Patriot Front Thwarted
A closer look at what happened in Coeur d'Alene

by Lindsey Anderson
SGN Contributing Writer

The flags were hung, the people had gathered, and Coeur d'Alene's first Pride in the Park celebration was underway on Saturday, June 11, when police sirens filled the air. Just blocks from the festivities, police intercepted a U-Haul van filled with 31 men in riot gear preparing to disrupt the event.

Coeur d'Alene Police Chief Lee White said they received a tip from an anonymous caller who saw approximately 20 men piling into the U-Haul at a hotel parking lot. The caller described the group as looking like "a little army."

Ten minutes after the initial 911 call, police stopped the U-Haul, and all 31 men were detained and charged with misdemeanors. All of the men have since posted bail.

"It is clear to us, based on the gear that the individuals had with them, the stuff they had in their possession in the U-Haul with them, along with paperwork from them, that they came to riot downtown," White said in a press release. "I think some of us were a bit surprised by not only the level of preparation that we saw but the equipment that was carried and worn by those individuals, along with a large amount of equipment that was left in the van when the stop happened," he continued.

see IDAHO page 19

Photos courtesy of Kootenai County Sheriff's Office

Texas GOP brands LGBTQ "abnormal"

by Mike Andrew
SGN Staff Writer

The Texas Republican Party has decided that being LGBTQ is "an abnormal lifestyle choice."

The wording comes from the new state GOP platform, passed at the party's biennial convention in Houston. The GOP said it opposes any "criminal or civil penalties against those who oppose homosuality out of faith, conviction, or belief in traditional values."

see TEXAS page 18

To infinity and beyond
Portland native Angus MacLane on taking command of Pixar's Lightyear

by Sara Michelle Fetters
SGN Staff Writer

Pixar's "Lightyear" blasted off into theaters last weekend, and for veteran animator and Portland native Angus MacLane, making it was like composing a visually dazzling love letter to the genre films of his youth. After getting his start with the company working on 1998's "A Bug's Life" and co-directing 2000's "Finding Dory" with studio legend Andrew Stanton, helming this ambitious what-if science fiction adventure was a dream come true.

see MACLANE page 17
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What’s fun in Madison, Wisconsin

by Bill Malcolm
Special to the SGN

You cannot beat a visit to Madison, Wisconsin. Situated on an isthmus between Lakes Mendota and Monona, the city is full of bike trails as well as kayak rentals. Everything revolves around the Capitol Square (home to the beautiful State Capitol Building), which features the best farmers market in the Midwest every Saturday morning.

Getting there
Madison is a 2.5-hour drive from Chicago; it is also served by Van Galder buses. Or take the Amtrak from Chicago to Milwaukee and hop on the Badger Bus to Madison. Dane County Regional Airport has flights from around the country, although the fares can be high.

What to do
Rent a B Cycle electric bike and explore the city.
The Olbrich Botanical Gardens on the east side are a must. Ride the Capitol City bike trail and afterwards stop by the new Garver Feed Mill.
Rent a kayak at the Brittingham Bay Boat House.
Enjoy the prairie flowers at Owen Park on the west side.
Take a swim at the UW Memorial Union Terrace pool, and then grab a brat and brew to watch the sunset.
Take in the free Mad City Water Ski Club ski shows Sundays at 6 p.m. in the summer. Brats are available there too.
Ride the Lakeshore Path and then hike out to the end of Picnic Point.

Where to eat
Grab a sandwich or some cheese at Pro-magination (155 S. Carroll).
Cosetta’s (222 W. Washington) is fabulous. Try the tomato sausage soup and grab some coffee at Birrigue’s across the street.
The Shamrock (117 Main) serves burgers. Harvest and the Old Fashioned are very good (215 S. Pickney) right on the Square.

Where to stay
I like the Hampton Inn and Suites downtown. The Graduate is also very nice, as is the Hilton Monona Terrace.
If you are on UW business, try the Fluno Center.
If you want to splurge, try the Edgewater, but check for resort fees.

Nightlife
Wooly at 114 King is a lot of fun (especially for the beer and leather crowd). Its Sunday beer bust is a must. Don’t miss its PrideFest August 13! Enjoy the outdoor seating and grab a bite at the wine restaurant next door, Vino.
The Club V on the Beltline is another fun option.
The Shamrock is also on the Capitol Square (117 Main) and is a lot of fun.

For more information
Pick up a copy of the monthly Isthmus. Our Lives is Wisconsin’s source for LGBTQ news. Outreach has a monthly calendar (outreachmadisonight.org).

Bill Malcolm is originally from Madison. He now resides in Indianapolis. His syndicated LGBTQ tourism column has appeared in publications around the country, from the Seattle Gay News to the Toronto Pink Play Magazine, as well as on the travel blog section of the TLFTA website.
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JUNE 24, 2022 CELEBRATING 48 YEARS!
Oregon Shakespeare Festival bounces back big-time

by Alice Bloch
Special to the SGN

Oregon Shakespeare Festival
Ashland, Oregon
Through October 30

For the first time since 2019, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) is once again offering live performances on three stages. This alone is cause for celebration. That the quality of these productions is just as high as we’d come to expect pre-COVID is an unanticipated delight.

The five plays now in repertory include two musicals, two terrific new plays in which the main characters are Lesbians, a lovely production of The Tempest originally scheduled for 2020, and an outstanding one-man show by and about August Wilson. (That sounds like six plays, but one of the plays about a Lesbian is also one of the musicals.)

