") is back at work with this Richard LaGravenese-directed feature. The film is based on the true story of a young teacher in Long Beach, Calif., who finds a way to unite her racially divided students by encouraging them to write in journals. An MTV co-production, the PG-13 "Writers" is looking to lure younger audiences. Imelda Staunton and

Patrick Dempsey co-star. Initially slated for Jan. 12, the film opens today on a smaller scale and will expand next weekend to about 2,000 runs.

While "Writers" has the smallest release schedule of the new films, it's likely to be the top grosser of the bunch. With a push from MTV, the film could connect with younger audiences and pass Paramount's big hit, "Dreamgirls," which is expected to gross \$8 million-\$10 million in its second full weekend of release.

New Line Cinema bows "Code Name: The Cleaner" today in 1,736 theaters. The PG-13 co-production with FilmEngine stars Cedric the Entertainer, Elizabeth Hurley, Lucy Liu and Nicollette Sheridan. From director Les Mayfield ("The Man") the action comedy centers on an amnesiac janitor (Cedric) who becomes convinced that he's an undercover agent embroiled in an international arms ring. Industry insiders don't expect much from the film, putting its three-day range in the \$5 million-\$7 million range.

Lionsgate opens the twisted animated film "Happily N'Ever After" in 2,381 theaters. The plot centers on Cinderella, who must lead a resistance effort when she realizes her wicked



"Freedom Writers," left, "Happily N'Ever After" and "Code Name: The Cleaner" open nationwide today.

stepmother is trying to take over Fairy Tale Land. With a strong voice cast featuring Sigourney Weaver, Sarah Michelle Gellar, George Carlin, Andy Dick and Freddy Prince Jr., the PG film is reminiscent of the Weinstein Co.'s "Hoodwinked," which opened to nearly \$17 million in January 2006 and went on to gross more than \$50 million domestically. But it's unlikely that this twist on the Cinderella story will get to those numbers; industry insiders have its opening pegged closer to the \$5 million range.

Many limited releases are expanding this weekend.

After a strong run in limited release, Universal Pictures is moving up its expansion of Alfonso Cuarón's "Children of Men" to this weekend. The R-rated dystopian drama, which has grossed \$1.5 million since bowing on Christmas Day, will expand to 1,910 playdates.

Picturehouse's "Pan's Labyrinth" — which had a stellar opening in limited release last weekend, grossing \$568,641 in 17 theaters — will add 24 runs to Los Angeles and three to Chicago. It goes wide Jan. 12.

After providing it a one-week awards season qualifying run in December, MGM is expanding Irwin Winkler's "Home of the Brave." The Iraq War drama starring Samuel L. Jackson, Jessica Biel and Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson debuted rather inauspiciously, bowing to \$6,000 from three theaters. But the studio is adding runs and hoping for a stronger debut the second time around.

Warner Independent Pictures expands "The Painted Veil" to 72 theaters this frame. The Edward Norton-Naomi Watts starrer bowed Dec. 20 to a per-screen average of \$12,771. Since then, the Bob Yari-produced film has earned \$679,398.

STAR POWER®

## PROFILE

★ Hilary Swank

Current film:  
"Freedom Writers"

- **The Black Dahlia** (2006) \$22.5 mil
- **Million Dollar Baby** (2004) \$100.5 mil
- **The Core** (2003) \$31.2 mil
- **Insomnia** (2002) \$67.4 mil
- **The Gift** (2000) \$12 mil

★ **Upcoming:**

"The Reaping" (Warner Bros. Pictures), directed by Stephen Hopkins; also starring David Morrissey, Idris Elba; release date: March 30.

For more on Star Power, go to [www.hollywoodreporter.com](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com)

background

## OPENINGS

Film	Distrib.	Rel. pattern	Week
<b>Happily N'Ever After</b>	Lionsgate	2,381	—
<b>Code Name: The Cleaner</b>	New Line Cinema	1,736	—
<b>Freedom Writers</b>	Paramount Pictures	1,360	—
<b>Three</b>	Bigger Picture	460	—

