

It's that honky-tonk woman ... 2A

Playing around on the air ... 6A

ARTS WEEK

february 18 - february 24

This Week's Best

today

•OTHELLO - the Shakespeare on Film series continues with this restored version of Orson Welles' classic film; UCSB Campbell Hall, 4 and 8 p.m.

friday

•THE GRACEFUL PUNKS will perform with Dirt and Oxidizer at Buster's on Hollister, 8:30 p.m.

saturday

•PUNK NITE at the Anaconda, with Face to Face, Guttermouth, Whitecaps and Rugburn

sunday

•THE BEST INTENTIONS, a Cannes grand-prize winning film by Sweden's Ingmar Bergman; UCSB Campbell Hall, 7 p.m.

monday

•WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY - although you celebrated the commemoration of the first president's birthday last week, it's actually today

tuesday

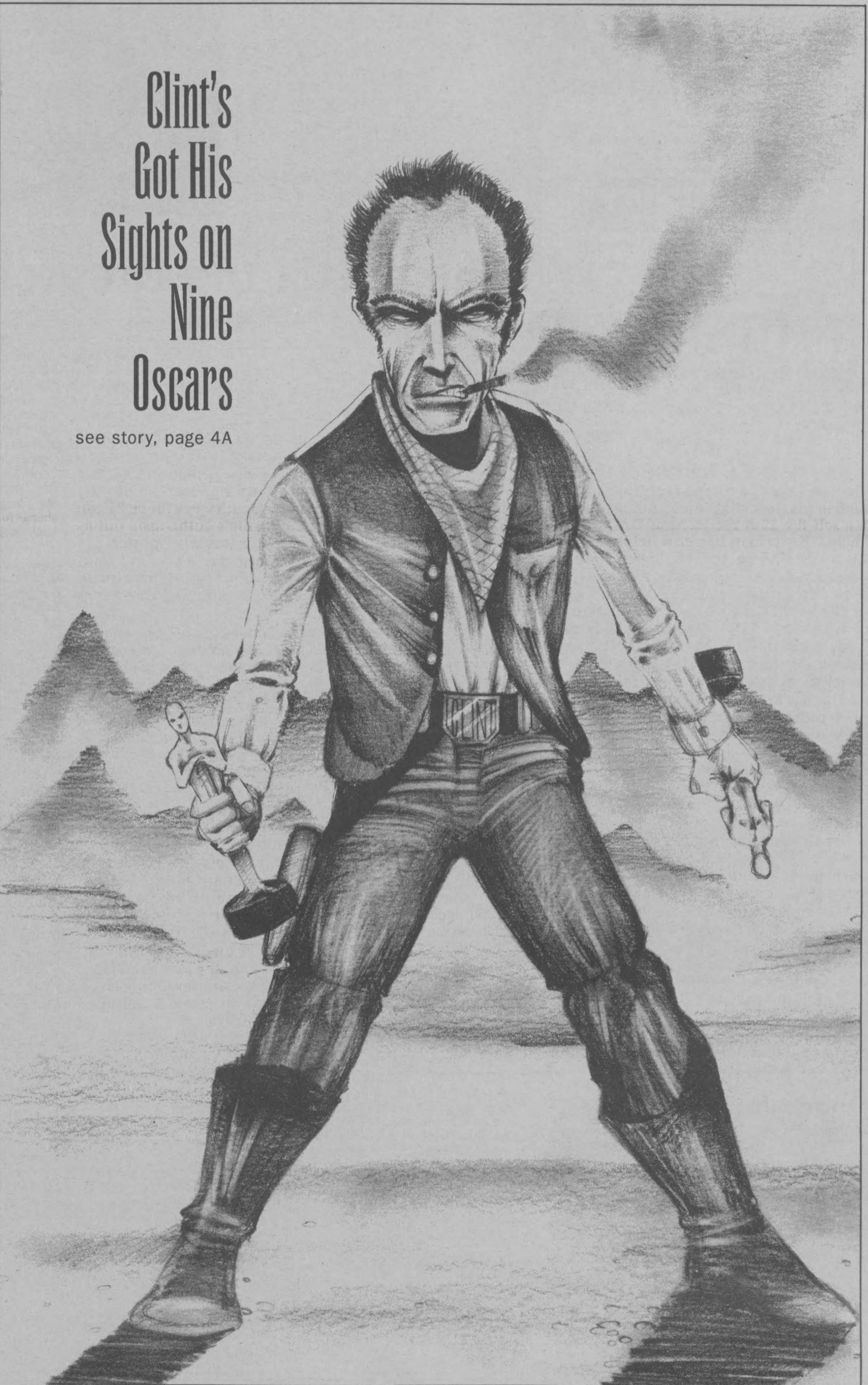
•SANTA BARBARA CHAMBER ORCHESTRA performs works by Ireland, Rachmaninoff, Barber and Barkok; the Lobero Theatre, 8 p.m.

wednesday

•BANFF FESTIVAL OF MOUNTAIN FILMS, featuring the best movies about mountain sports, outdoor adventure and spectacular nature; UCSB Isla Vista Theater, 7 p.m.