Revenge Song
Allen Elizabethan Theatre, through October 14

In the program notes for Revenge Song, director Robert Ross Parker describes the show as “a rollicking, swashbuckling, gut-busting musical-comedy-adventure spectacle.” Oh, and it’s about Julie d’Aubigny, an actual 17th-century Lesbian sword fighter and opera singer, who once freed her girlfriend from a convent by robbing a grave, putting the corpse in the girlfriend’s bed, and setting the room on fire. (Although playwright Qui Nguyen took many liberties with d’Aubigny’s life story and with the historical setting, apparently some of her most unfulfilled escapades really did occur.)

Nguyen and Parker are co-founders of the Vampire Cowboys, a “geek theater” company devoted to pop culture and stories that feature gender-bending heroes played by people of color. For Revenge Song, they collaborated on the song lyrics (most memorable: “We Had Sex, Y’All” and “This Girl Breaks All the Rules”). Shane Rettig composed the pounding punk and hip-hop score.

The opening-night performance was too much fun, from beginning to end. Reina Libby-Guthrie was adorable and dynamic as d’Aubigny. In the dual roles of Madame de Sonnesteer (the show’s narrator) and Marie (own house owner and lover of d’Aubigny), Donna Simone Johnson was fabulously naughty. Julian Remollo gave a sweet, sympathetic portrayal of d’Aubigny’s best friend Albert. In many roles, with many costume changes, James Ryan, Ryan Brooks, Al Baghousa, David Anthony Lewis, and Phil Wong all threw themselves with abandon into the over-the-top action.

I didn’t count how many sword fights took place in the course of the evening, but there were many, all performed splendidly by cast members under the direction of veteran fight director U. Jonathan Toppo, now in his 30th season at OSF.

Music director Elana Money seemed to be everywhere at all times, playing a wide variety of instruments and keeping the other musicians on track.

Costumes designed by Ulises Alcaldes merged 17th-century fashion with the riot grrrl style of the 1990s. Lighting designed by Michael K. Maag and projections designed by Katherine Pfeifer made the stage pulsate with energy. Although Sara Ryung Clement’s set consisted of nothing more than graffiti on walls, there were plenty of props, including a carousel horse and a rubber chicken used to hilarious effect in Johnson and Ryan’s demonstration of consent.

In post-performance remarks, Associate Artistic Director Erika Oschlinski spoke movingly of the importance of expanding the range of stories and audiences welcomed at OSF. He told about witnessing a middle-school class that attended a preview of Revenge Song. “One Queer kid came in waving a Pride flag,” he said. “When I was a Queer Kid, there were no shows like this for me to attend. Just think what that kid will grow up to create!”
OSF continued from page 7

unknown

through July 31

This play is the one I can’t stop thinking about. Playwright Moni Mansoor’s unknown is beautifully written, staged and acted. It’s simple in structure yet complex in meaning. It’s short but packed with human truths.

Maryam Shamee’s novel, Rezende Srong, assumes a life of a Lesbian main character, but that’s about the only similarity. Where Revenge Song, unknown has a Lesbian main character, but that’s about the only similarity. Mia, played with burning intensity by Helen Sadler, is a young American conflict photographer. Nora of Samadhi inhaled through her mouth, so close to Miao’s mature and still Turkish ex-lover, a Syrian woman Miia encounters on the job, in two very different circumstances; and a Palestinian woman whom young son’s death precipitates a mental health crisis for Mia.

As the second in the series of plays, this is the one that primed that Miia’s well-meaning but somewhat clueless mother.

The central theme is the emotional damage done both by and to conflict photographers. As the spouse of a former first responder, I can attest to the accuracy of the play’s portrayal of Miia as a person suffering from PTSD.

Director Byron Oechsle does himself as a “Turkish Queer immigrant,” and there’s no doubt that his direction helped lead to authenticity to the set (designed by Mariana Sanchez) of the Istanbul apartment where most of the action takes place. Arvin’s light sound design placed us in Turkey and the Near East while the audience was still arriving.

The play offers a master class in dialogue, pacing, and character development. In the OSF production, it also offers a master class in acting and stagecraft. I want to see it again.

The Tempest

Allen Elizabethan Theatre

through October 12

Shakespeare’s late play, The Tempest, provided the first opening night in the Allen Elizabethan Theatre since 2019. This production was originally scheduled for 2020, but, as Artistic Director Nataki Garrett said with obvious emotion in her post-performance remarks, “On March 12, 2020, I was on the phone, telling actors not to get onto their rights to come and begin rehearsals, because we were canceling the season. I thought, ‘We’re never coming back from this. This is a miracle that we all here.”

Fortunately, director Nicholas C. Aliu and most original cast members were able to convene in Ashland this year and begin their long-postponed rehearsals. The cast features several familiar OSF actors, all excellent: Kevin Kennedy as Prospero (magician and deposed Duke of Milan), Tyrone Wilson as Alonso the king, Al Espinosa as Prospero’s villainous brother Antonio, Michael J. Hamse as Prospero’s ally Gonzalo, James Ryen as an exceptionally vulnerable Caliban, Amy Lizardo as the jester Trinculo, and William Theissen as Ferdinand (the king’s son and the love interest of Prospero’s daughter Miranda, played by Grace Chan Ng).

