

# Arts and Entertainment

## The Dining Table

### BEANA'S MEXICAN RESTAURANT

988 St. Georges Avenue, Rahway, (732) 381-3233

By MICHELLE H. LePOIDEVIN  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Beana's Mexican Restaurant on St. Georges Avenue in Rahway gives an eye-ful of ambiance from multicolored paper streamers, banded patterned napkins, flashing chili and cactus lights and magnificent sombreros swinging from the ceiling. But little else tempts the eye or the tastebuds. After making reservations for what I was told was a "tough place to get into," I surprisingly had my pick of tables. However, this seems to be common for an early Sunday evening dinner.

A small white cup of thick and spicy salsa with a bowl of chips awaited me and my companion at our colorful table. Unfortunately, I found myself turning to this complimentary appetizer instead of my dinner as the evening went on. When I ordered a Cherry Coke for my beverage, the waitress warned me that the Cherry Coke syrup in the machine was not up to par and that she would get me a Coke instead if the syrup was still a problem.

On the bright side, Beana's offers a wide array of appetizers such as Black Bean Soup with scallions and Monterey Jack Cheese (\$2.95), Tijuana Nachos with your choice of chicken or beef and cheese, scallions, olives and tomatoes (\$6.95) and Jalapeno Poppers which are stuffed with Monterey Jack Cheese and served with sour cream and Pico de Gallo (\$5.95). A vegetarian version of the nachos with three cheeses is also available.

I ordered the Tostada (\$8.95) which offered a choice of chicken, seasoned beef or beans on a flat corn tortilla and topped with lettuce, olives, tomato, scallions and Jack cheese. The entrée also included a spicy rice with a choice of whole, black or refried beans and a side of sour cream.

The tortilla was soaked in the oil that oozed from the rice, making it soggy. The refried beans were heavy and pasty with little flavor and the cheese that topped it seemed surgically attached. A side of sour cream turned out to be a teaspoonful. I ended up having to share my companion's dollop.

Seasoned chicken nestled in a homemade corn masa topped with mole and Jack cheese was served up in the Tamale (\$8.95) which I ordered. The black beans were savory and the tamale was served lukewarm.

While we were sampling our fare, our waitress was reading off a list of specials which were available for the evening to the table behind us. Some of them sounded rather good, and although they were posted on small boards around the restaurant, it would have been beneficial to hear the specials from our waitress.

Still, we remained ever hopeful that dessert would keep our opinion of Beana's afloat. There had to be some redeeming quality in the promise of Beana's Homemade

Flan (\$3.50) or Aztec Cake - a crispy tortilla topped with ice cream (\$2.95). They must be delicious. I know I had heard and read

so much about them. After our waitress snatched our plates from the table, she announced, "Okay, then, I'll be bringing your check now." So much for asking us if we wanted coffee, tea or dessert. After the oversight, I was thoroughly disgusted.

The dining experience left much to be desired. Although the manager was polite and came over to the table to inquire about our meals, our waitress was not as accessible. She perched herself at the kitchen door and chatted with fellow waitresses. Meanwhile, my companion was trying to tame the fire that was rising in her mouth from her meal. Hey, what about those free refills? Waitress! Waitress! It took the manager to get the refill for her.

You can't ignore the generous offering of choices on the menu of entrees. The prices are moderate, ranging from \$6.95 to \$13.95, but this doesn't quite seem to match the quality of the food that comes to the table. No matter how colorful the presentation.

If you're looking for atmosphere, go to Beana's. If you're looking for attentive service and knock your socks off of Mexican, think twice. Oh, and be careful not to hit your head on the basket lampshade above your table.

### Guitar Bob, Carnaby Street to Take Stage Tonight at Village Green

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Scotch Plains Cultural Arts Committee will offer two performances on Thursday, August 5, in the Village Green.

Guitar Bob will take the stage from 7 to 7:45 p.m., singing songs from "Bob's Songs from the Kooky Jar."

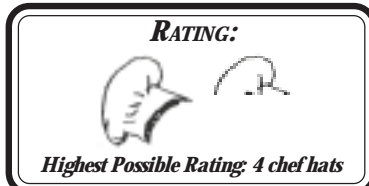
Carnaby Street, a British Invasion group, will play from 8 to 9:30 p.m., performing selections from U.S. and British bands of the 60s.

The concerts are free. The Scotch Plains Volunteer Firefighters Association will provide free birch beer.

The Cultural Arts Committee will raffish a framed Disney "Lady & The Tramp" limited edition seriel. Tickets will be on sale for \$5 each or three tickets for \$10.

The concert will be moved to the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School auditorium in the event of rain.

For more information, please call the Recreation Office at (908) 322-6700.



