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interview, p.4A





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"I KNEW HIM WHEN HE WAS JUST A COLLEGE NEWSPAPER EDITOR!" Trey Clark graciously presents the Artsweek Recognition of Excellence award to new A.S. President Elect Mahader Tesfari

ARTSWEEK CHARITY BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE A.S. ELECTION RUN-OFFS

who's the boss | **trey clark**

Scapegoating, racial slurring and organized chaos: Yes, I am describing the scene of my very first Leg Council meeting, which I attended Wednesday, May 3. I was there to present both presidential candidates with the esteemed Artsweek Recognition of Excellence Award: a compilation of the world's best hip hop, put together by yours truly. So, around 11 p.m. I headed over to the UCen to hook up Mahader and Courtney. Once I got there, I was surprised to find that Leg Council was in the middle of one of its famed meetings. Instead of stepping out, I decided to stick around and see what all the hype was about.

I figured out the rules quickly: Everyone gets a chance to talk, uninterrupted, for a limited amount of time (I assume you sign up for a turn at the beginning of the meeting). It really is an interesting scene. Most of the participants spent their allotted time talking shit and complaining, but offering no solutions (kinda like a bad hip hop record). Topics went from taking subtle shots at each other to global problems that Leg Council could never hope to have any voice in. It finally ended, allowing me to look for the deserving recipients. At this point, I realized that everyone goes to these meetings just so they can be there

when it ends. All of the attendees were suddenly very friendly, giving each other hugs and plenty of nice words. Even I was greeted by some cool strangers who wanted to say something about my Blackalicious shirt and the tapes in my hand. It was a real love-fest, and everyone seemed very content that they had accomplished nothing. I made my presentations to the grateful award-winners and went home to analyze the events of the night, which put me right to sleep.

On a side note, everyone needs to pick up the latest issue of *Blaze* magazine, with Swizz Beats and Mannie Fresh ("Are They Hip Hop's Best Producers?") on the cover. Inside there is a "better-late-than-never" article on West Coast underground hip hop, as well as a story on the Santa Barbara scene! *Artsteen* coverboy and contributor Rüd the Instructor is mentioned, as is our little town of Isla Vista (the article refers to weekly "hip hop parties," I seem to have missed those). Somehow, the author left me out of the article. I understand not wanting to hype up a potential competitor, but come on. That's just straight up playa hatin'!

Trey Clark would like to tell Sophie to email him for a tape at <trey@187squad.com>



"EVERYONE SEEMED VERY CONTENT THAT THEY HAD ACCOMPLISHED NOTHING"

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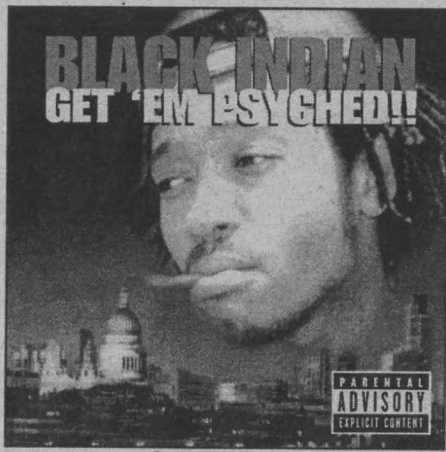
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SOUND- SOUNDSTYLE*



Black Indian | Get 'Em Psyched!! | MCA

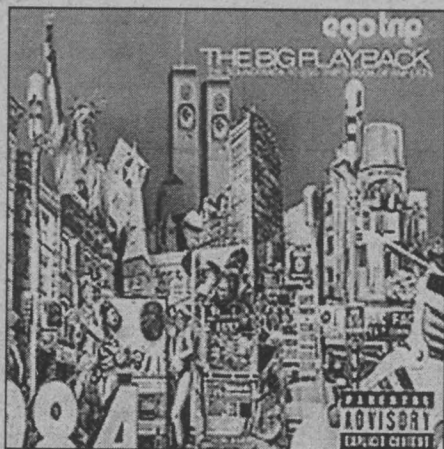
It's about time D.C. came out with a serious rap act. Stuck between New York and the deep South, the city has always been pivotal in producing artists who have made serious contributions to black music and culture. Better known for its go-go and U Street jazz clubs, hip hop curiously seems to have not taken much root in this largely African-American city. Though worthy, Black Indian's major label debut fails to put the city on the map as a real epicenter of hip hop.

