

Arts & Entertainment



DISCOVER WESTFIELD BY DISCOVERING FINE ART...Jane H. Annis of Westfield is one of many local artists who will be exhibiting their original work at the Westfield Art Association's "Art in Westfield" Sidewalk Art Show & Sale on Saturday, October 7, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the sidewalks of downtown Westfield. The raindate will be Saturday, October 14. Artistic demonstrations and musical performances will also be held in the downtown throughout the day. The show is part of the "Discover Westfield" promotion that is sponsored by the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Westfield Corporation.

Fashion Show To Benefit Scholarships

CLARK - The Gran Centurion Twig of Rahway Hospital invites all to attend "Hats Off to Fashion," a fashion show which will be held on Wednesday, November 1, at 7 p.m. at the Gran Centurions in Clark. Fashions from Talbots of Westfield will be modeled by Twig members. Petties and large sizes of women's apparel and accessories will be modeled. Members of the Key Club of Arthur L. Johnson Regional High School have volunteered to help Twig members with this fundraiser. Tickets cost \$10, which includes dessert and coffee. All proceeds will aid the Rahway Hospital Nursing Scholarship program. The Gran Centurion Twigs have been awarding Nursing Scholarships for over 30 years. For tickets and information, please call Kaye Guarino at (732) 381-2008.

Westfield Symphony to Offer Performances in Caravan Event Throughout Today

WESTFIELD - The Westfield Symphony Orchestra will take its show on the road today, September 28, to perform "Caravan" programs throughout Union County. The Orchestra will present a program entitled "The Language of Music - An Introduction to Opera" which includes a version of Humperdinck's *Hansel & Gretel*. The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders has designated the Westfield Symphony Orchestra as the county's official "Orchestra in Residence." In that capacity, the Orchestra will perform at two grammar schools, a hospital and a senior citizens center. Yesterday, the Symphony performed at Robert Gordon School Gymnasium in Roselle Park for

third and fourth graders. The ensemble also performed at Connecticut Farms School in Union for the same age group. Today, the Westfield Symphony Orchestra will perform for the Children's Specialized Hospital in Fanwood and the Peterstown Senior Citizen Center in Elizabeth. The singers/performers in the program include Emily Wigod, Maureen Francis, Shelly Watson and Timothy Truschel, under the stage direction of Randal Hoey and Music Conductor David Wroe. The musicians include Byung-Kook Kwak, Marilyn Gibson, Kenneth Burward-Ho, Eliot Bailen, Vince Carano and Shaung Guo. Each performance of the famed fairy tale *Hansel & Gretel* will last approximately one hour.

Celebration Singers Set Children's Chorus Auditions October 3

CRANFORD - The Celebration Singers will hold auditions for their children's chorus on Tuesday, October 3, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Cranford United Methodist Church, located on the corners of Lincoln and Walnut Avenues. Children, ages 9-13, are welcome to audition for this tuition-free chorus directed by Khy Garner.

The group performs a variety of music ranging from classical pieces to Broadway show tunes. Rehearsals are held Tuesdays from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Cranford United Methodist Church. In addition to the annual holiday performance, scheduled for December 8 and 9, the Celebration Singers also perform at municipal events, church functions, award banquets and parks to help raise funds for charitable organizations.

Godspell Will Open Season At Cranford Dramatic Club

CRANFORD - The Cranford Dramatic Club, 78 Winans Avenue, Cranford will open its 2000-2001 season with the musical *Godspell*. Based on the Gospel according to Matthew, this modern and contemporary retelling is a joyous celebration of music, mime, comedy and slapstick.

Performances will be held on Fridays and Saturdays, October 13, 14, 20, 21, 27 and 28 at 8 p.m. All tickets are \$15.

Janice Lynn Schuhan is both Director and Choreographer. Arlene Wachstein is Assistant Director, while Alissa Corritone is Musical Director and Anajnette Valiante serves as Vocal Director.

Art Kusiv is Stage Manager and Liz Howard is the Producer.