Roxana, now in his 24th season at OSF, just gets better and better. His characterization as the stage— a necessity as an effective Prospero. The character of Ferdinand is often bland and forgettable, but Hodgson played with sparkling comedy and charm to make him memorable.

OSF excels at comedy, and this production is no exception. The comic interludes provided by Lizardo, Ryan, Jonathan Fisher as Stephano, and Tim Setman as Adrian were laugh-out-loud funny indeed.

In his OSF debut as the spirit Ariel, Geoffrey Warren Barnes II sang well and conveyed a sweet and sexy energy. In one scene, he even managed to move gracefully while wearing a huge pair of wings reminiscent of Angels in America.

Sensuous costumes designed by Helen Q. Huang featured gorgeous colors and textures. In this year of supply chain problems, the OSF costume shop must have gone to extraordinary lengths to obtain those exquisite fabrics.

Lighting designer Dawn Chiang and projection designer Shawn Duan contributed drama and interest to Sara Ryung Clement’s minimal set, which mostly consisted of leaves and moss hanging from railings.

In this time when many of us are reeling with losses of loved ones, the grief of Ferdinand and his father Alonso, when both think the other has drowned was particularly touching. Their loving reunion in the final scene came at the same time as Prospero’s releasing Ariel from his service and forgiving those who had wronged him—a suitable validation for this play in this time.

I’ve Learned What I Learned

Angus Bowmer Theatre

through July 30

August Wilson, one of America’s greatest playwrights, performed as an actor for the first and last time in his autobiographical one-man show How I Learned What I Learned, which had its world premiere at Seattle Repertory Theatre in 2003. After Wilson’s death in 2005, other actors took on the role in other productions. It’s hard to imagine that any of them did a better job than Steven Anthony Jones in the current OSF production.

Jones brought Wilson back to life, pulling off a nearly two-hour monologue without ever boring the audience. It didn’t hurt that Wilson was a master storyteller with a wealth of life experience, a keen sense of humor, and a brave approach to exposing racial inequality. Of the life lessons imparted in this show, my favorite was this one from Wilson’s mother: “Something is not always better than nothing.” There was even a nice little tribute to Fred Rogers, whom Wilson met in their native Pittsburgh.

Director Tim Bond has directed nearly all of Wilson’s plays at OSF and elsewhere, and his and Jones’ affection and respect for Wilson came across in every scene. Costume designer and dramaturge Constanza Romero, Wilson’s widow, supplied the hats and jacket familiar to all who have seen photographs of Wilson (or the postage stamp that honors him).

Now full designed the set: a desk and a couple of chairs in front of a series of brick walls, layered almost like a Jenga game. On those walls, Rasean Davonte Johnson’s projections displayed words, photographs, and graphics to illustrate each of Wilson’s tales.

Lighting designed by Xavier Pierce created atmosphere and minimally changed the mood from comedy to tragedy and back again.

Once on This Island

Angus Bowmer Theatre

through October 30

Directed by Lili-Anne Brown, this revival of a 1990 musical written by Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens is successful in several respects. Setting the show specifically in Haiti rather than in a generic Caribbean island was a good idea. The talented all-Black cast did full justice to the songs and dances, despite substitutions necessitated by breakthrough COVID cases. Exuberant choreography by Bruce Ardell and colorful scenery (designed by Arnel Sanchez) and costumes (designed by Yovonne L. Miranda and Samantha C. Jones) made the stage a joy to behold. Patricia Jefferson as Mama Euralise and Clara Dawn as Ti Moune, the central character, sang superbly.

The plot is based on that of The Little Mermaid: a dark-skinned peasant girl falls in love with a rich, light-skinned boy and gives her life to save him. It would be hard to see the ending changed for the revival, to make Ti Moune more self-respecting and less self-sacrificing, and to generate at least a little bit of character development. What OSF delivered, I think, is a good production of a deeply flawed show.

Unsurprisingly, the songs have a Disney-musical sound, and unsurprisingly, a Disney film adaptation is in the works.

Coming up at OSF

Two plays will open in August and run through October: Shakespeare’s rarely performed King John (directed by Ross Joshi) and Dominique Morisseau’s Confederates (directed by Nataki Garrett).
BLMF: Books for all Seattle’s motherfuckers, including those just passing through

by Lindsey Anderson
SGN Contributing Writer

Deepest in the bowels of Pike Place Market sits one of the city’s finest collections of used books, in a store perhaps better known by tourists than locals.Owned and operated by J.B. Johnson for the last 25 years, BLMF Literary Saloon has become a must-see destination for anyone caught in the tourist trap that is the Market.

“It stands for ‘Books Like a Mother Fucker,’” Johnson said of the acronym sometimes misinterpreted as an affiliation with Black Lives Matter.

“People ask me that all the time. If they look hip enough, I’ll say ‘Books Like a Mother Fucker’ if not, I’ll make something up.”

BLMF is a unique store in that it mostly sells books to tourists, which means that the titles Johnson stocks can sometimes be a little peculiar.

“I never know who’s going to ask me for what next,” Johnson said. “Books that would sell downtown or in Capitol Hill or Ballard, those could be downtown here. But then other stuff that I totally couldn’t move in another neighborhood; I could just blow right through here.

There’s a book called The Alchemists, and it’s very popular. I’ve probably sold more of that than anything else. Another book called The Road, I still can’t believe people will give me 50 for that. I’m very happy about that, because that’s easy to find.”