## RECENT HOLDOVERS

<b>Children of Men</b>	Universal Pictures	Wide	2
<b>Pan's Labyrinth</b>	Picturehouse	Limited	2
<b>Night at the Museum</b>	20th Century Fox	Ultrawide	3
<b>Rocky Balboa</b>	MGM	Ultrawide	3
<b>The Good Shepherd</b>	Universal Pictures	Very wide	3
<b>We Are Marshall</b>	Warner Bros. Pictures	Very wide	3
<b>Black Christmas</b>	MGM/Dimension	Wide	3
<b>Dreamgirls</b>	Paramount Pictures	Moderate	3
<b>Charlotte's Web</b>	Paramount Pictures	Ultrawide	4
<b>The Pursuit of Happyness</b>	Sony Pictures	Ultrawide	4
<b>Eragon</b>	20th Century Fox	Very wide	4
<b>The Holiday</b>	Sony Pictures	Very wide	5
<b>Blood Diamond</b>	Warner Bros. Pictures	Wide	5

Ultrawide: 3,000+ theaters; very wide: 2,000+; wide: 1,000+; moderate: 500+; limited: select areas

Boxoffice figures for North America  
SOURCES: THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER, EXHIBITOR RELATIONS CO.



Humberto Carrero/STARTRAKSPHOTO.COM

Christina Aguilera

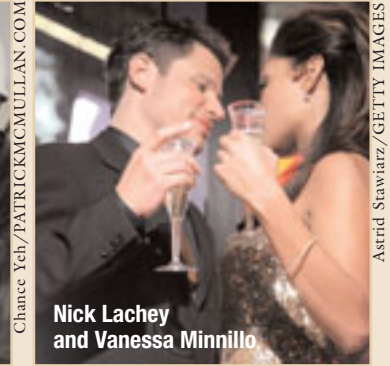
<< BALL DROPS >>

New Year's may have rung out all across the world earlier this week, but it's New York's Times Square (and vicinity) that had everyone glued to their sets. While revelers packed the Square, parties erupted all across Manhattan, including **Christina Aguilera's** Hudson Hotel event (where **Jessica Simpson** hung out with **Sherrod Small**); Tinsley Mortimer's Japonais-based, Sky-hosted event, which largely drew musicians including Fall Out Boy's **Pete Wenz** and Panic at the Disco's **Brandon Urie**; Wenz's band, Jesse Bradford and Noel Ashman held a shindig at The Plumm for guests including **Leelee Sobieski**; and of course everyone rocked out at MTV Goes Gold's party — where Simpson's ex, **Nick Lachey**, hung out with main squeeze **Vanessa Minnillo**.

— Rande Dawn



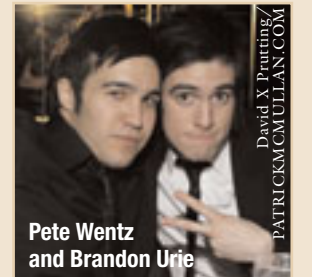
Jessica Simpson and Sherrod Small



Nick Lachey and Vanessa Minnillo



Azie Tesfai, Selena Macmahan, Anthony Roth Costanzo and Leelee Sobieski



Pete Wentz and Brandon Urie



Anthony Minghella and Harvey Weinstein



Mike Wallace

Evan Agostini/GETTY IMAGES

^^ COMPANY TIME ^^

For those who weren't already feeling crammed by the holiday season, The Weinstein Co. held two competing screenings on Dec. 20: A private screening of "Breaking and Entering" at the Celeste Bartos Theater at the Museum of Modern Art, which was attended by **Harvey Weinstein** himself, plus director **Anthony Minghella** and **Mike Wallace** — among others. The other one featured "Days of Glory (Indigènes)" was hosted by rapper/actor **Chris "Ludacris" Bridges**, and guests included MoMa's **Laurence Kardish** (who managed to hit both events) and Weinstein co-president of production **Michael Cole**.

— Rande Dawn and Gregg Goldstein



Laurence Kardish, Chris "Ludacris" Bridges and Michael Cole

Sylvain Gaboury/FILMMAGIC.COM

vv COASTING ALONG vv



Josh Hamilton and Tom Stoppard

The second part of **Tom Stoppard's** epic "The Coast of Utopia" held its opening night at Lincoln Center on Dec. 21, with guests, cast members and Stoppard alike on hand to celebrate the start of "Shipwreck" — who included **Josh Hamilton**, **Jennifer Ehle**, **Billy Crudup** and **Amy Irving**, among many others.

— Rande Dawn



August Gladstone and Brian F. O'Byrne



Jennifer Ehle, Billy Crudup and Amy Irving

Bryan Bedder/GETTY IMAGES