

# encore!

## The Gamecock Weekend & Entertainment Section

Friday, April 2, 1999

All Aboard For Fun Time

Page 5

### 'Ed' not 'Truman'

by Kenley Young  
Gamecock Critic ★★★ 1/2 out of four

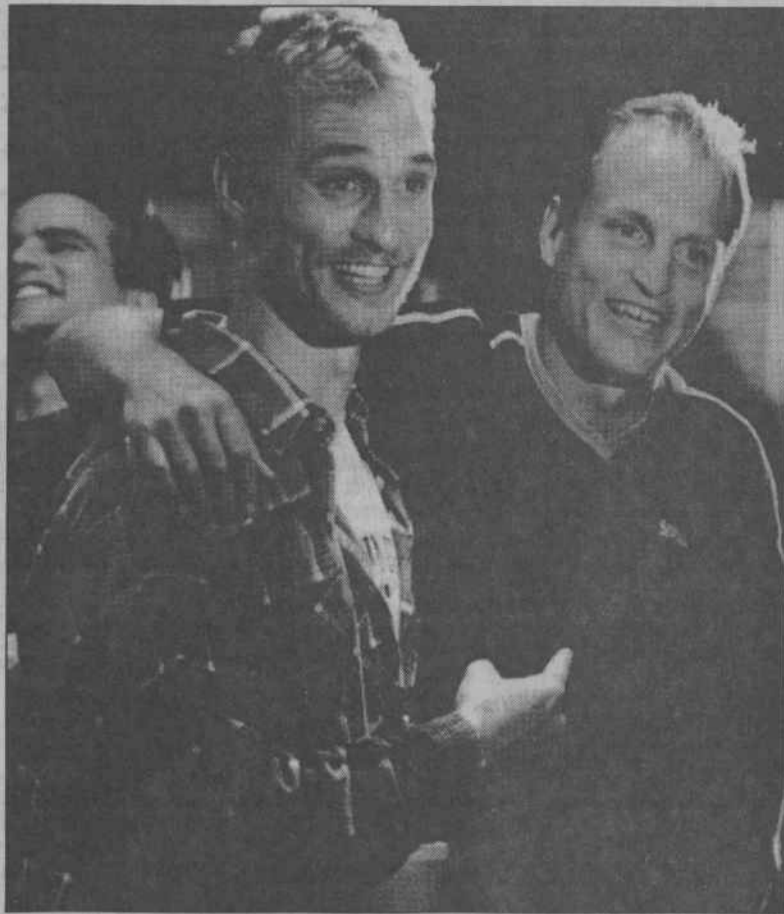
In Ron Howard's "EDtv," a young video store clerk named Ed (Matthew McConaughey) is chosen to "star" in a 24-hour television show chronicling his life.

Sounds a lot like "The Truman Show," right? Well, not exactly. While "The Truman Show" examines the futility of a manufactured existence and ultimately extolls the virtues of the visceral, imperfect real world, "EDtv" explores the boob tube's shameless pandering to society's morbid fascination with famous figures.

The problem? Woody Allen did it better in "Celebrity." Nevertheless, "EDtv" has a few things going for it that "The Truman Show" lacks. Elizabeth Hurley is the first thing that comes to mind, not only because she plays a supermodel named Jill and is taped in a provocative sexual encounter with Ed, but ... well ... so maybe that is the only reason.

And as chauvinistic as it sounds, sexuality and romance are what "The Truman Show" is missing. Truman has only a vague semblance of sentiment for a woman he once loved, but any moments of actual tenderness and electric chemistry must have ended up on Peter Weir's cutting room floor.

"EDtv" also has Ronnie Howard in its corner, who is the consummate artist when it comes to evoking tenderness and chemistry. Howard has an uncanny knack for wringing the sap from the most contrived and rehashed scripts, catching the runoff and pouring it down



Special to The Gamecock  
Matthew McConaughey (left) and Woody Harrelson star as brothers in Universal Pictures' "EDtv."

the throats of even the most stalwart audience members.

But "EDtv's" ensemble cast is its true redemption. Jenna Elfman is delightful as Shari, Ed's compassionate, good-hearted love interest, for whom the audience is supposed to cheer. Woody Harrelson is an absolute gem as Ed's promiscuous brother Ray, a financially and morally bankrupt moocher who thinks he can profit from Ed's newfound fame. Ellen DeGeneres, the creative force behind "EDtv," pulls off the performance of her film career, al-

though with projects like "Mr. Wrong" under her belt, I'm not sure how much that really says.

But "EDtv's" true scene-stealer is Martin Landau, who plays Ed's wheelchair-bound stepfather and who never fails to deliver a powerhouse performance. Landau's character serves as the film's emotional locus, and as the skeletons in Ed's family closet gradually are resurrected and paraded in front of 200 million Americans, Landau's is the one character with whom the audience is at pains to find fault.