Get 'Em Psyched!! is a decent collection of bump-and-grind numbers and vehement urban anthems that lack real consistency. The dread-locked Black Indian flexes the perfunctory rapper muscles as he rhymes about how much he likes to smoke weed, do women and roll around the different quadrants of his hometown. Though quite prolific on a few numbers, the rhymes lack bite and flavor; few tracks come across as having any real profound thoughts on D.C. urban life.

There are exceptions. The raw fury of "The Fight Song" with its chorus, "Don't

break up the fight let 'em rumble!" and the smooth jive of "Get Dat Dough Quick," gets the blood running and should be bumping out of a State Street club sometime soon. "Hold it Down" keeps the momentum going with its off-time drumbeat and full-throttle vocal delivery.

Passionate, if a bit hasty, *Get 'Em Psyched!!* makes up for its uneven style with a tour de force of southern vehemence. [Andy Swyack]



Various Artists | Ego Trip's The Big Playback | Rawkus

Various Artists | Hip Hop For Respect | Rawkus

The initial concept is nothing new. These days, more hip hop albums seem to be made by Various Artists than anybody else. This Various Artists character usually fronts like he is meshing all kinds of different styles, but the product comes out sounding effortless — as in he didn't put any effort into it. This time around, Various Artists simultaneously drops the full-length *The Big Playback* as well as the four-song *Hip Hop for Respect*. And now I

am going to drop the Various Artists as a singular person gag.

The Big Playback's theory is that hip hop was more exciting in the '80s. I personally could not disagree more, but *Ego Trip* has selected a fine batch of evidence in defense of its argument. Each song, with the exception of Marley Marl and MC Shan's "Marley Marl Scratch," is a relatively obscure treasure that you won't hear on the old-school mix at your local hip hop/R&B station. The highlight of the album has to be MC EZ and Troup's "Get Retarded." EZ is actually the 1988 persona of Craig Mack, the man who released two classics in 1995 with "Flava In Ya Ear" and "Get Down." As the liner notes explain, EZ and Troup couldn't get their instruments to make the correct bassline, so instead they made it with their own vocal chords, chanting, "Zoom zoom zoom, zoom za zoom za zoom." Combined with the magnificently placed chorus sample, "Get Retarded" will get your neck snapping and your vocal chords laughing. Other highlights like Positive K's "Step up Front" and Divine Force's "Holy War" make *The Big Playback* straight-up cold chillin'.

Hip Hop for Respect is a short set of protest songs to raise awareness of police brutality. I could not agree more with the cause, but unfortunately the actual music is just not very good. The use of 41 emcees on the four tracks is overkill. Some of the emcees say that the community should steer clear of trouble to avoid conflict with the cops, and some talk about bustin' a cap in their ass when they roll by; it just doesn't mesh well. Props to Talib Kweli and Mos Def for making a statement and doing something about the

ridiculous police state in New York, but it probably would have been a lot better if they had just handled the whole project themselves. [Trey Clark is Swayze]



Steadman | Loser Friendly | Ozone

Loser Friendly is comparable to an I.V. hookup: entertaining and fun for a little while, but not likely to become love or even memorable the next day. The bass lines are solid and the vocals are clear, even showing a bit of range with a mildly unique style. Unfortunately, as with so many bands today, it is so formulated to fit under alternative music that it is sorely unoriginal and uninspiring. Repetitive songs flow from one to the next due to their surprisingly similar beats overlaid with different lyrics. There are a few much-needed variations that are refreshing, but like many party experiences, the phrase "too little too late" comes to mind. On the other hand, you are young, so it is worth a quick run-through. Despite its lack of promise, sometimes these things work out for the lucky few, but I wouldn't hold my breath. [Ben Ebyam]