BLMF is so popular among tourists that some visit the store every time they stop in Seattle. “People who know about me, I know about me,” Johnson said. “We do have a small online presence, but most of my traffic comes from people coming from the Market,” said Johnson.

“I just had a guy in here who came in yesterday. He’s from South Africa. He comes to Seattle like once every three or four years, and he always stops by here, all the way from South Africa. I was amazed and so flattered by that.”

A unique collection in the Market

Working in Pike Place has its ups and downs for Johnson. “The Market is great — most days. It is the biggest tourist trap on the West Coast, which can be good for business,” he said.

However, he noted that selling books could be easier in other areas. “If I had, say, a neighborhood store, you know like Twice Sold Tales — people go to Twice Sold Tales looking for books. Some people will come in here just because the door’s open, which is not necessarily a bad thing, but sometimes it gets a little wearing.”

BLMF is a used bookstore, but that doesn’t mean all its titles come from donations. “If you just took donations, you’re going to get a bookstore full of Louis L’Amour and Danielle Steel, which I don’t want. I buy stuff from people on the street. I get books from all the spots — libraries, yard sales, etc.”

Johnson also gets books from people looking to sell to local shops. “I get a lot of travelers here, so I get people who are surprised to see something that just came out. I get tourists who have stuff left over that they don’t want to put in their suitcase.”

“Seattle is also a very literate town, so I get people who love books but don’t have the space to sit on them in their tiny apartments.”

While Johnson has a myriad of titles in the store, he knows just what titles to put on display to catch readers’ eyes. “I’ve been doing this for 25 years. If there’s something that looks cool, I put it up. If there’s something that just came out, or has anything to do with what’s on TV, or if Oprah or Reese Witherspoon recommended it, I will put it on display,” he said.

“I have a particular perspective on what I think is worth reading,” he continued, “and like I said, I’ve been doing this for a long time. It’s a great place and a mellow atmosphere down here, and I’ve become good at making recommendations. It depends on what people are looking for, but I can usually match the person to the book.”

BLMF has many sections with various genres for just about any reader, including some LGBTQ+ titles, like now ones from the popular author Aidan Thomas. “I have a gender studies section, but it’s small,” Johnson said. “Usually, when people are selling LGBTQ+ books, they sell to Jamie [at Twice Sold Tales] up on Capitol Hill, which is fine. When people are looking for LGBTQ+ books, I always refer them to her.”

see BLMF page 10

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JUNE 24, 2022

SGN 9
Meat Me by the Fountain: Shop ‘til you drop!

by Terri Schlichenmeyer
Special to the SGN

MEET ME BY THE FOUNTAIN:
AN INSIDE HISTORY OF THE MALL

ALEXANDRA LANGE
© 2022 Bloomsbury
$28.00
320 pages

Viktor Grunbaum knew design. Held the Nazis in Vienna in 1938, immigrated to New York, changed his surname, and almost immediately landed a job creating buildings for corporate exhibitions at the New York World's Fair. Then he worked as a designer for high-end boutiques and stores and, turning his eye toward the problems facing downtown stores (versus suburban stores with more parking), Grun saw a solution: he created the first mall.

"It was a national event," says author Alexandra Lange in the cultural history Meat Me by the Fountain.

Within a very short time, other designers realized that shoppers perceived the mall as a "treat," and they made it even more so. Rocks, ponds, and greenery were added, along with park benches and mini-zoos. Child-friendly zones were created. Stores were required to upgrade or remodel every few years, and underperforming stores were dropped, often in favor of national chains.

Then, about 20 years after its creation, the mall itself began to morph into open-air marketplaces. This was, says Lange, both good and bad. Marketplaces revitalized downtowns and made use of abandoned or desert buildings, but creators often ignored the things that made such pedestrian malls work.

So if the mall needed to change, why not go bigger? Why not invite senior mall walkers and teenagers with cash and young arcade gamblers? In fact, what about offering public spaces for meetings, and movie theaters and restaurants for every budget?

It sounded great and shoppers loved it — until they didn’t. In 1980, says Lange, the notion that the mall was "dying" was first raised in the media.

It wasn’t the last. Even the word, says Lange, is going out of favor.

But when was the last time you were in a mall? For most Americans, it was sometime this week, and this book explains why: malls have never stopped changing to become what shoppers want in the moment.

This shift has been for the better: malls of the 1960s were marred by racism, malls of the '80s by a certain amount of blight. Still, despite all the mall killers who sneer about its demise, Lange poo-poos any sort of death. Malls survive by adapting — sometimes they've done well.

But they can do better, she says, by tapping into nostalgia. That’s one thing, she points out, that Americans love.

Reading Meat Me by the Fountain is like looking into the nooks, crannies, and hidden hallways of your local shopping emporium with a critical eye. It harkens back to your childhood in the most intriguing way.

BLMF continued from page 9

While he sells all kinds of books, Johnson admits there are some he refuses to buy: "I sell a little bit of everything here. I have no idea who is going to ask me for what next, so I try to stock a little bit of everything for everybody. Except I don't stock Ann Coulter. I don't stock Bill O'Reilly books, no, no, no. You want that shit, you can find them at Goodwill for $3, no problem.