Clint's Got His Sights on Nine Oscars

see story, page 4A



MATT RAGLAND/Daily News

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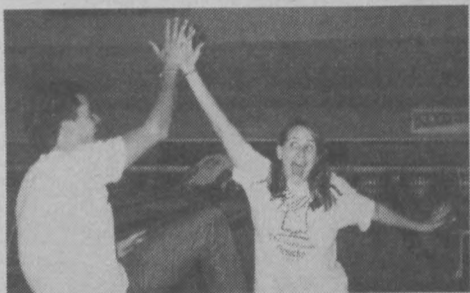
Spike's Party Schedule

- Thursday, Feb. 18 Liquid Sunshine 9-12pm
Friday, Feb. 19 John Lyle 9-12pm
Saturday, Feb. 20 Bill Fernberg 9-12pm
Sunday, Feb. 21 Late Night Happy Hour
Monday, Feb. 22 Regular Stuff
Tuesday, Feb. 23 Bill Fernberg 9-12pm
Wednesday, Feb. 24 Marv Green 9-12pm

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music review

"Mick Jagger — Probably the most successful woman in radio, Mick has been very close to marriage. She had the man, admitted she was very fond of him, but sadly sent him away — she couldn't bear to sacrifice her career."

— from the 1978
bio-album 'Some Girls'



This girl's a real harbinger.

She's Still the Greatest Siren

by Thor Garcia

Mick Jagger
Wandering Spirit
Atlantic

☆☆☆☆

Mick Jagger is the most beautiful woman in all of show business. Ambitious, delicious, bold and funny, Mick has for decades now served as the paradigm for the modern-day rock siren, earning the jealousy of the world's women, the near-universal admiration of men, and providing both jollies and a neo-formalist aesthetic framework for an entire generation of rock critics. Of course, there were the highly publicized romances with Truman Capote, Andy Warhol, David Bowie, and the messy interecine spats with the elusive Swede, Keith Richards and the dashing Bill Wyman — affairs that threatened to wreck the mercurial singer's career. But we've come to expect that from Mick — as well as to expect her irrepressible ability to rebound, which has been demonstrated time and again in her unflinching dedication to her art. As she herself described on the 1978 bio-album *Some Girls*: "Mick Jagger — Probably the most successful woman in radio, Mick has been very close to marriage. She had the man, admitted she was very fond of him, but sadly sent him away — she couldn't bear to sacrifice her career."

And so Mick is back — gorgeous, delicious and, well, sexier than ever, and with a new solo album, *Wandering Spirit*, a long-overdue showcase of all the stylings that have made Jagger the femme fantastic of the rock world. Teaming with devil producer Rick Rubin (Slayer, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Beastie Boys), Mick testifies on *Wandering Spirit* to the redeeming power of rock and issues a defiant yawp against those who would challenge her unparalleled mastery of the form. Even at age 49, Mick seems to say she is still the queen bee of rock's angry, divided hive.

The record is Mick's third effort apart from her erstwhile recording chums, the Rolling Stones, and as such it recalls many of the ensemble's finest and most memorable moments. *Wandering Spirit* glimmers with the fury and abandon of the Stones' hard-rocking masterpiece *Sticky Fingers*, it sways in feel-good remembrance of the country, funk, blues and gospel forays on such Stones masterworks as *Exile on Main Street*, *Black and Blue*, *Some Girls* and *Beggar's Banquet*. And, alluringly, Mick resurrects her addictive falsetto on two tracks, "Sweet Thing" and "I've Been Lonely For So Long," which lovingly updates the Stones' ground-breaking work on "Miss You" and "Emotional Rescue" nearly 15 years ago. She even dusts off her harmonica for the ferocious rocker "Mother of a Man," proving once more her matchless virtuosity and fluency in rock's rich and still vital traditions. Indeed, the song is a not-so-subtle re-

minder that Mick remains the mother of all rock front-women.

Mick has assembled a topflight group of studio musicians for *Wandering Spirit*. New guy-pals Flea of the Chili Peppers and handsome balladeer Lenny Kravitz sit in on a few tracks, asserting Mick's currency among the younger set. Her duet with rumored companion Kravitz on Bill Withers' "Use Me" is a delightful tribute to early '70s soul music, and Mick is at her savage best on the album's throbbing, Zeppelinized cover of James Brown's "Think." And there are several outright gems — from the country toe-tapper "Evening Gown," where Mick returns to a fave theme, the passage of time and beauty, to the joyful despair of "I've Been Lonely For So Long," Mick shows that her irony and mastery of rock composition remains undimmed.

The record's drumming, by studio hand Curt Bisquera, is relentless and lends the album a seething, slashing breakneck urgency, especially on the blistering tracks "Put Me in the Trash," "Wired All Night" and "Mother of a Man." A quartet of guitarists do passable Keith Richards on *Wandering Spirit* — Jimmy Rip, Frank Simis, Brendan O'Brien and Mick herself — and while the product is surely passable, one can only speculate on how these songs might have soared had Keith himself been asked to deliver the drunken, swaggering, cocaine-nightmare chops, many of which seem to have been written by Jagger with Keith in mind.