TRIBUTE AWARD...The Garden State Arts Center Foundation's sixth annual Francis Albert Sinatra Tribute to the Performing Arts was awarded to Foundation Chairwoman Marie Sevell of Scotch Plains during the benefit reception prior to the July 14 performance of Cher. Pictured, left to right, are: Foundation President Ronald R. Gravino, Marie Sevell and New Jersey Highway Authority Chairman Joseph E. Buckelew. The foundation raises money to fund free shows for New Jersey school children and senior citizens at the PNC Bank Arts Center.

### CLIP AND SAVE

## Union County Arts Center Announces 1999-2000 Season

RAHWAY - The line-up for the 1999-2000 season has been announced by The Union County Arts Center (UCAC) in Rahway. The following list includes the performers and programs which will be featured.

**Headliner Series**  
-Al Martino and the 21 Piece Spanish Eyes Orchestra will take the stage on Saturday, October 2.

-Billy Guy's Coasters, The Drifters and The Platters will perform music from the 50s and 60s on Saturday, October 23.

-Roberta Flack, R&B artist, will take the stage on Saturday, November 13.

-Country singer, Kathy Mattea, will perform on Friday, December 3.

-Three Dog Night will sing its hits, "Joy to the World" and "Old Fashioned Love Song" on Saturday, April 15.

-Wayne Newton will end the season with his performance on Saturday, May 6.

**Family Series**  
-A revival of the Broadway hit, Man of La Mancha will be performed from Friday, March 10, to March 25.  
-Scholastic's The Magic School Bus will entertain family audiences on Saturday, October 30. They will offer two performances of "A Bright Idea," a new program.

-A childhood favorite, Winnie-the-Pooh will be a musical celebration performed for children on Sunday, November 7.

-101 Dalmatians will invade UCAC on Sunday, January 9, and offer two performances for children.

-A celebration of folk stories from the Americas, Jack and the Fire Dragon will be presented on Saturday, March 11. As a special Family Week event, one free child's ticket will be offered with every adult ticket purchased.

-The Family Series will conclude with a new musical version of Black Beauty, a classic story by Anna Sewell on Sunday, April 2.

**Classical Music**  
-The Vienna Choir Boys will make

a holiday appearance on Friday, December 17.

-The Westfield Symphony Orchestra, the resident orchestra of Union County, will present three separate performances on Saturdays, October 9 (Invitation to Dance), February 12 (The Many Ways to Say I Love You) and April 1 (Something New, A Tribute and More).

-The Plainfield Symphony will make its first UCAC performance on Sunday, November 21.

-The Orchestra of St. Peter by the Sea will perform in the Rahway Hospital Foundation benefit on Wednesday, December 8.

**Weekday Matinees**  
-The Last Swing of the Century, a celebration of The Ink Spots. Guy Lombardo's Royal Canadians and the music of Benny Goodman, will be held on Tuesday, November 9.

-The Glenn Miller Orchestra will be welcomed at UCAC on Monday, February 7.

The classic film series at UCAC will also return this season. The Godfather, Young Frankenstein, From Here to Eternity, It's a Wonderful Life, Driving Miss Daisy, Mississippi Burning, Sunset Boulevard, Finian's Rainbow, Ben Hur and 2001: A Space Odyssey will be some of the films offered. There will also be a Hitchcock/Cary Grant Festival featuring North By Northwest and Vertigo. For more information or to receive a season brochure, please call (732) 499-8226.

The Union County Arts Center Ticket Central will be open for sales on Monday, August 16. Tickets may be purchased individually, although discounts are available for multiple show packages.

Tickets may be purchased by telephone with a Visa, Mastercard or Discover or in person at the Irving Street Box Office. Tickets are also available online through the Web site: www.ucac.org and through ETMTicket Kiosks located in the Menlo Park Mall and Edwards Supermarkets.

## Motown Sound to Be Featured At Echo Lake Park Festival

MOUNTAINSIDE - The Sensational Soul Cruisers will roll into Echo Lake Park in Mountainside with its special brand of Motown music on Wednesday, August 11, at 7:30 p.m. in the seventh concert of the Summer Arts Festival Concert Series.

The performance by the Sensational Soul Cruisers will be presented free of charge by the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders and sponsored by the Tosco Bayway Refinery.

"This group is extremely popular and they're a joy to hear," stated Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders Chairman Nicholas P. Scutari. "We are pleased to have them back for their sixth year in a row."

The 11-piece band has performed across the country in clubs, theaters and arenas. Members of the band include Walter "Sticks" Smith, Joe "Nappy" Martin, Eric "Teddy Bear" Ward, Stan Tartas, Jeff Dieterle, Jimmy Bevan, Joe Mack, Bill Wiens, John Gavin, Michael Hartsfield and "Screamin" Steve Barlotta.