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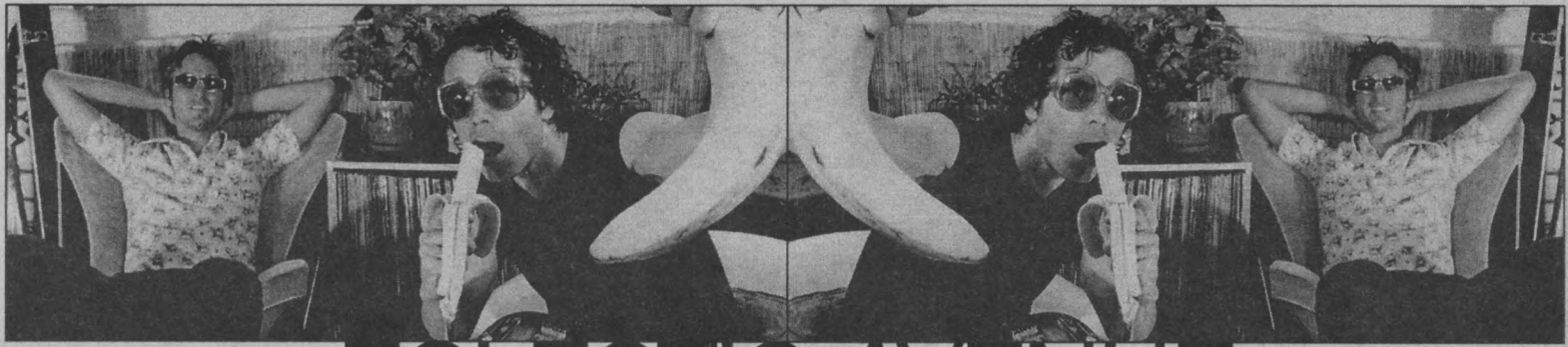
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ECLECTIC AVENUE

STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER? DJ ME DJ YOU ARE WAITING TO TAKE YOU AWAY

dynasty | dollface

DJ Me DJ You (a.k.a. Ross Harris and Craig Borrell) are electronic ingenues, creating sounds that go down as easily as Kool-Aid. Their first full-length, *Rainbow and Robots*, is a multi-layered trek into the utopian land of pure fun. These two started off their musical endeavors as one-half of the band Sukia, which led to the fateful birth of DJ Me DJ You. They have remixed for some of the most innovative artists around, including the likes of Beck, Takako Minekawa, Beth Orton and Fantastic Plastic Machine. But their solo work will have you toe-tapping and dreaming of "Star Wars" swank before you know it.

Ross Harris took some time to chat with *Artsweek*.

Artsweek: How did you meet Craig Borrell?

Ross Harris: We both grew up in the same town, but went to different high schools in Camarillo. Then, I moved to Los Angeles and he moved to the Bay Area for about five years. We both ended up moving back and then met through a friend and just started playing music together in Sukia.

What's the common bond between you guys?

I think our common bond is that we have a similar ear for the stuff we like to hear and sounds we like mixed together, putting together a couple of different elements, but not in exactly the way that we'd heard anybody do ... before. We both want to do instrumental electronic music that isn't just like a groove for the dance floor, but maybe has a narrative to it and holds your attention. But besides that, [our common bond] would probably be nude gardening.

I love that too! What gets on your nerves about each other?

Hmmm, probably a few things get on my nerves about him! (Laughing) You'd probably have to call him and ask him about me. But we get along pretty well, and that's why we ended up doing [DJ Me DJ You] together. Out of all the people we were working with, we offended each other's sensibilities the least. It's cool to work with someone whose instincts you respect. But things that get on my nerves? Maybe when he shows up five minutes before our plane is going to leave with no passport or things like that.

Is Rainbows and Robots a concept album?

It wasn't a concept album at all until we mastered it, which is the very last thing you do when you're making an album ... Once we put all the tracks together in order, it started to take on more of a concept. I'm not completely clued in to what the concept actually is, but it

seems like there is a concept there if you listen to the album from beginning to end. We just wanted to have a good time. It seems like everybody lately is either way too over-the-top serious or so lightweight that it almost sounds like a soap commercial. We wanted to do something that didn't take itself too seriously, but wasn't a total joke.