Indeed, the inevitable question *Wandering Spirit* raises is why Jagger didn't take these songs to the Stones in the first place, so close are they to that band's soul. But the Stones are rumored to be heading into the studio this summer, and if you take this record and multiply it by Keith's recent *Wicked As It Comes* — well, let's just say the libido is suitably engaged.

Lyricaly, Mick turns in a performance characteristic of her later period, which began with the 1983 Stones LP, *Undercover* — which is to say, Mick often has one hand in her Rimbaud and the other in her no-no place. On "Wired All Night," she is able to bellow, "I said a, hey, are you shooting to kill/ Hey, would I tell you a lie/ We'll be slamming tequilas, popping hydrogen/ And lose the coils and the kings that are wrecking my life" just as easily as she offers the clunking, "Life is a bitch, it's way too short/ Unlike a politician it just can't be bought" on "Don't Tear Me Up."

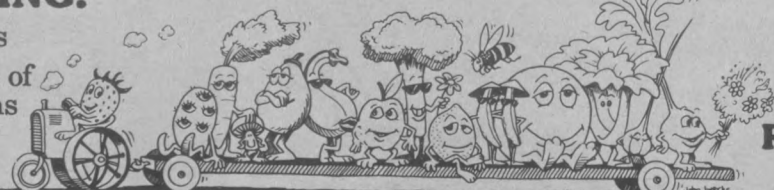
Did anyone really think Jagger had lost touch after her first two solo outings, the critically disparaged *She's The Boss* and *Primitive Cool*? The luxury of time allows us to see those abstract albums now as signposts to Mick's evolving art — necessary releases of creative energy that allowed Mick to broaden her canvas and develop the explosive new tools that are now allowing her to further plumb what it means to be the world's greatest rock siren and singer. If you've ever enjoyed peak-era Rolling Stones, pick up *Wandering Spirit*. Mick Jagger — the bitch is back.

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A Foursome to Hear

Shostakovich. String. Quartet. Ah, the beauty of those words.

Dimitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) was a composer of haunting melodies reflective of the horrors his Russian homeland endured during his lifetime. The strings are two violins, a viola and a cello. The quartet which captures the composer's stirring and abstract style is, respectively, Andrei Shishlov, Sergei Pishchugin, Alexander Galkovsky and Alexander Korchagin.

Shostakovich didn't live to see the Cold War end, but his namesake did. Hailing from the former Soviet Union, the quartet has achieved widespread acclaim in Europe and Asia since their inception 25 years ago at the Moscow Conservatory. But aggravated tensions between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. after the Afghanistan War kept the foursome from touring these parts, until 1990's Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, when they brought their music—*live*—to ears that had only previously experienced it courtesy of analog technology.



Shostakovich String Quartet

Since their stunning debut, the quartet has been wowing United States audiences with music that is always impeccable and pure, whether it be the quartets of Schumann or Bartok or works by fellow countrymen like Tchaikovsky or Shostakovich himself. Their current tour will reach UCSB this weekend, where they will

assuredly perform un-touchable renditions of Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 7, Borodin's String Quartet No. 2 in D Major and Glinka's String Quartet No. 2 in F Major. *The Shostakovich String Quartet will perform in UCSB's Campbell Hall on Saturday, Feb. 20 at 8 p.m.*

—Bonnie Bills

Ant Keeps Marching

First Duran Duran and now this...

Adam "Goody Two-Shoes" Ant, joining the alarming number of former pop gods making comebacks, will be at the Ventura Theater on Wednesday, Feb. 24, as part of his first tour in five years. He'll be rockin' some golden not-so-oldies *a la* "Strip" and "Stand and Deliver," as well as some newer material that seems to have thrived better in the cold damp of England than the hot smog of Cali.

Indeed, Adam Ant may well say, "Don't call it a comeback — I've been here for years!" He's had a new album out almost every year, with his latest being 1991's compilation *Antics in the Forbidden Zone*, and apparently he can still make the girlies squeal at such pop Woodstocks as KROQ's recent Los Angeles Christmas shows, which also featured Duran Duran and The Cult. (You'll remember that KROQ was the definitive pop-rock station of the '80s — giving birth to thousands of loyal teeny-boppers who by now are probably observing this pop Renaissance as the Second Coming.) In any case, it remains to be seen what



Adam Ant

the world will make of Ant's upcoming and still untitled album. He's been working with longtime partner Marco Pirroni and drummer Dave Ruffey, who are both fresh from Sinéad O'Connor's world tour, and who will also be with him on Wednesday night. Could the product of this union be some kind of alternative-pop mutation? That's not so outlandish considering that today's music scene is rife with trendy grunge and audience-friendly punk.