Motown enthusiasts will hear music from the 50s to the 80s at the concert, including hits like "If You Don't Know Me By Now," "It's Your Thing," "Love Train," "Treat Her Like A Lady," and "Could It Be I'm Falling In Love?"

Concert goers should bring their own lawn chairs, blankets and picnic baskets. A refreshment stand will also be available at 6:30 p.m. The rain site for the concert will be Cranford High School in Cranford. Rain information is available by calling (908) 527-4900 or (908) 352-8410 after 3 p.m. on the day of the concert. For more concert information, please call the Union County Division of Parks and Recreation at (908) 527-4900.

### SPECIAL A&E NOTICE

If you are especially talented in art, music, dance, theater or any other form of art and entertainment, we would like to feature your talent in our section. You must be a resident of Westfield, Scotch Plains, Fanwood or Mountainside. For more information, please call Michelle H. LePoidevin at (908) 232-4407.

## Kid's Corner..... Puppeteers Plan Show At Trailside Center

MOUNTAINSIDE -- The Tuckers' Tales Puppet Theatre will present Once Upon a Planet on Wednesday, August 11, at 1:30 p.m. at Trailside Nature and Science Center in Mountainside.

The Tuckers' Tales Puppet Theatre is a Philadelphia-based performing company founded in 1981. Co-directors Marianne and Tom Tucker have performed at puppet, folk, ethnic and street festivals, and at craft fairs, shopping centers, theaters and schools around the country.

Audiences ranging in ages from small children to senior citizens have enjoyed the variety of styles skillfully displayed by these puppeteers. Presented by the Union County

Board of Chosen Freeholders, the Tuckers' Tales Puppet Theme performance of "Once Upon A Planet" is part of Trailside Nature & Science Center's summer Wednesday Matinee series.

The show is for families with children ages 4 years and up and tickets may be purchased on the day of the performance for \$4 per person.

For information about this and other programs, please call Trailside Nature & Science Center at (908) 789-3670. Trailside is a facility of the Union County Division of Parks and Recreation. The center is located in Watchung Reservation at 452 New Providence Road, Mountainside.

## POPCORN™ Inspector Gadget A Mechanical Failure

By Michael S. Goldberg

One Popcorn, Poor • Two Popcorns, Fair • Three Popcorns, Good • Four Popcorns, Excellent

### 1 & 1/2 popcorns

If you've seen Eyes Wide Shut and are planning on the Blair Witch Project for your next course of hefty fare, it might not be a bad idea to first clear the cinema palate with an innocuous serving of Inspector Gadget.

This will afford an opportunity to ingratiate yourself with the kids. And whether or not they enjoy this rather middling, live-action expansion of the animated television series, your readily transparent gesture is bound to be appreciated nonetheless.

Inspector Gadget should prove mindlessly amusing for child-toting adults only by virtue of its entirely inconsequential mien, while the colorful and upbeat hokum from Disney may offer a minor nostalgic appeal for those young teens who would otherwise be scavenging their parents' video rentals for the latest in R-rated contraband.

But be warned! The murder of robotics maven Artemus Bradford (Rene Auberjonois) right at the outset of the film, while establishing a necessity for the creation of super hero Inspector Gadget, might be too emotionally steep for the under-7 crowd.

Ostensibly a primmer version of the typical James Bond plot, director David Kellogg's technically astute but risk-free movie goes through the predictable motions. And while the high-end special effects required to make Matthew Broderick's Inspector Gadget a viable hero ratchets-up the production bill to \$80 million, the screenplay by Kerry Ehrin and Zak Penn is strictly bargain basement; ironic for a movie that celebrates inventiveness, there is nary a creative nod to story nuance.

Oddly, while Disney ventures good-sized dollops of schmaltziness in Tarzan, Inspector Gadget is strictly white bread. Still, there's plenty happening in this action-packed tale devoted to recounting just how the title character came into being.

Feeling beholden when security officer John Brown (Broderick) is critically injured trying to save her doomed Dad, at

the hospital Dr. Brenda Bradford (Joely Fisher) okay's rebuilding the wannabe cop with all the jiggers and gizmos the deceased scientist was developing. But who will pay for the expensive, rather experimental operation?

Here, the filmmakers feel the compelling need to give youngsters a mini-lesson on the virtues and wiles of venture capitalism as it relates to government services and the cost of labor. "Saturday Night Live's" Cheri O'Teri, in a fine little spin as the disingenuous, photo-op-hungry mayor of Riverton (gosh...wonder who served as her inspiration?), arranges public funding for the surgery that will transform Brown into Inspector Gadget.