Do you see any similarities between what you're doing and what Arling & Cameron are doing?

Yeah, I think so. [Both groups] are doing more of the actual instrumentation and bringing in more live players, as opposed to sampling. Once you start making music for a while and you aren't doing it in your living room anymore, you can start playing with drummers and violinists and cellists and start bringing in a more orchestral feel to it, like you're sampling it yourself. I think they're doing



EVERYBODY LATELY IS OVER-THE-TOP SERIOUS OR SO LIGHTWEIGHT THAT IT ALMOST SOUNDS LIKE A SOAP COMMERCIAL

that more and we are kind of going for a similar thing. It's just two different interpretations — the Dutch and the Californian.

In the past, did you use more samples?

For our EP, *Simplemachinerock*, we were working in our living room and there was more sampling on it because we didn't have the room, the ability or the microphones to do it [live]. But on *Rainbows and Robots*, we ended up playing a lot of it live. We hired a drummer, I play bass, guitar and keyboards, Craig plays keyboards and horn, we hired a friend of mine to play bass and guitar, and got a guitar synthesizer that could play grand piano or cello sounds. I think the original idea for sampling was just to provide a beat for rappers and so their rapping over it makes it their own, original thing. When you're doing electronic music, you can't just loop up your favorite part of a James Brown song and put it out as your own.

Is it true that you find most of your records in dusty thrift store bins?

Oh yeah! And in Santa Barbara, too! They closed a lot

of the stores up there that I used to go to, but I go to Salvation Army on Milpas and American Pie Records by Trader Joe's. It's great up there. I love Santa Barbara!

Tell me about your art side projects in L.A.

I've been working on a film, outside of the art scene, and it's being produced by Propaganda Films. It's called "The Recycler," and it stars Laurie Cochran, Beth Orton, and Beck plays a part in it, along with Hank Williams III. It's kind of about the L.A. music scene a little bit, where this guy gets a keyboard and it gets stolen. He spends the rest of the film trying to track it down, and it's all about the crazy people he meets while trying to find his keyboard. Hopefully, it'll be finished next month ... and then out in theaters at the end of the summer. And Craig is a painter and graphic designer. But the main thing we've been doing right now is a club we started in L.A. the last Tuesday of every month called "8479 A.D." at Café Noura, a Middle Eastern restaurant. It's cool!

So, you've worked with Beck, Beth Orton, Takako Minekawa, and Fantastic Plastic Machine. Who was your favorite artist to work with?

We've brought some crazy people to Ventura County! Well, I'd say the most fun to work with is Beck because I've known the guy about 10 years. I'm comfortable hanging out with him, and it doesn't even matter if we get something accomplished. Actually, that's why we don't have more stuff recorded together because he's so busy and we end up just goofing off. And it was really fun to work with Takako because she got to stay for a while and it was interesting. We barely spoke each other's language and didn't have an interpreter so we really just talked through the music ... and rode bikes around a lot.

If you could create any musical instrument of any kind, what would you create?

I would probably create an electronic burrito. I think it would be really great if you could eat a burrito or any kind of food and it gave you pleasure that could be displayed in a light-and-sound show, maybe connected by the seat you're sitting on.

With keyboarding guacamole?

Yeah, exactly. It might just be related to [general] pleasure, but maybe tuned in more to food pleasure. People need to start exploring that, I think. People rush eating and they don't enjoy it. No one rushes sex!

What's in your CD player right now?

Either the Femi Kuti CD is in there, or the *Elmo Sing-A-Long Songs*, because I have a son.

Are you sure that's not just a cover-up?