The cast includes John Schweska as Jesus, Rick Brown as Judas, Matthew Nazzaro as Matthew, Tiffany Wilson as Tiffany, Melissa Loderstedt as Melissa, Matt Beams as Matt, Sandy Howard as Sandy, Ginger Burd as Ginger, F.J. De Robertis as F.J. and Molly Frieri as Molly.

The ensemble includes Jenn Eisenberg, Marie Losavio, Matteo Guasconi, Kevin Kessler, Charles Del Riscoe, Hallie Walters and Christina Koller.

For reservations and further information, please call (908) 276-7611.

Little Opera Company Plans To Bring Big Talent to Area

WESTFIELD - The Little Opera Company of New Jersey, along with The Baroque Orchestra of Boonton, announced their performances of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* to be held on Saturday, October 28, at 8 p.m. at The Presbyterian Church of Westfield and

on Sunday, November 5, at 2 p.m. at the auditorium of Boonton High School in Boonton.

The opera, which will be conducted by Maestro Robert Butts, will be narrated by star Celeste Holm.

The cast of *The Marriage of Figaro* includes soprano Victor Tralongo, bass Frank Basile, mezzo-soprano Barbara Bruening and 15-year-old Katherine Spadora. Mr. Basile has performed with The Metropolitan Opera. Mr. Tralongo won The Merola Competition. Ms. Bruening performs with The New Jersey State Opera. Katherine is the winner of The Crescent Avenue Young Musicians Competition.

Along with the full orchestra and adult chorus, *The Marriage of Figaro* will star singers and instrumentalists ages 8 to 18 from around the state who were chosen by audition to participate.

Funding for this program has been provided by the HEART Grant of Union County.

For tickets and more information, please call (908) 654-2006. Tickets are \$25 for general admission, \$15 for senior citizens and students and children under 12 are admitted without charge.

Senior Citizens Invited to View Victor/Victoria

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Scotch Plains Senior Citizen Advisory Committee is offering the opportunity for theater-goers to attend a performance of Blake Edwards' *Victor/Victoria* at the Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn on Sunday, November 12, at 2 p.m.

The cost is \$43 for residents, who may register starting on October 2, and \$45 for non-residents, who may register beginning on October 9. The ticket cost includes bus transportation.

The bus will leave from the Municipal Building Parking Lot at 12:30 p.m. and return immediately after the performance. All registrations must be made in Room No. 113 of the Municipal Building, 430 Park Avenue, Scotch Plains.

Amish Quilts

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Another delightful handiwork, ranging from \$25-\$26, was the "Collapsible Basket." Spiraling wood turns into a basket large enough to hold fruit, bread, candies or decorative items. Baskets came in the shape of pigs, Christmas trees, pineapples, and other favorite forms.

Meanwhile, tasty sandwiches and hot dogs were on tap from the Armory kitchen - offered by a few gutsy people who belted from the corner to lure consumers in. Jarred Amish fare - from Chow Chow to Fruit Jellies and Jams - were all provided for sale by the Kitchen Kettle Village, a staple in Lancaster County.

The Bentons have been taking their Amish Country Quilts & Crafts show on the road for 13 years, ever since Ms. Benton established the business to conduct quilt sales country-wide.

The Benton enterprise has reached Rochester, White Plains, Stony Brook in New York, Annandale, Va., Phoenix, Ariz., Lowell, Mass., Raleigh, N.C., Austin, Tex., Seattle and Spokane, Wash., Colorado Springs, Colo. and Hayward and Roseville, Calif.

Your Feedback Is Valuable to Us: michelle@goleader.com

POPCORN™ Almost Famous: Nearly Perfect

By Michael S. Goldberger
One Popcorn, Poor • Two Popcorns, Fair • Three Popcorns, Good • Four Popcorns

4 popcorns

A colleague on the city beat comes running up to me: "I've just seen a great movie."

I remark: "So have I." Each certain that we are speaking of the same film, practically in unison we both ask: "Almost Famous?" The answer is affirmative. All that remains now is to discuss the film and exchange notes. This way I can steal his good ideas. You'll enjoy doing the same with your pals.