Per Her Honor's win-win thinking, the security officer thereby realizes his life-long dream of becoming a cop; the police department is on its way to a robotic, strike-free work force; and, theoretically, at least, there's finally someone sleuth enough to catch dastardly Sanford Scolex, murderous megalomaniac personified, and his cretinous minions.

Rupert Everett's Scolex has more than a passing interest in the hardware that Professor Bradford made his life's work. A veritable Oil Can Harry, he is consumed by a desire to manufacture a super race of mechanical soldiers; they'll need neither food nor sleep and will always do what they're told.

World domination, anyone? But now he'll have Inspector Gadget to deal with. Problem is, Dabney Coleman in a basically lackluster turn as Police Chief Quimby is dead against the newfangled detective and won't give him a shot at the murder case. Added to that challenge, though Gadget can summon virtually any of 14,000 different devices to spring from his reconstructed limbs and torso including helicopter blades that readily emanate from his head, to be effective he's going to have to get the hang of his new superpowers.

Hence, most of what then follows is the robo-cop's mechanical misadventures. Motion picture protagonists as far back as Charlie Chaplin's Little Tramp have battled against the encroachments of technology, and Gadget's introspective travail at the dawn of genetic engineering is merely the latest, cutting edge update.

Asking for oil to spray from his digits by chanting, "Go, go, Gadget oil," he mistakenly soils an adversary with a gloppy jolt of toothpaste. Try to figure out why that inadvertency might be funny to a 9-year-old mind. Frightening.

Diverging from the source material in ways that may cause orthodox moppets to scream heresy, the film relegates side-kicks Penny (Gadget's niece, played by Michelle Trachtenberg) and her dog Brain to tertiary roles.

Instead, the second banana duties are assumed by the Gadgetmobile (voiced by D.L. Hughley), the movie's minor league homage to the Aston Martin DB5 in Goldfinger (1964), but with an attitude. You see, this talking set of wheels comes fully equipped with the chiding soul of an egotistical rap singer.

While undeniably true-blue beneath his hood, the wise-cracking machine doesn't hide a cynical impatience with his bumbling boss-in-training. Achieving few laughs, the home-boy allusion is a mite tired if not embarrassing.

Of course, what self-respecting children's film dars be seen without a pair of evil twins in tow, a sure-fire allegory for the good and bad in us all, n'est-ce pas? Perhaps sensing that, Inspector Gadget was short a few nuts and bolts in the plot department, the filmmakers inject the malevolent clone angle.

As Robogadget, the good inspector's diabolical double, at least Mr. Broderick gets to flash that wicked side of his, the one he unveiled to such critical acclaim in Election. But Miss Fisher doing overtime as Robobrenda, the party girl flip-side to the super cop's secret heartthrob, seems a curiously out-of-place delirium on the Madonna-tramp syndrome.

Yet, while there's a loose screw here and a badly thrown monkey wrench there, this movie's troubles are really quite basic. Like his great-grandfather the Tin Man, Inspector Gadget simply lacks a heart.

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Inspector Gadget, rated PG, is a Walt Disney Pictures release directed by David Kellogg and stars Matthew Broderick, Joely Fisher and Rupert Everett. Running time: 86 minutes.

## STATE OF THE ART

### Music

The Sensational Soul Cruisers will perform Motown music at Echo Lake Park on Wednesday, August 11, at 7:30 p.m. Clem & Alex and Eternally Elvis will take the stage on August 11 at 7 p.m. at Memorial Park in Berkeley Heights. Guitar Bob and Carnaby Street will perform this evening on the Village Green in Scotch Plains beginning at 7:30 p.m. Jewish Music with Oy Vey Klezmer will be performed at Friberger Park in Union this evening at 8 p.m. The Salaam Temple String Band will play at Mindowaskin Park in Westfield on Thursday, August 5, at 8 p.m.

The Crossroads in Garwood will welcome Brian Bellew to the stage this evening. The Hudson River Rats will perform on Friday, August 6. Day In A Box will play on Saturday, August 7. On Thursday, August 12, Bad Attitude will perform.

WATERLOO VILLAGE IN STANHOPE

will welcome The Indigo Girls will perform on Friday, August 6; Howie Mandel will take the stage there on Sunday, August 8 and Hootie and the Blowfish will perform on Friday, August 13. Tickets are available at all Ticketmaster outlets. For more information, please call (973) 347-0900.

### Literature

BARNES & NOBLE IN CLARK will host its Open Mike Poetry Night on Sunday, August 8, at 7 p.m. Roberta Rogow, mystery author of "The Spiteful Spiritualist" will appear for an evening of "Mystery, Iced Tea and Crumpets" on Tuesday, August 10, at 7:30 p.m.

### Mixed Bag

The Summit Summer Fair will be held on Saturday, August 7, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Downtown Summit. Arts, crafts and food will be featured.