I wish! Have you heard *Elmo Sing-A-Long Songs*?

welcome to yet another artsweek calendar, where the diligent staffers fill it with all sorts of oncampus events that few students ever take advantage of and the

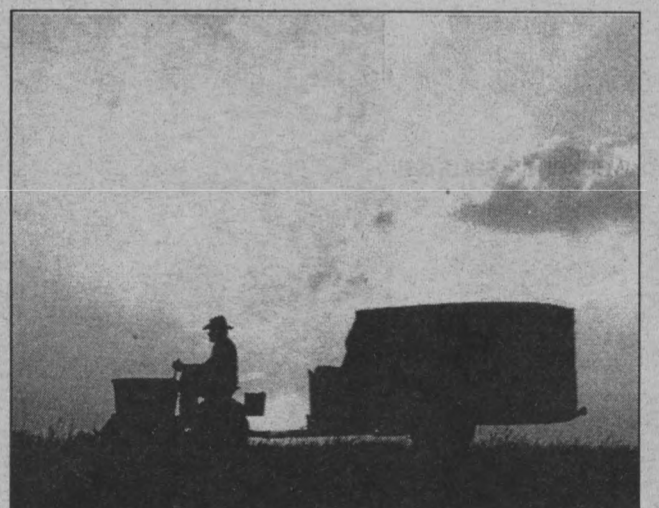
today | thursday



Canadian solo dancer Margie Gillis, who astounded a cheering local audience in her last performance here in January 1994 returns to the Santa Barbara stage tonight in "In Extraordinary Company," a concert with guest artists Joao Mauricio and Bruce Wood. So grill up some bacon, open a can of Molson and make your way over to Campbell Hall, eh! Margie Gillis holds all sorts of honors, such as introducing modern dance to China, being named Cultural Ambassador for both Quebec and Canada and appointed to the Order of Canada. If you don't like it, blame Canada. If you do, thank Arts and Lectures.

8 p.m. \$12 - \$18 students; \$16 to \$22 general.

tomorrow | friday



Although David Lynch is more famous for his dark films like "Blue Velvet," the simple, child-like tale told in "The Straight Story" will probably change the public's mind. In this inspirational road movie/redemption story, an elderly man drives his lawnmower on a six week journey through the American heartland to visit his ailing brother. Richard Farnsworth was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actor for his role as the elderly man, and word on the street is that he'll be attending this screening at Campbell Hall. So eat dinner early (or way late) and greet a world famous movie star! It's screening at - guess where!

- Campbell Hall. 7:30, \$5. For more information, call 893-3535.



Kenji Yanobe, Atom Suit Project: Tunnel, 1998, light-box photograph

THE GOOD, THE BAD+THE UGLY

UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM HAS TOO MUCH OF WHAT IT SHOULDN'T HAVE

just the ten of us | jenne raub

Upon entering the newly renovated University Art Museum, the most glaring problem is the lack of student and faculty art space. Quite a shame. While theater, film and music productions solicit outside interest, the absence of any student or faculty art space within the museum reveals the largest problem with arts on this campus. Often directed for an older, presumably wealthier Santa Barbara audience, the arts given the most publicity are sadly detached from the rich, creative initiatives taking place within the separate student artistic communities.

However, the University Art Museum manages to get a couple things right. The front gallery takes advantage of natural light; the floors are crafted from beautiful tan wood; the entire space contains the clean, airy feel of, well, a real place for art.

Yet despite the renovation's great success, the museum is still too small to really be a museum and yet too large to be a gallery. While the curators are obviously aiming for a diverse display of artistic works and exhibitions, in such a small space the enormous spectrum of art shown creates a disorienting experience. And the art itself ranges from inspiring to awful.

The main exhibit, "Afterglow in the Desert: The Art of Fernand Lungren," stands as a sad testament to the less-than-stellar works displayed. Lungren's early oil paintings focus on the native peoples of the Southwest; later works focus on the landscapes of the Southwest and Southern California. While Lungren's composition and detail to the depth of the terrain is superb (distant horizons of mountains, mesas and desert), the luminous light of the landscape is lost in the heavy oils. Due to the absorption of light in oil, the colors Lungren chooses to reflect, say, a pink sunset on a snow-covered mountain appear derivative of natural beauty. Such paintings lack the precision of desert photography and the serene lucidity of watercolor. Not coincidentally, Lungren exhibits his best work in his watercolors. *Aspens*, for example, reflects the glimmer of mountain light; *The Bull Café* exquisitely depicts the detail and shadow of a mountain corral. Although Lungren painted interesting studies of the various peoples in the Southwest in the late 1890s,

his later work, especially when viewed in the context of his Impressionist contemporaries, lacks attentive detail to one of the desert's most important qualities — light.