Johnson also loves to give book recommendations. For the SGN book club, he recommends a thrilling crime series. "So, this is called Blacktop Wasteland. It’s one of the best crime novels I’ve read in the last five years, and this is the follow-up, called Razorblade Tours — it has an LGBTQ+ slant to it, so this is something I’ve been recommending to people.

“Crime novels are my favorite genre, and this guy is the best in the business right now," he added.

One of Washington’s only Black bookstores

While many things make BLMF unique, the most special part of the shop is perhaps Johnson himself. "I just thought of another thing that makes this store special," he said.

“There might be one other guy, but I think I’m the only Black-owned bookstore in the state, which makes me one of the only Black-owned bookstores in the country, so there’s that. And that gives me a particular perspective."

Johnson’s perspective truly is special. His witty humor and expert sense of humor are what charms customers and calls them back to the store, even if they’ve traveled hundreds of miles to be there. Johnson is a book lover who encourages everyone who stops by BLMF to keep reading, and most likely knows exactly what your next favorite novel will be.

For the SGN’s readers, Johnson has a special message: “Anybody out there listening: don’t come at me with ‘I don’t have time to read.’ Everybody has time to read. If you have a favorite TV show, you have time to read. If you spend more than half an hour on Facebook, you have time to read. If your Clash of Clans’ castle is higher than ten, you have time to read. So just read.”

BLMF is located on the third level of the Diamond Center at Pike Place Market and stocked floor to ceiling with all sorts of literary treasures just waiting to be discovered. More information is at https://www.pikeplacemarket.org/vendor/blmf-literary-salon and Instagram @ bookslikeweightyfucker.
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Intriguing *Spiderhead* is a mixed bag of psychedelic thrills

by Sara Michelle Fettig
SGN Staff Writer

**SPIDERHEAD**

*Netflix*

*Spiderhead* is a great *Twilight Zone* or *Black Mirror* scenario — only one that offers up a terrific idea, asks several fascinating questions, and then frustratingly doesn’t know how to reach a satisfying resolution. Even so, thanks to the nimble handling of the material by director Joseph Kosinski (*Top Gun: Maverick, TRON: Legacy*) and a larger-than-life, charismatically chilling performance from star Chris Hemsworth, there’s still plenty to enjoy.

*Spiderhead* is a state-of-the-art penitentiary located on a remote island far from the prying eyes of civilization, more a high-tech resort than a prison. The inmates have volunteered to be test subjects for an array of top-secret psychotropic cocktails designed to alter users’ consciousness and control their physical actions. They are allowed the freedom to wander around the facility and spend their time as they choose, knowing that any infraction will result in their immediate expulsion and a return to a maximum-security penal institution for the remainder of their sentence.

It’s all run by the enigmatic, unrelentingly pleasant Steve Abnesti (Hemsworth), and he makes it his mission to treat each inmate as if they were his best friend. His star guinea pig is Jeff (Miles Teller). The young man is incarcerated for committing manslaughter while driving under the influence, and he views being a test subject as a form of penance that will hopefully stop others from following in his deadly footsteps. He authorizes Abnesti to give him all sorts of viral chemical cocktails, each bringing forth a wide variety of emotional states, from object fear to overwhelming lust, not to mention numerous psychological pit stops in-between.

The basic plot points aren’t particularly surprising. *Spiderhead* isn’t what it appears to be. Abnesti’s goals aren’t as altruistic as claims. Key tests will go tragically wrong, and Jeff will learn horrifying truths that make him question everything he’s approved. It all builds to a psychological battle of wills between prisoner and warden, every emotion augmented but whose authenticity is made more difficult to believe because of the drugs coursing through each man’s veins.

When Reit and Verbinski’s (*Zombieland*) adaptation of George Saunders’ short story *Escape from Spiderhead* focuses on the relationship between Jeff and Abnesti, the film excels. When it spends time looking at the former’s drunken accident that landed him behind bars or his romantic relationship with fellow inmate Lissy (a determined Jerneika Sanioti), sadly the pair’s work comes up a little short. There is also the logical rushed climax to be dealt with, the final minutes moving at such a breakneck pace that the whole film comes dangerously close to descending into nonsensical chaos.

Granted, that may be the point. The sense of Abnesti is testing induce a mixture of psychedelic pandemonium that, in spite of the scientist’s claims otherwise, grow increasingly out of anyone’s control. Up is down. Left is right. Time becomes abstract. Fear is an illusion. Sexual attraction is a figment of the imagination. It’s all in pursuit of subordinating free will and creating blissful drones who would never dream of harming themselves or others, even if that means erasing the idiosyncrasies that make each person unique.

Hemsworth is outstanding. Abnesti is the type of character who plays directly to the actor’s strengths. The screenplay relies upon his sense of self-effacing humor, his clever, cocksure confidence, and his athletically awkward physicality. Kosinski gives Hemsworth the freedom to draw the viewer in with casually debonair indifference before lowering the boom and showcasing his true Orwellian colors. This makes Abnesti a chillingly magnetic villain, and if the film has any lasting resonance, it is almost entirely because of him.

It’s a shame the final act is an unadventurous letdown. There are only so many places this scenario can go, and unfortunately Reit and Verbinski take the most obvious route. Because of that, it feels as if Kosinski made the calculated decision to speed through the finale, thinking that momentum might create the tension that’s been unintentionally diluted courtesy of the banal familiarity of the climactic plot developments.