The fellow scribe and I are from different generations. So I am gratified by his approval of the film. The teenaged ticket seller the night before offered a like opinion, but I still wasn't sure.

Since writer-director Cameron Crowe's extraordinary coming-of-age story set in 1973 speaks so eloquently and enchantingly to my Baby Boomer sensibilities, I feared that a nostalgic-driven egocentricity might be clouding my objectivity.

But the words "transcend" and "universal" are so readily appropriate in describing this saga about an aspiring, 15-year-old journalist's watershed experience whilst touring with a rock 'n' roll band.

For starters, it is certainly one of the finest movies about the life and times of a rock 'n' roll band. But it's much more than just a backstage drama. And if you accept this humble auditor's theory that the 1960s actually last until Nixon's resignation and the Patty Hearst case, then you'll also agree that *Almost Famous* provides the most accurate, unaffected depiction of that era since *The Graduate*.

Expert art direction assures that Mr. Crowe's loving, semi-autobiographical paean to a special time and place in his formative past is not riddled with those absurdly self-conscious trappings that have come to depict the period. You know the drill: Put everybody in a pair of polka-dot elephant bells stolen from a later episode of "The Brady Bunch," put a joint in their hands and have them say "Hey, man" ad nauseum.

Rather, Crowe successfully incisives a poignant slice of life. The attention to detail is commendable. For instance, the re-creation of Max's Kansas City, a watering hole in New York City where rockers went to see and be seen, is downright

spooky. And by not attempting to jampack all the aspects of a historical epoch into a one-stop survey of the 1960s, the way several made-for-TV efforts have essentially trivialized those years, it leaves room for more important things...like story and characterization.

Excellent acting all around propels the captivating action throughout this warmly inspired tale. Yet Frances McDormand (*Fargo*) is the only brand name in the ensemble. Reminiscent of the matricarchs you find in a John Irving novel, she's aces as the wonderfully wacky Elaine Miller, existentialist, college professor and over-protective mother of William (Patrick Fugit), our aspiring rock reporter.

Surprisingly accelerating him through his academic career, she has neglected to tell her exceptionally bright son that he is three years younger than his classmates. She is finally forced to come clean at the threatening insistence of Billy's sister, Anita (Zoey Deschanel), who, in order to escape this dominating force, runs off and becomes a stewardess. This gives Mom more time to smother our young hero.

But Elaine, though hell-bent on having her prodigy become a lawyer, is a loving mother despite her nuttiness. And she's no dummy. Hoping that this is just an adolescent phase that too shall pass, the worry-wart drives Billy to his maiden gig and issues her first of many anti-drug warnings.

Later, after he gets an assignment from *Rolling Stone* magazine to travel with the up-and-coming group, "Stillwater," her long-distance admonitions achieve a running gag fame. But no drug will prove as mind-altering or intoxicating as the real-life odyssey Billy is about to experience.

Its premise established, *Almost Famous* becomes a sociologically fascinating road movie peopled by an exuberantly realized milieu of rock 'n' roll types. Even if you've spent the scantiest amount of time among this sub-culture, you'll recognize the authenticity Crowe achieves through his splendidly drawn characters.

But the two most important portrayals are those that combine with Billy to form the plot's subtle love triangle. There is Billy Crudup in a sensational turn as Russell Hammond, the upstaging, lead guitar Adonis that no successful band can be without. And then there is Kate Hudson as Penny Lane, at once the Emily Post and Irma La Douce of groupies.

But like all those who become superstars of an otherwise suspect avocation, she decries the use of the term groupie. Instead, she and her Lolita-like sorority, who wholeheartedly view themselves as the only true affluents of their musical heartthrobs, prefer to be known as Band-Aids. Wise beyond her 16 years, Penny takes it upon herself to guide Billy through the mores and folkways of big time rock culture.

But he also has a journalistic mentor. Contributing a performance that has best supporting actor written all over it, Philip Seymour Hoffman is simply wonderful as Lester Bangs, the editor of a small rock 'n' roll magazine who gave Billy his start. Partly jealous, but also proud of his protégé's meteoric rise, he lectures him on ethics, objectivity, and the realities of their plight.