While "Afterglow in the Desert" feels like an exhibit at an art show in Palm Desert, Kenji Yanobe's "Atom Boy Returns To Save the World!?" is exciting and colorful. Consisting of four installed, three-dimensional post-apocalypse contraptions and three lighted photographs, "Atom Boy Returns" is a stylish, interesting view into an imagined futuristic world. The devices are all reasonably functional, as the lighted photographs display. *Atom Suit No. 8* (a yellow jumpsuit reminiscent of the Beastie Boys'



Fernand Lungren, *Poppies and Lupin*, 1912, oil on canvas.

DESPIRE THE RENOVATION'S GREAT SUCCESS, THE MUSEUM IS STILL TOO SMALL TO REALLY BE A MUSEUM+YET TOO LARGE TO BE A GALLERY"

"Intergalactic" video), can be worn when driving *Atom Car*, a tiny, rounded, cream-colored car, when dispensing small toys from the giant, red gum dispenser (*Survival Gacha-pon*), or while looking through the view piece of the *Last Film Theater of the World*. Will these devices provide any real protection after a nuclear catastrophe? Probably not. But they certainly encourage the viewer to reconsider the gadgets and gizmos present in daily life. "Atom Boy Returns" is a fun, creative exploration of retro-futurism — from the bright, bold colors and often toy-like appearance, the outfit and appliances embody a

particular idealism for the post-apocalyptic future. "Lost in Space" for the postmodern generation? Indeed.

However, the remaining exhibits at the University Art Museum lack Yanobe's creativity and innovation. At the Alfred Moir Collections Focus Gallery, drawings, prints and photographs from the museum's permanent collections are currently on display. Due to the wide range of work, from detailed architectural renderings to a quick sketch of a monkey's head, the current exhibit is at once interesting and disorienting. There's Picasso's lively *Peasant Boy* and David Hockney's delightful *Rumpelstiltskin: Roomful of Straw*, but other works are clearly serious studies or blandly abstract. While the works display skilled, effectual art, the juxtaposition of genres, mediums and styles does not work to the advantage of the exhibit.

In many ways, this disorienting effect can be extended to summarize the new University Art Museum — while various exhibits are interesting, others are so drastically different that it creates an odd relationship between the diverse art forms displayed. There is so little space between exhibits such as "Atom Boy Returns" and "The Renaissance Revealed" that little continuity between art forms is established.

Larger museums have the space to contain such a diverse array of art, and most large museums, it is important to note, usually stick to a particular era of art (modern, contemporary, classical, etc.). While it might be silly to expect a larger museum on UCSB's campus, it does seem possible to select works closer in genre, quality and interest. (Hopefully in years to come, the University Art Museum will return to showcasing more works of students and faculty, just as the various theaters on campus showcase student and faculty actors, playwrights, designers and directors.)

Although the University Art Museum clearly has problems in establishing what type of museum it would like to be, it is still a great advantage for students on campus to freely saunter in during the week while waiting for another class to begin. While the art may not be consistent in its interest or importance, at least there's another glimpse of culture on campus.

occasional fun thing happening elsewhere. if you think you have something of interest that should be in here, email us at artsweek@ucsbdailynews.com mmmmm??

weekend | **saturday**



Most Saturdays, **Artsweek** leaves for Hollywood to wine and dine in the land of celebrities. Or hobnobbing with rock stars. But this weekend, no vacations. Artsweek has uncovered three live music performances you might want to know of. At Fairview Gardens at 3 p.m. the legendary bluegrass musician David Grisman will perform. At the Hi-Bar (located above the Yucatan on State St.), you can find Wasted Tape, Tracker and Buellton. At SOhO restaurant and music club, you will find Jessica Peters, Scott Garth Band and The Mades. SOhO is, of course, located at 1221 State Street. Or, you could just find a great mod party complete with band, twist contest or well-stocked bar. The choice is yours.