### 'Squad' falls short

by Rob Lindsey  
Gamecock Critic ★ 1/2 out of four

"Mod Squad" is a sad, wasted effort of a film. Such a good cast, such a talented director and such a solid idea for a movie should have produced a formidable action thriller. As it stands, however, the plot is flimsier than a twice-used tissue, and all these excellent elements fall short as soon as cameras roll.

The movie is based on the '60s and '70s television show of the same name. But the plot is the same as every other good cop / bad cop movie ever made: A small contingent of good cops fights against an overwhelming infestation of bad cops at the local precinct. The only twist, which isn't really a twist at all, is that the good cops are delinquent kids. Don't worry about why these kids were chosen or why they've suddenly decided to leave their lives of crime behind. Apparently none of this matters to the screenwriters. You would only need this information to get an idea of the character's motivations and personality. But, the writers aren't interested in developing characters, either.

The three misfits are played by extremely talented young actors. Omar Epps ("Scream II") plays Linc, who, as the voice-over during the opening credits says, has a penchant for arson — a useless plot point, for the audience never sees him use this skill. Despite such flimsy characterization, Epps manages to give Linc a smoldering loner quality. He is the one member of the



Special to The Gamecock  
Omar Epps (left), Claire Danes and Giovanni Ribisi star as three juvenile delinquent cops in MGM's "Mod Squad."

Mod Squad who actually does some quality police work.

Claire Danes ("Romeo & Juliet") stars as Julie, a recovering alcoholic convicted of assault. Apparently, she is supposed to have a bad temper, but she seems benign enough throughout the film. Again, the character described during the opening credits is nothing like that which Danes portrays. True, in this horrendous script, she has next to nothing to work with, but as an actress who has proved herself in sever-

al high-profile roles, she should be able to do more than she does. Is she a bad girl? Or a shy wallflower? Or a sexy super cop? The answer is a little of each yet none of the above.

Finally, Giovanni Ribisi ("Saving Private Ryan," "The Other Sister") plays Pete, a totally ineffectual robber. His character is mainly the comic relief. Again, a paper-thin character, with a paper-thin role, functioning as a mere variable in the most cliché of all action formulas.

### Albert Hill to break up after last Columbia show

by Marcus Amaker  
Gamecock Critic

Albert Hill will rock Columbia for the last time this weekend. The Spartanburg band is breaking up after a prolific career that produced several tapes and CDs, an extremely loyal following and a reputation as one of the best bands in the state.

A live Albert Hill show has a little bit of everything. Lead singer Aaron Whisnant, bassist Chris Francisco, drummer Kenny Hogan and keyboardist Robbie Bowen will have a lot of material to choose from when they perform Saturday night. Their latest CD, *The All-for-Me Theology*, contains fan favorites like "Realigning" and "Commander Nude," which are brought to new heights in a live setting. They'll also do songs from their earlier albums, *Fistunderfinger* and *Machine Called Company*. These two CDs displayed Albert Hill's more aggressive and energetic side, with songs such as "Impressed," "So the Row," "U.V." and "Rotten" staples of their live set.

Each of their three full-length CDs showcase Albert Hill's knack for creating songs that have a universal appeal. Their music is an indescribable hybrid of rock and pop music, highlighted by Whisnant's exceptional songwriting talent.

The Elbow Room Music Hall has always been one of Albert Hill's most frequently visited venues because of the enthusiastic crowds that show up. Saturday's show should be no different.

The opening band will be Angry Salad. In the past, this five-member band has opened up for popular acts such as Live, Goo Goo Dolls and Barenaked Ladies. They will be releasing their self-titled major-label debut soon, which features songs from their earlier independent albums, *Bizarre Gardening Accident* and *The Guinea Pig EP*. The *Guinea Pig EP* received a fair amount of attention from the press and was nominated for Outstanding Debut Rock Album at the Boston Music Awards.

The show should start around 11 p.m.



Special to The Gamecock  
Albert Hill, left to right: Aaron Whisnant (guitar, vocals), Robbie Bowen (keyboards, vocals), Kenny Hogan (drums) and Chris Francisco (bass, backing vocals).

### Peep Freaks!

by Valerie Byrd  
Web gURL

<http://www.pcola.gulf.net/~irving/bunnies/BunnySurvivalTestsHomepage>

"To determine specific weaknesses and/or strengths possessed by 'Marshmallow Bunnies' is the motto of this home page. Those little marshmallow bunnies are not as tough as they appear to be! This guy has tested their endurance in a variety of cru-



el situations. Tests include Oxygen Deprivation, Electrocutation Tolerance and Flame Tolerance. It's fun to see what happens to the bunnies in the microwave! Check it out! Pictures are included for your enjoyment.