—Jeanine Natale

Spring Quarter 1993

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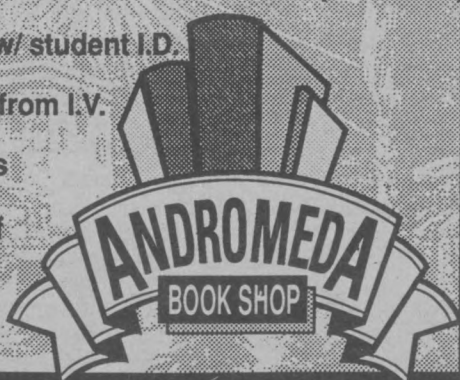
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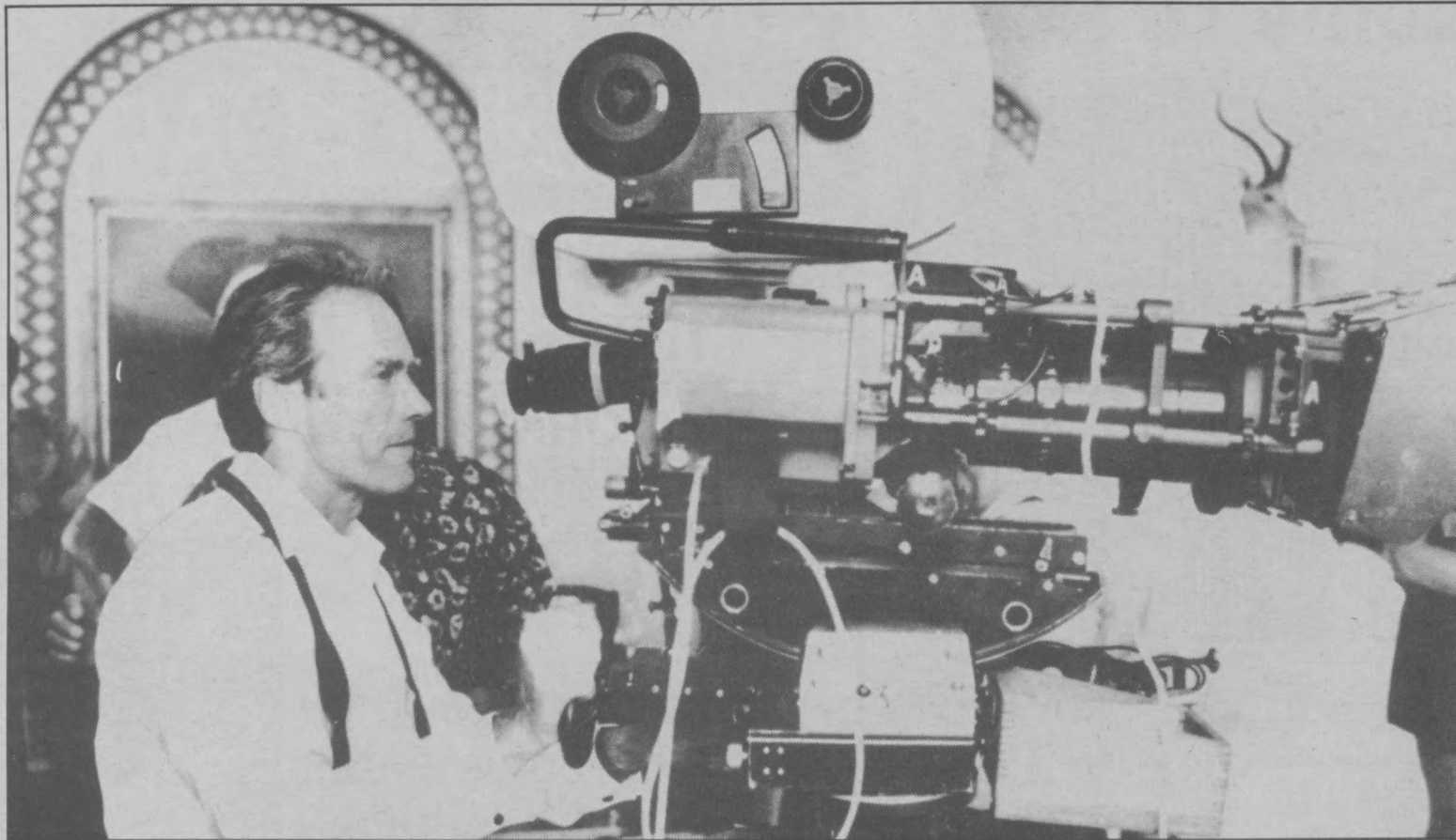
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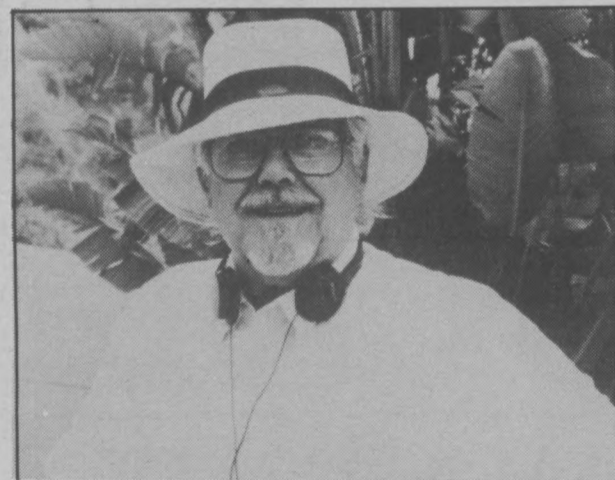
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Cover Story