*Does it work? Not really, but due to Kosinski’s skills behind the camera and Hemsworth’s smarmy sweaty, paranoid charm in front of it, the thriller comes awfully close to being a success. There is something grand about seeing Abnesti held accountable for what he’s done, and the redemption arc for Jeff and Lissy isn’t without its positive aspects. While *Spiderhead* is far from perfect, I’m still glad I gave it a look. Ultimately, that’s what matters most.*
Whimsically weird *Lightyear* is an entertaining toy story

by Sara Michelle Fetters
SGW Staff Writer

*LIGHTYEAR*

Theaters

Pixar's *Lightyear* is a bit strange. In some ways, it is as daring as anything the studio has ever produced, even up there with the likes of *WALL-E*, *Inside Out*, and *Turning Red*. In others, it's nothing more than an innuous, amusingly harmless thrill in the vein of *The Good Dinosaur* or any of the three-Cars adventures.

The reason for this has everything with the conceits behind this animated sci-fi escape. The idea fuelling this interstellar effort is that "Lightyear" is the movie that Andy from *Toy Story* watched in the summer of 1995. It instantly became his favorite film, and so it's no wonder he was so excited when he received a Buzz Lightyear action figure to add to his prized toy collection later that year on Christmas morning.

That means *Lightyear* is a crazy piece of epic lunacy, in that it isn't a *Toy Story* spinoff and it isn't a continuation of the popular television series *Buzz Lightyear of Star Command* from the early 2000s. Instead, it is a movie inside a movie, one made to fit within the kid-friendly nation picture it is supposed to be a part of but also constructed to lovingly imitate similar genre efforts of the actual year in which it was supposed to have been released.

So it's a little bizarre. But, because it is a 1990s-style action film, because it is purposefully something of a convoluted track built upon an understandably creaky foundation, Pixar's latest also doesn't say or do a lot that's innovative. It doesn't make a lasting impression, and while it's a heck of a lot of fun in the moment, days later I discovered that I was fondly giggling more about the fact it exists than about anything substantive.

*Images courtesy of Disney*

While it has nothing to do with the quality of the film itself, there is also the slightly annoying fact that *Lightyear*, not *Soul*, *Luca*, or *Turning Red*—each substantially more ambitious ventures in which Pixar took big swings—gets a theatrical release, whereas those three were shuffled off to Disney+ as if they were forgettable afterthoughts.

That shouldn't bother me. But I'd be lying if I didn't admit otherwise, and it's hard not to hold it against the studio that the film that feels more like a cringe throwaway deserving of debuting on a streaming service is the one to end up on 4,000-plus domestic screens on its opening weekend.

Admittedly, holding that against the film is unfair. This flight of fancy can be a heck of a lot of fun. Director Angus MacLane (*Finding Dory*) and the rest of the creative team have come up with a fast-paced, visually stunning lark that audiences, especially younger viewers, are almost certain to enjoy. There's enough artistic joie de vivre to make this jovial what-if scenario worthwhile, and—taking into consideration the impressively immersive sound design and Michael Giacchino's (*The Batman*) thunderous score—on the biggest screen possible.

Trapped on a strange planet 4.2 light-years from Earth, Space Ranger Buzz Lightyear (voiced by Chris Evans) makes it his mission to get commander Alisha Hawthorne (Uzo Aduba) and the rest of his ship's crew of scientists home, no matter what the cost. But while each attempt to test this new hyperdrive system is five minutes to him, back down on the planet, years pass. Hawthorne and the rest of Buzz's shipmates make full lives for themselves, including getting married, having children, and building a thriving community, while his only companion is a mechanical cat named Sox (Peter Sohn).

In some ways, what is most impressive about all of this is that MacLane and company do make an honest-to-goodness 1990s action flick in the vein of *Speed*, *Armageddon*, *Twister*, or *Con Air*. It moves at the same breakneck pace. It takes fanciful leaps in logic that are as cartoonish as they are endearing. It presents larger-than-life characters who are allowed to be silly and heroic, often at the same time.

There's not a ton more to add. *Lightyear* is nonsense, but it is frequently entertaining nonsense, and it's hard for me to walk up the energy to get all that annoyed at its shortcomings or mistakes. Besides, even if it isn't exceptional, Pixar's latest is still a weirdly beguiling endeavor that's far more creatively enterprise than it will get credit for.

To infinity and beyond? Hardly, but *Lightyear* does achieve lift-off, and that in and of itself isn't too bad.
MACLANE
continued from cover

I briefly sat down with MacLane to chat about his film, the challenges it presented, and the aspects about its production he's especially proud of. Here are the edited transcripts of our 10-minute conversation:

Sara Michelle Fetter: You've probably been asked this 25 billion times and are tired of the question, so we'll get it out of the way: Why this story? What was it that made you want to tell the tale of Buzz Lightyear the person, instead of the toy?
Angus MacLane: I wanted to make a movie that felt like the ones I loved when I was a kid. The sci-fi genre pictures that I grew up with really inspired me to be a filmmaker, and I wanted to do the same for our new generation. I'd been connected to Buzz since I started at Pixar in 1997, but I'd always felt like his backstory — although it was an amalgam of the genre films that I had grown up with — had a potential for an interesting sci-fi universe to be explored.

A Buzz story would allow me to do a sci-fi movie in the tone that I was interested in. That's all. I wanted it to feel like a Toy Story. It would be much more of a straightforward, hard sci-fi movie punctuated with character and comedy.