weekend | **sunday**



This Sunday, Artsweek recommends waking up and making a delicious, nutritious breakfast. How about cheddar cheese omelettes with avocado and tomato, a slice of bacon, half a grapefruit, a cup of coffee and lots of orange juice? There's nothing like beginning your day with wholesome simplicity. Further your American day by venturing to Campbell Hall to check out "American Movie," the hilarious documentary about a young Wisconsin cemetery caretaker/filmmaker's manic quest to complete his no-budget film. Probably not as nihilistic as "American Beauty" or as fantastical as "American Pie," but at least it's a Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner. 7:30 p.m. \$5



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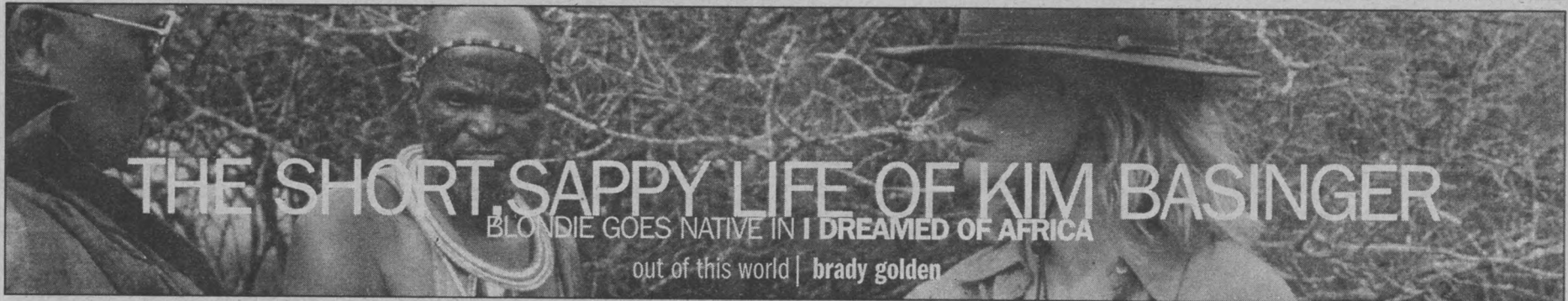
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THE SHORT, SAPPY LIFE OF KIM BASINGER

BLONDIE GOES NATIVE IN I DREAMED OF AFRICA

out of this world | brady golden

Lions and tigers and Kim Basinger. Oh my.

Some people have been waiting to see what Basinger would do to follow up her Oscar-winning performance in "L.A. Confidential." It's a safe bet that when an actor or actress who has spent their entire career in grade-B movies gains any sort of credibility, they're going to try to keep it by starring in something pretentious and boring.

Guess what two words best describe "I Dreamed of Africa."

It's the story of Kuki Gallman (Basinger), a single Italian mother who decides to reinvent herself after she breaks her leg in a car accident. She marries a heartthrob named Paolo (Vincent Perez), quits her idyllic, upper-class life in Venice (?), packs up her young son and moves to a dilapidated ranch in Kenya, where she has all sorts of adventures, like digging ditches and yelling at elephants eating her garden. She learns the same thing the protagonists in "white folks go to Africa" stories have been learning since "Heart of Darkness," and probably before:

You can't control Africa; Africa controls you.

"I Dreamed of Africa" gains points for being a true story, based on Gallman's autobiography. Few filmmakers have realized that stories about real people tend to be more interesting than ones about aliens, asteroids or whatever the trend happens to be. Still, the reality that exists in this film is completely overwhelmed by a silly moral and tons of cheese, Kuki's voice-over narration being the least easy to digest. The voice-over readings from Kuki's diary are reminiscent of the worst high school poetry — they're full of big, empty words and the blandest kinds of philosophy.

It would be difficult to overlook the racism that takes place in this film. Although

it's about a sheltered European woman broadening her understanding of a different world, the African characters are essentially props. The Gallmanns' servants are introduced when the family first arrives at the ranch, and they are in nearly every scene. Still, they have next to no dialogue, and undergo no development. Their role is to stand behind the white characters, smile when they are given a chore and cry when something bad happens to one of their masters.