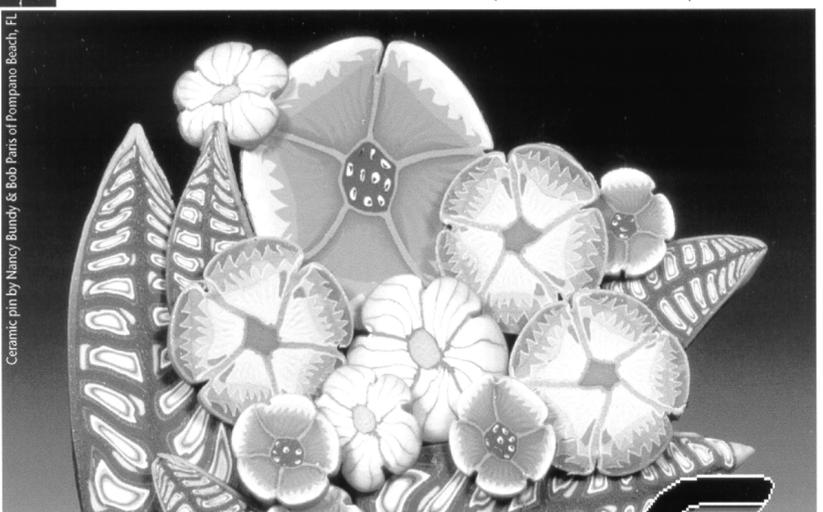
Remember, we're the uncool guys. We're the smart ones. They're the good-looking dudes. They get the chicks. Don't think you can be their friend," he warns. "That's how they get you. So just tell it like it is." And finally, noting the unwelcome incursions of big business and other factors, the aficionado bemoans the imminent death of rock 'n' roll as he knows it.

Of course, as young Mr. Miller's adventure in wonderland progresses, he can't help but be drawn in by the camaraderie so enticingly offered by the ultra-hip members of "Stillwater." It becomes increasingly apparent that within Lester's words of wisdom is all that one need know if they are to truly embrace this profession, let alone life in general.

And therein lies the nub of conflict in Crowe's tour de force that perplexes Billy as he tries to figure out what kind of a man he hopes to become. So we cheer for him without reservation. Because with totally award-worthy direction, entirely heartfelt writing and completely perfect performances, there is nothing almost about *Almost Famous*.

Almost Famous, rated R, is a Dreamworks and Columbia Pictures release directed by Cameron Crowe and stars Frances McDormand, Patrick Fugit and Kate Hudson. Running time: 122 minutes.

CO-SPONSORED BY UNION COUNTY BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS & THE DIVISION OF PARKS & RECREATION AND ROSE SQUARED PRODUCTIONS, INC.



FINE Art & Crafts

NOMAHEGAN PARK, CRANFORD
SPRINGFIELD AVE, ACROSS FROM UNION COUNTY COLLEGE

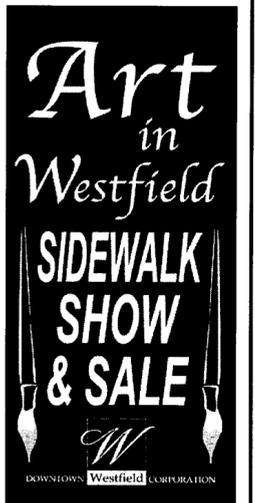
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OCT. 7-8 FREE • 10 A.M. - 5 P.M.
RAIN OR SHINE - PARK ACROSS THE STREET AT UNION COUNTY COLLEGE

Fine Art & Crafts at Brookdale Park, Montclair-Oct 21-22

Westfield Art Association



Saturday Oct. 7
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

(Raindate October 14)
Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce & Downtown Westfield Corporation

ORIGINAL ART DEMONSTRATIONS * MUSIC
Information:
Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce 908-233-3021
Westfield Art Association 908-232-7058