SMF: For audiences, I do feel that it takes them a second to realize this isn't a Toy Story movie. It's not even Buzz Lightyear of Star Command. Lightyear is its own thing, made in the style of those 1990s action films. Was that a difficult concept to convince Pixar to go with?
AM: It took some convincing to bring people over to understand what I was doing. But Pixar was always supportive of it. It always had a tough road as far as making it. It's an unusual concept, to be sure, but it has the benefit of being a very personal story and from a very specific point of view. I think you can't get very far with random genericness. I think, when you're going to make a movie like this, it needs to have something consistent about it. That was always my goal. The movie we ended up with is the movie that I wanted to make, which is really nice.

SMF: It's a balancing act. You're making a movie in that style of those films that you loved back in the '90s, but it still has to play and appease modern audiences, especially kids. What was the balance like to make sure that you were hitting all of those buttons? Was it even something that you were thinking about?

AM: I didn't think much about the kids at all, honestly. I just sort of thought, "What would I like?" Then you test-screen to make sure that kids are getting it. You make adjustments as needed.

It's hard to chase the concept of "modern audiences" in the sense that when you start the movie, by the time you finish it, the audience will have aged 20 years. [laughs]

All that time-shuffle stuff is based around film production. It takes so long to make these movies. When you finish, you're like, everything's changed. It's just this thing that you're always battling. All you have is this mission, this mythical mission that never really ends, and so you need to realize that the most important thing is spending time with people.

SMF: Exactly. Buzz's journey is that he's so centered on saving everyone, he doesn't get to live a life. His discovery at the end of what living actually means and encompasses, I think, is very powerful. What is the message that you're hoping that audiences take away from this journey?
AM: I think the smart thing to say, or the poignant thing to say, would be that I hope people realize not to focus too much on the past or worry too much about the future, but to live in the now, that's fairly aspirational. But honestly? The thing I want audiences to take away from the movie is, "That was awesome!"

I think that was the feeling that I got from the movies of my youth. I hate to use the term "thrill ride," but there's a sense of momentum here. Star Wars is interesting because people often focus on the details, but the narrative momentum of the original Star Wars is incredible.

I'm not trying to compare the movie to Star Wars, but there's something about that film that is really aspirational as a filmmaker. It's interesting to see how that momentum generates this kind of feeling. When you finish Star Wars, you're like, wow! I want to see that again. That's fascinating to me.

SMF: Talk about the visuals. This is the first Pixar film animated to be in IMAX, and some of those visuals are stunning.
AM: Thank you! The movie is exactly the way I thought it was going to look in the beginning, so it's hard for me to chart when it became clear to everyone else. It's like you're working on a painting that has been covered in sort. I know what it looks like, but not everyone can see it, and so you're going to kind of remove it carefully. Then it reveals itself to be this fresco.

The look of it was in trying to chase a cinematic, warm look that CG doesn't do very well. What happens in CG is everyone has to make everything so they can see their work. They want to see it. Often things are overt and you have too much information. To me, the movies I always gravitated toward were things where you couldn't see everything and your eye was really directed. That's something that we worked really hard on, to make it feel like your eye was directed in the right way and limiting information to the audience learns in and gets into.

SMF: I would be remiss if I do not bring up Commander Hawthorne's journey in the film. How important was it for you to have her story in there and have it be part of Buzz's tale but not a focal point of it?
AM: That's the challenge. For me, representation is so important, but it's not substantial enough and it feels like an afterthought, then it reads like tokenism. It was always a goal to have the character be substantial.

Alisha's Queerness... did a couple of really nice things for us. One, the representation is something that was personal to me and I believe in. But additionally, I did not want to have Buzz have a romantic relationship. I noticed that whenever we veered toward that or implied that, it felt weird. I think that Buzz is better when he's not doing things for romance. It didn't quite feel right.

By making Alisha explicitly Queer and having that be something that Buzz was aware of, and it was just normal, it solidified their relationship. Additionally, showing her life — and I wish it wasn't as revolutionary as it is — was a way to show something that he was missing from his life. It solidified what their relationship was so. This was good narratively and socially, I think.

SMF: At the end of the day, what do you hope audiences take away from the film? What do you want them talking about?
AM: I just want them to have a good time. It's great to read reactions from audiences. It's pretty much now like, "I've seen it twice. That was awesome." People get into it.

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NLRB supports baristas
Asks federal court to order Starbucks to play fair

by Mike Andrew
SGN Staff Writer

For the third time since December, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has asked a federal court to order Starbucks to stop interfering with a unionization drive in its US stores.

The NLRB is the agency charged with overseeing national labor laws, including providing a fair and free process for employees to form unions at their workplace.

The first filing sought to stop Starbucks from unfair labor practices including retaliation against pro-union workers at its Buffalo, New York store — the first to unionize in the latest round of organizing.

Since then, more than 200 US stores have petitioned the NLRB to hold union elections — so many, in fact, that the NLRB now faces a serious backlog of unionization requests. At least 151 stores have already voted to unionize.

The latest NLRB filing also involves the Buffalo store. The NLRB’s regional director in Buffalo filed the petition for federal court intervention on June 21. It asks the court to order Starbucks to reinstate seven Buffalo employees it says were unlawfully fired for trying to form a union.

The NLRB also seeks to order Starbucks to bargain with employees at a store where the NLRB-sponsored union election was tainted by Starbucks’ intimidation tactics.