The 1993 Academy Award nominees include (from top to bottom) Clint Eastwood for Best Director and Best Actor for 'Unforgiven,' Denzel Washington for Best Actor for his performance in 'Malcolm X,' Marisa Tomei for Best Supporting Actress for her performance in 'My Cousin Vinny,' Robert Altman for Best Director for 'The Player,' and Robert Downey, Jr. for Best Actor in 'Chaplin.' With a surprising nine nominations, 'Unforgiven' is this year's picture to beat.



Go Ahead, Make His Day

... 'Unforgiven' Could Clinch Nine '93 Oscars

by Brian Banks

The 1992 Academy Award nominations, announced Wednesday morning in Beverly Hills, prove one point — Clint Eastwood is back. No longer just Dirty Harry and the nameless wandering cowboy, Eastwood took the center stage in this year's Oscar race by capturing nominations for Best Director and Best Actor for his film *Unforgiven*, which was also nominated for Best Picture. The nods were the first in the actor-director's 25-year career.

It's been a long road back for Eastwood, once stuck in mediocre action films which tried to capitalize on his Dirty Harry persona. His directing career, too, has seen its ups and downs. The Academy is apparently willing to forgive *Honky-tonk Man* and *The Rookie*.

With nine total nominations, *Unforgiven* is suddenly the picture to beat. Here is a breakdown of the major categories and how the races should pan out:

•**Best Picture:**

The nominees are *Unforgiven*, *Howard's End*, *A Few Good Men*, *Scent of a Woman*, *The Crying Game*.

The race seems to be wide-open, although *Unforgiven* is the early favorite based on its box office and critical success. *The Crying Game* and *Scent of a Woman* could challenge, but are considered smaller films. *Howard's End*, released 11 months ago, is probably too old and too British for consideration. And *A Few Good Men* is entertaining Hollywood fluff, exactly the kind of film the Academy loves to shower with nominations and then shut out on Oscar night.

•**Best Director:**

The nominees are Eastwood, James Ivory (*Howard's End*), Martin Brest (*Scent of a Woman*), Robert Altman (*The Player*), Neil Jordan (*The Crying Game*).

The race comes down to Eastwood, who is a shoo-in for the award. It's one of those nice-comeback, good-movie, great-career Oscars, but who cares? It's Clint, dammit. Brest was a surprise choice over *A Few Good Men*'s Rob Reiner, who must be wondering how many good movies he has to make before he gets nominated.

•**Best Actor:**

The nominees are Eastwood, Al Pacino (*Scent of a Woman*), Robert Downey Jr. (*Chaplin*), Denzel Washington (*Malcolm X*) and Stephen Rea (*The Crying Game*).

The race is over. Al Pacino, after eight career nods and twice being nominated in both the lead and supporting actor categories in the same year, will take home an Oscar for his portrayal of a suicidal blind Army colonel. Eastwood gets his in another category, and Downey, Washington, and Rea get to rent limos and play dress-up.

•**Best Actress:**

The nominees are Emma Thompson (*Howard's End*), Susan Sarandon (*Lorenzo's Oil*), Michelle Pfeiffer (*Love Field*), Catherine Deneuve (*Indochine*) and Mary McDonnell (*Passion Fish*).

The race, like the Best Actor contest, won't be a contest. In a weak year for women's roles, Thompson has captured the critic's prizes and is a lock for an Oscar. Sarandon, for the umpteenth time, will be the bridesmaid, with Pfeiffer, Deneuve and McDonnell splitting the protest-the-inevitable votes.

•**Best Supporting Actor:**

The nominees are Pacino (*Glengarry Glen Ross*), Jack Nicholson (*A Few Good Men*), Gene Hackman (*Unforgiven*), David Paymer (*Mr. Saturday Night*) and Jaye Davidson (*The Crying Game*).

The race ruins the greatest and best-kept film secret of the year. Anyone who has seen *The Crying Game* might argue with Davidson's nomination for supporting actor, but little else should be said about the subject. Best Actor Pacino, first-timer Paymer and two-time winner Nicholson will be on the outside looking in at a tight contest between newcomer Davidson and veteran Oscar winner Hackman.

•**Best Supporting Actress:**

The nominees are Joan Plowright (*Enchanted April*), Judy Davis (*Husbands and Wives*), Miranda Richardson (*Damage*), Vanessa Redgrave (*Howard's End*) and Marisa Tomei (*My Cousin Vinny*).