<http://www.learnlink.emory.edu/peep/MarshmallowPeepsEducationSite>

Very similar to the Bunny Survival Tests Homepage, but instead of using

bunnies, this one examines Peeps. Lots of the same tests are performed, but one thing different about this site is the step-by-step operation guide. All Peeps are born connected, and here you learn how to surgically separate them. I always thought just ripping them apart was fine, but I was wrong! It must be done carefully with love and caution. There are also pictures at this site.

<http://members.aol.com/peepsshow/PeepShow>

This site is also dedicated to the marshmallow Peep as opposed to the marshmallow bunny. Includes peep facts (only 32 calories and 0 fat in 1 peep!) and lots of peep art. You can get wallpaper for your computer or print the pictures out and create a magnet for your fridge (suggestion of site creator). Oh, the fun you can have with Peeps.

### Benigni's indie gem

by Chris Richter  
Richter Scale

One of the most joyous moments I have seen on television was during last week's Academy Awards ceremony. Roberto Benigni restored my faith in the movie industry for a couple of hours.

I first saw Benigni about one-and-a-half years ago, although I had no idea who he was. After reading about "Life Is Beautiful" and seeing him on the "Charlie Rose Show" on television, I became interested in his films and tried to find a few.

The video pick for the week is Jim Jarmusch's "Down by Law," starring

Benigni, John Lurie and Tom Waits. It tells the story of Jack, Zach and Roberto, three men who are thrown together in a jail cell. Jack (Lurie) is a pimp who gets caught propositioning an underage girl. Zach (Waits), an ex-DJ, is caught in a stolen car. Roberto (Benigni), a card cheat, killed a man with billiard balls during a fight. The men bond during a spirited chant of "I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream." It sounds odd, but it's things like this that you expect from Jarmusch's films.



They escape from the prison through underground tunnels and find themselves in the backwoods of Louisiana. Eventually, the jailbreakers find a road, which they follow until they get to an old store. Zach and Jack send Roberto in to investigate, but he doesn't come back. They venture into the store to find Roberto eating dinner with the proprietress, Nicoletta, played by the real-life Mrs. Benigni, Nicoletta Braschi.

Benigni has been compared with Charlie Chaplin. However, don't expect this over-the-top comedic style in "Down by Law." Jarmusch's films are always studies in understatement, so Benigni doesn't climb chairs or jump stair although he does stumble with his English. Other Benigni films available on video are "Night on Earth," another Jarmusch film, and two Italian films, "Johnny Stecchino" and "Monster." Benigni might not be a comic genius, but he certainly a joy to watch.

## People's Poetry in the Park, cafes and graveyard

by Beth J. Harpaz  
Associated Press

New York — Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" will be read in a cemetery, rappers will hold a war of words and cowboy poets will sing their songs.

There will be an open mike for poets seeking fame, and readings by those who've found it: Pulitzer Prize winner Galway Kinnell, "Iron John" author Robert Bly and U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky.

All the above will unfold at the People's Poetry Gathering, April 9 to 11, in cafes, parks and auditoriums around Manhattan. The festival will celebrate poetry from sonnets to hip-hop, from Montana to Brazil, from the verse of 18th-

century Scotsman Robert Burns to publication on the Internet.

The festival is being organized by City Lore, a group that preserves folk culture, and Poets House, which sponsors readings and maintains a large poetry library.

"We're trying to create a festival that involves and includes literary poets, but also includes new inner city poets and ethnic and folk traditions," City Lore's director, Steve Zeitlin said.

Kinnell is one of the most prominent poets attending.

"The whole flowering of poetry is a wonderful thing, and there are many more petals than there used to be," Kinnell said. "Having everybody involved like this is kind of exhilarating."

Kewulay Kamara, who will be at the festival, is a Sierra Leone poet who comes from a long line of West African oral historians. "Their role in society is quite different from the role of artists in Western society," Kamara said. "These were ... the ambassadors, the masters of ceremonies, the people who orchestrated coronations. The word is what brings people together — not money."

Kamara's work is performed to music and partly improvised — not unlike the rap lyrics to be featured at the festival's hip-hop slam, a spoken-word contest in which participants try to out-rhyme each other.

Other slams at the festival include "Head-to-head Haiku" — using the Japanese verse form — and a Puerto Rican decima contest, in which a sentence is literally pulled out of a hat and a 10-line poem is composed ending in that line.

Several events feature cowboy poets, including Wally McRae, 63, a Montana rancher. "Everybody is supposed to write about where they come from," he said. "That's what it's about — it's who we are and what we do."

The festival also offers sessions on the blues, Asian writers and Yiddish female poets, along with workshops on how to memorize a poem and on writing renga, a Japanese poem composed while drinking sake.

"To have a festival where you can taste poetries from around the world, and find the music in poetry that you can sing to and dance to — as opposed to something you have to have explained to you — is a milestone in the renaissance of poetry," said slam impresario Bob Holman, co-producer of the PBS series "The United States of Poetry."