Basinger's performance is uninspired, but her role doesn't call for much. She spends half of the movie surveying her ranch and her family with an expression of proud stoicism smeared across her face, and the other half weeping at funerals. Perez outshines her in nearly every scene they share, because he's a much better actor, and because his character is more interesting than hers is. While Kuki spends the film trying to overcome the repression that life in Europe has bred in her (snore), Paolo, an adventurer who came to Africa to hunt big game and to live off of the land, has to reconcile his need for danger with the unexpected domesticity that family life requires. Perez, a French actor whose work in films like "Cyrano de Bergerac" is absolutely phenomenal, made a tragic U.S. debut in the monumentally crappy "The Crow: City of Angels." With "I Dreamed of Africa," he manages to redeem himself, and proves that he is a true international actor.

Nonetheless, the only real reason to see "I Dreamed of Africa" is that the scenery is gorgeous. If you can ignore the story and pay attention to Kenya's stunning landscapes, the movie might be worth your \$7.50. On second thought, nevermind. Buy a postcard and read a Hemingway story.

"THE REALITY IN THIS FILM IS COMPLETELY OVERWHELMED BY A SILLY MORAL+TONS OF CHEESE"

LOVE ME TENDER

OLD-FASHIONED ROMANCE FABLE RETURN TO ME IS HOT AND COLD

cheers | john fiske

In the last month, there have been two films about good people doing good things, but complications happen to spring up in their lives. The first of the two is "Keeping the Faith," a fine romantic comedy. The second is "Return to Me."

Just because "Return to Me" is old-fashioned and romantic doesn't mean it's a good film. But just as there was a time when contrived films like this diluted the market, there now exists a cinema of cynicism. Films like "Erin Brockovich" and "Gladiator," regardless of their quality, prey on our fears and worst assumptions. "Return to Me" is unique in its optimism.

After a car wreck leaves him a widower, Bob Rueland (David Duchovney) feels that his life holds no real hope. Meanwhile, Grace Briggs (Minnie Driver) has just found a new lease on life in the form of a heart transplant unwittingly from Bob's dead wife. After almost a year, the two meet and notice an immediate attraction. The basic problem revolves around Grace's inhibition about

the 14-inch scar running down the center of her chest, and eventually the discovery that she holds inside her the heart of Bob's wife.

The film is primarily character-based, focusing on the semi-charming antics of a ripe supporting cast. At the Italian/Irish restaurant where Grace works is a bickering group of old men who are often arguing over who the



best singers in the world are. Director Hunt plays Grace's best friend, Megan, whose oversized husband (James Belushi) offers a lot of strong comic relief.

Unfortunately, the supporting characters are so bright and funny that they become more interesting than Bob and Grace. One gets the sense that the filmmakers knew

this, especially when most of the romantic scenes are cut between the lovers and whatever supporting group is handy at the moment.

Starved for a project where he wasn't playing a brooding poker-faced character, Duchovney jumped on this project, and his enthusiasm shows. He actually smiles, and, yes, he can act, as evidenced by his reaction to his wife's death. But the news isn't so good for Driver. Normally a wonderful actress, Driver has elevated most of the projects she's been involved in. Here it looks like she's stoned. And I don't mean that as hyperbole; Driver's performance is so uneven, unfocused and tired that it looks like she got high before each take.

"Return to Me" isn't without its pleasures. The supporting cast is funny, leading to many big laughs, which is probably what audiences have responded to. Those interested in "Return to Me" shouldn't be disappointed. However, those interested in a good-hearted romantic fable should go see "Keeping the Faith."

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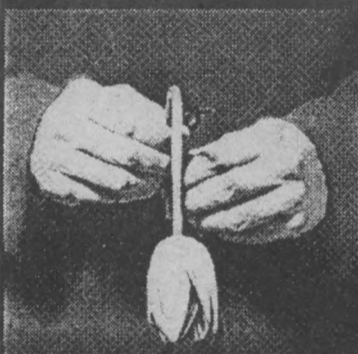
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