The race is too close to call. Davis, an English actress whose fictional character proved to be Woody Allen's best cranky New Yorker since the very-real Mia Farrow, may be the most deserving. But the Academy will be hesitant to honor a film by Allen, who not only scorns the ceremonies, but whose girlfriend was six years old when *Annie Hall* won Best Picture. Plowright has that fine-career, never-won angle working, and it helps that she slept with (and married) Laurence Olivier. Richardson had three Oscar-nominated films out in 1992, including *The Crying Game*, so her heavy workload might get her a prize. Redgrave hasn't a chance, and Tomei — whose squeaks and squeals were the highlight of the film — can be satisfied with a nomination. Besides, would the Academy really award a film with the word "Vinnie" in its title?

Before Eastwood gets too thrilled and takes his Oscars back to Hollywood to make more studio films, he should note that in the top eight Academy Award categories, almost half of the nominations went to independent films. A third of the nods in the Best Picture, Best Actor and Best Actress categories went to movies made outside the system. Last year, there was only one such nomination.

Maybe the Academy is finally catching on.

—Brian Banks

"The race comes down to Eastwood, who is a shoo-in for the award. It's one of those nice-comeback, good-movie, great-career Oscars, but who cares? It's Clint, dammit."

films

Hollywood Helps Out

Film Starring San Francisco's Homeless Will Benefit From Screening of 'Bodyguard'

by Alex Wilson

In filmmaking, Hollywood and independent movie-makers exist in two distinct spheres whose orbits rarely intersect. But, in a rare show of sympathy, a major Hollywood outfit will be lending a helping hand to a financially strapped alternative film through a benefit screening on campus next week.

The proceeds from next Tuesday's showing of Warner Bros. hit movie *The Bodyguard*, starring Whitney Houston and Kevin Costner, will go towards the completion of an independent film that boasts no big stars, just a cast culled from San Francisco's homeless population. The movie, *Chalk*, is a low budget pool-hall drama by independent filmmaker Rob Nilsson, who is attempting to portray the universal hopes and heartaches of all people through the experiences of San Francisco's homeless.

Nilsson founded the Tenderloin Action Group in the summer of 1991, an acting workshop which invites people from shelters and the streets into its ranks. Less than two years later the workshop is nearing completion of a full length feature film which owes its power not to traditionally contrived narrative, but to the autobiographical nature of the performances and the idiom of the streets.

Nilsson didn't start the workshop with the intention of making films out of it but when he saw the raw electricity of the performances he elicited, he knew the potential was there.

"I saw it as a training ground for an auxiliary cast. I never thought that we would just take the workshop and make a movie

with it," said Nilsson.

Nilsson said that he first became interested in the homeless when his brother left his parents' Marin County abode and became a drifting vagabond. After years of searching, Nilsson caught up with him and eventually created a small part for him in his movie.

The homeless men and women who act for the Tenderloin Action Group have invariably found new emotional strength from the program because they take part in creating something.

"They came in because we gave them a chance. And what we're trying to do in the workshop is be real. We're not trying to tell people to praise the Lord and give them some bread. We're trying to see what people feel and think. What I emphasize is emotion and intuition and feeling, allowing people who might have blocked that side of themselves because of the difficulty of living on the streets. We give them a chance to explode and get it all out; and once that happens, people feel good," said Nilsson.

Many startling metamorphoses have occurred within the actors in the group, Nilsson said. "Some people, as a result of the workshop, have cleaned up their acts," he said. "One guy was a heroin addict for many years and was addicted to almost everything you can be addicted to, and now he comes to the workshop every week, he plays a major role — in fact he has transformed his life."

"It's been a total inspiration for me," Nilsson said. "It's taught me that people are amazing if you provide a venue and give them a chance."

While Nilsson believes there is a place for big budget Hollywood extravaganzas, he thinks the major studios should do more to expose alternative cinema to the



A campus screening of the 'The Bodyguard' will benefit an independent film.

public.

"It's not that they shouldn't make films for mass consumption, what I'm saying is that they shouldn't pretend that they're making art or personal expression or trying to really mediate between people and their fears and joys and sorrows, when they're not really trying to do that, they're trying to make money."

Since *Chalk* has no big stars or a well known screenplay, the major studios haven't been beating down Nilsson's door to fund the project. Therefore the funding for the film has been on a shoestring with private donations and fund-raising benefits starring the likes of Tom Waits and

Gregg Allman. Nilsson is also grateful to the many San Francisco filmmakers and technicians who have donated their services.

Nilsson said that because the major studios have become so concerned with the bottom line they have "lost touch with doing the work for its own sake."

Nilsson hopes his experience will lead others to follow in his footsteps. "Little groups like this could form anywhere and could push to make a film that makes this statement," he said.

The *Bodyguard* will be screened in Campbell Hall on Tuesday, Feb. 23 at 8 p.m. and 10:30 p.m.

Two Angst-Filled Holidays

I hate Valentine's Day. It's just another sappy holiday created by corporate America to suck money out of your accounts as you pathetically attempt to buy another person's affection.

Well, boys and girls, I didn't buy into this feeble little scam this year.

Nope, instead I was going to use the healing power of laughter to get me through this unbearable, dark day that stalks us mortals once yearly. I was going to escape into the safety of a movie theater, where I could forego my miserable reality for a few hours of sheer fantasy. The film of choice was Bill Murray's new comedic vehicle, *Groundhog Day*.