In its petition, the NLRB charged Starbucks with numerous violations of US labor law in Buffalo, including surveilling employees about unionization plans by listening in to conversations on their headsets, promising higher pay and better benefits if they didn’t unionize, and interrogating them for fearing unionization.

The NLRB’s petition is not confined to the Buffalo store. However, it also asks the court to order Starbucks to stop a number of anti-union tactics at all of its US stores, including:

- offering benefits to non-union stores;
- threatening reprisals for employees who support unionization;
- refusing to bargain with stores that have voted to unionize;
- temporarily or permanently closing stores.

Earlier this month, Starbucks announced plans to permanently close a store in Ithaca, New York, that had voted to unionize.

The company cited “business reasons” for the closure, but workers at the store said the company is retaliating for their labor activism. Starbucks, which operates 8,000 US stores, says it opens and closes locations regularly and bases its decisions on staffing and other problems at the store.

TEXAS continued from cover

Texas Republicans also said they “oppose all attempts to validate transgender identity.” This includes proposed criminal penalties for anyone providing gender-affirming medical treatment for a patient under 21 years of age.

While the new platform received overwhelming support, many delegates were opposed. “We’re the Republican Party of Texas,” one delegate said in protest. “We’re not the Westboro Baptist Church.”

On the other hand, a delegate said she supports the plank calling homosexuality “abnormal behavior, because it is.”

In addition to the anti-LGBTQ language, convention managers barred the Houston chapter of Log Cabin Republicans — the GOP’s LGBTQ group — from setting up a literature table in the hall.

The LCR struggled to express its disappointment while at the same time sticking to its own attitude toward the GOP and its leaders.

“Log Cabin Republicans have repeatedly demonstrated our commitment to individual liberty, limited government, fiscal responsibility, and a strong national defense,” said LCR Houston president Chris Halilhodzic in a statement to KXAN, a local TV station.

“LCR thanks Melanie Trump, Donald Trump Jr., and the allies we encounter from across Texas for supporting our inclusion in the Republican Party. We will never stop advancing the rich voice of LGBT conservatives in this country. And we will never stop growing our party’s tent to ensure its success for years to come.”

“[These are just] crazy people,” Michael Cargill, acting chair of the Log Cabin Republicans of Texas, said of the convention.

“It’s a small minority of people that are being an, um, Christian-like and saying this hateful language...”

"It’s not their job to judge anyone," he continued. "That’s up to the Lord to judge. They need to dig deep into the Bible, spend a little time in church on Sunday, and listen to what the Lord says about loving all of his children.”

The far-right convention attendees do not represent "the majority of the GOP," Cargill added. According to KXAN-TV, state GOP convention-goers tend to be the furthest right of an already far-right political party.

This was the same convention where Republican Sen. John Cornyn was heckled and booed for his work on bipartisan gun safety legislation. The Cornyn incident occurred the day before the platform was approved.
North Idahoans are praising the fast actions of the police department for preventing what could have turned out to be a violent and egregious attack.

"I am grateful that [Coeur d'Alene] Police Dept. was prepared to take action to protect area residents and visitors, including the LGBTQ+ community," Idaho state Rep. John McCluskey told the SGN.

"Every time that oppressed communities are attacked, we must continue to respond with resilience, like those who continued to hold the CDL Pride event. Every person holds dignity, and our LGBTQ+ community adds beauty to our diverse world."

Involvement with white supremacist group

The equipment confiscated by police included shields, shin guards, and at least one smoke grenade. Reports from the scene also confirmed that the men were dressed similarly, all wearing khaki pants, blue shirts, and hats with plastic inside them — a uniform many have come to associate with the internal terrorist group Patriot Front.

While Coeur d'Alene police are still investigating the event, along with help from the FBI, there seems to be good evidence that the men were affiliated with Patriot Front. The organization's leader, Thomas Ryan Roussea, was among those arrested.

Among the men arrested, only one was actually from Idaho. The rest had traveled from other states, including Texas, Utah, Washington, Colorado, and Alabama. While it is unclear why they chose North Idaho as the location for their riot, some theorize that Patriot Front could be attempting to restore the old Aryan Nations group that used to gather in the area.

One man from Missouri, with a previous record of defacing a mural in St. Louis depicting famous Black Americans, has already obtained legal counsel. His attorney is defending his presence in Idaho on Saturday as a protected right to free speech.

Gay Welsh fans boycott World Cup after qualifying

The BBC reported on June 10 that Gay couple Seirliol and Jamie Davies-Hughes, both of whom support Wales, will not be traveling to Qatar for this year's World Cup, despite their team qualifying for the first time in 64 years.

"Before my husband and I go on holiday, the last thing we do is Google Gay rights in that country," said Seirliol Davies-Hughes. "That's something that straight people do not have to do, but it's something that we do every time, and it's remarkable how many countries that people go to regularly aren't safe for people like us, and Qatar is definitely one of those.

"There have been messages of inclusion, but like many other fans, the Davies-Hugheses aren't convinced. "This is the clearest and most blatant example of sportswashing I can think of," said Seirliol, meaning Qatar was using sports to improve its international image.

"If this was the women's World Cup, then a large percentage of the players are Gay or Bi," Davies-Hughes continued. "It went on. "So the idea that Welsh female players can't go to support their team is as ridiculous as the World Cup since it's completely unacceptable."
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