I entered the theater with the hopes of another Murray film over-brimming with bitter sarcasm and bile, just the right concoction to chase away the blues brought on by that asinine holiday. Anyway, back to the film, which is directed and co-scripted by Harold Ramis, the man partially responsible for such laugh riot classics as *Animal House*, *Caddyshack* and *Stripes*. I felt I was in good hands. If anybody could make me forget the little animal-like noises my roommate and his girlfriend make through the bedroom walls it would be Bill Murray and Harold Ramis.

In *Groundhog Day*, Murray plays Phil Connors, an egotistical, megalomaniac weatherman for a small Pittsburgh TV station. In true Murray fashion, Phil demeans all those who populate his world as he walks through his job like God's gift. Little does he know that he is in for a rude awakening. While on the annual trip to Punxsutawney to watch the groundhog ceremony, Phil gets stuck in his own subjective dystopia. He soon realizes he is stuck in Punxsutawney, forced to live Feb. 2 over and over again. Each day he awakes to Sonny and Cher's "I Got You Babe" and the nightmare begins again.

This premise is interesting and leads to an anecdotal structure of the film. I found myself laughing quite a bit in the first half, as Murray makes the most of his predicament, acting like a god and amusing himself at the expense of others. He can indulge in as much debauchery as possible, then wake the next day to a world that



Bill Murray and Friend

doesn't remember and has not changed. This premise is funny while it lasts, but soon the film takes a sappy sentimental turn in which Murray uses his plight to help his fellow man and win the love of his producer Rita (Andie MacDowell).

As Ramis and company layer on the Hollywood sap, I found my nightmares of Valentine's Day returning. I had been shafted. Gone is the "fuck you" attitude and in comes a barrage of hokey sentimental ploys. This is when my eyes wandered from the screen to the people that shared the theater with me. A feeling of nausea and claustrophobia overcame me as I witnessed romantic masses of flesh sitting intertwined enjoying every moment of the Hollywood hocus-pocus. Those annoying noises of my roommate and his girlfriend returned to haunt my eardrums as sweat shot from my every pore.

By the time the credits began to roll, I had already vacated the theater. *Groundhog Day* had ultimately failed me. What was I to do? I felt a burning need to sort things out over a bottle of 100 proof "Blackjack" and a real movie — a movie that would spit in the face of sentimentality and chase away the fever brought on by *Groundhog Day* and this infernal holiday — and I knew just the flick. *Henry: The Portrait of a Serial Killer*.

—Terrence G. Myers

Doing Vietnam Differently

American filmmakers do not necessarily have a monopoly on films about Vietnam, although it often seems so.

In *Indochine*, French director Regis Warginer explores France's involvement in the Vietnam War after World War II, when the country was still called Indochina. Briefly, Indochina had been occupied by the French since the late 1800s, then by Japan during WWII, and again by France until the Geneva Conference created North and South Vietnam in 1954. The rest, as they say, is history, or an Oliver Stone movie.

Indochine begins around 1939, when French power was still dominant in the region, though threatened by nationalist insurgency. Elaine Devries (Catherine Deneuve) is a powerful rubber plantation owner who also is the adoptive mother of orphaned native princess Camille (Linh Dam Pham). Elaine's guarded demeanor is broken slightly by an affair with troubled Navy captain Jean-Baptiste Le Guen (Vincent Perez), but when Jean-Baptiste saves the life of Camille (and lovingly wipes blood off her exposed breasts), well, his affections shift, to say the least.

Up to this point, *Indochine* looks to be a moody melodrama of two more anguished French souls suffering in studied passion, and is only slightly engaging. But when Elaine uses her power to have Jean-Baptiste transferred to a remote coastal outpost in the north, the film opens out

into a beautiful and emotional epic. Camille becomes the central character, escaping from an arranged marriage to search for Jean-Baptiste. This story line is an exception to the typical domestic Vietnam movie formula, as the Vietnamese in *Indochine* are written as real characters.

As Camille leaves the Western industrialized south and journeys north through the country's agricultural heartland, her gradual understanding of and conversion to the nationalist cause is a metaphor of the country itself in the transitional years of the 1940s. Linh Dam Pham's performance is understated at first, obscured by Deneuve's star power. But Camille's emergence from a fragile adolescent to an independent woman is believable and exciting to watch. When Camille finally takes power into her hands in a brilliant scene at a slave camp, there is a brief close-up of her face in which this change is suddenly apparent; Camille has become an adult sure of her destiny.

Indochine is a very rewarding film for those who can make it through the beginning half hour. It is a comprehensive and unique understanding of the decades prior to where most people's memories of Vietnam begin. Though we root for Camille, we cannot help but sadly realize it was people such as her that would soon become America's "enemy."

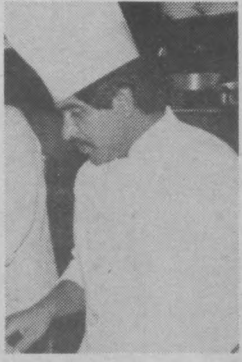
—Ted Mills



A French film about Vietnam takes a different look at the country's history. Elinh Dam Pham (Camille) and Catherine Deneuve (Elaine Devries) dance the night away in Regis Warginer's sprawling drama 'Indochine.'

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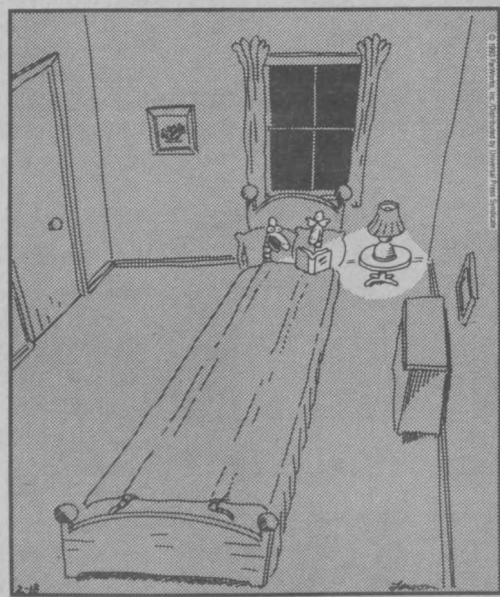
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By GARY LARSON



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Jon, Chris and Dave

GARY ANDREWS/Daily Nexus

Non-Static Tunes

Always Eclectic 'Off the Air' Tests the Boundaries of Radio

by Martin Boer

Ever tuned into KCSB radio late at night hoping to hear some dope hip-hop or fem-punk and found yourself bombarded by a waterfall of curious noises and spoken narratives so intriguing, but equally strange, that you spilled your beer, pulled over and parked alongside the center divider in hopes of catching a clue as to what just happened?

It's OK (sort of). What you heard was "Off the Air," a radio collage of spoken word, music and sound effects so intricate that slight details can only be heard on a third hearing. You could very well hear two conversations spliced together, buttressed by a guitar chord complemented by a vacuum cleaner sucking across a carpet to the beat of a ping-pong ball.

The seemingly near-chaotic noise is actually a very well-thought out art form created by three veteran disc jockeys, Dave LaDelfa ("a musician that writes plays"), Jon Leidecker ("a writer that plays instruments") and Chris Ball ("just this guy").

All three possess a dry sense of humor, even if it comes down to poking fun at their own work. "We're very jaded,"

LaDelfa admits. Yet every one-hour episode of "Off the Air" is a grand project that takes between two and 400 hours to complete. It is this combination of irreverent self-parody and intense dedication/professionalism that has created an impressive following of dedicated listeners since the show hit the airwaves in 1989.

Although the trio has been too busy to make new episodes for this quarter, the show is so popular that reruns of past airings are currently running on Sunday nights. These include the ever-popular "You Are Going to Die," an episode asking 'everyone does it; how would you react?', "Cops Are Tops!" a salute to enforcers of law and justice everywhere and "The Midwest," an exploration of America's fertile heartland: Oregon, Kentucky and Ohio.

If they are included in KCSB's spring programming schedule they will begin airing new episodes in April, some of which have been in production for over a year. "Never have so few waited so long for so little," jokes Ball.

The shows vary in content from week to week, not restricted to set parameters or styles. A five minute sample of the show might include Satan's redemption, the apology of a Marxist cat, and a condescending ad for smart drugs. In one program LaDelfa played a tape of the word "endlessly" over and over for the entire duration of the show.

"Repetition and variation are both really good things," Ball says. "We like repetition and variation."

"Repetition and variation are very good things ... We like repetition and variation."

Leidecker says that radio allows for a wide range of programming, although off-the-wall programs like "Off the Air" have been largely pushed out of a strictly formatted market. "Radio is a very flexible medium, but the advent of television basically deepfrozen its range to prerecorded music and the 'news.' It's capable of so much more; anything remotely unusual going out in such an over-formatted medium really tends to explode people up a bit," he says.

"Normal radio is making people dumb," says Ball.

While "Off the Air" is certainly a cutting-edge approach that might very well be classified as post-modernist, the producers stress that their comedy will not be compromised by political messages. In fact, not much will compromise their shows, the name alone allows for flexibility; basically, they do what they fancy. LaDelfa says the show is a direct descendant of the comedy aesthetic created by '40s radio entertainers like Jack Benny and Arch Obler and the Warhol/Rauschenberg school of appropriate art.

What's art? "What artists do," Ball says. What is not art? "Whatever artists eat." Tune into "Off the Air" on KCSB, 91.9 FM, Sunday from 11 p.m. to midnight.

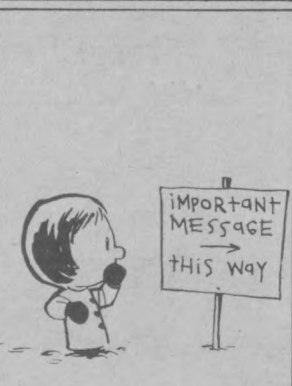
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WIDEOR 2/18

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“Vas?”

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“Eh?”

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