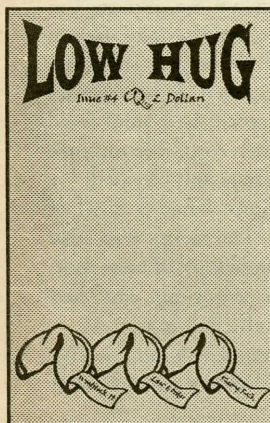


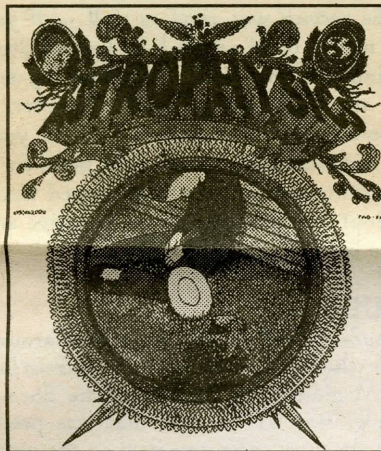
COVER STORY

BUILDING THE PERFECT ZINE

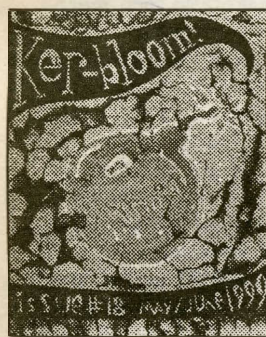
Progressive self-publishers near and far breathe new life into a well-worn medium.



'Low Hug,' from Champaign, IL



'Big Questions,' from Chicago, IL



'Ker-bloom!,' from Oakland, CA



'Clamor,' from Bowling Green, OH

By Jason Pankoke

They peek out from the dustier corners of independent book stores or hip music emporiums, catching your eye with oddball names, bold-as-hell color schemes, -and ultra-stylized layout. Within their pages, you might find tons of reviews of obscure bands and movies in one section, personal essays in another, and vegetarian recipes, alternative health methods, or political manifestos in yet another. You will also notice very little, if any, corporate advertising, bar codes, or slick production value.

For every offset comic like *Big Questions*, you will find a *Ker-bloom!* containing personal rants typeset by hand. For every satirical, cut-and-paste, photocopied *Chum*, you will find a *Broken Pencil* sporting the more traditional glossy cover and newsprint innards. For every commercial magazine that you will find on nearly every newsstand in America, there are 10, 15, maybe 20 do-it-yourself titles that thumb their noses at the media masses.

This is the world populated by zines, the real alternative to the high-stakes publishing industry.

BOWLING GREEN OR BUST

It was with great curiosity that my friend Dave and I ventured to Bowling Green, Ohio recently to attend a gathering sponsored by the Bowling Green-based collective Become the Media, publishers of *Clamor* magazine. Organized by BCM heads Jason Kucsma and Jen Angel, the second annual Underground Publishing Conference (UPC) attracted dozens of fellow self-publishers who find value in instilling their own personal interests and agendas within the covers of their own publications.

On the campus of Bowling Green State University, Kucsma and Angel (themselves publishers of the zines *Praxis* and *Fucktooth*, respectively) rented out a sizeable meeting hall for other zine publishers to set up their wares. I reserved a table to display my own offering, *Micro-Film*, as well as another Champaign-based zine, A.J. Michel's *Low Hug*.

"I first discovered zines in the late '80s," began Michel, currently a graduate student in library science at the University of Illinois, "and I got to know a few zine editors and purchased lots of zines, but I never got around to doing my own." As might be expected, zine publishing often gets relegated to recreation time. "It always seemed like something was in the way: school, work, life in general," Michel continued. "The first issue of *Low Hug* came

out in August 1998. I joked that it was eight years late."

Part of that delay might have come at the expense of earning part of her education at the institution where the UPC took place.

"I have this theory that places get really hip after I move away from them," quipped Michel, "so of course Bowling Green would start developing this great publishing culture a few years after I move out."

Located 25 miles due south of Toledo, this sleepy town of 30,000 seems like the last place on earth to help spawn a counterculture movement. Maybe the point is that the activism inherent in zine publishing can come out of nowhere, at any place, at any time.

VARIATIONS ON THE THEME

One of the defining aspects of zine culture is its reliance on community. Without people willing to write each other, e-mail each other, or freely trade zines and ideas with one another, most efforts would probably just pile up in the corner of one's apartment or basement.

"I live in a po-dunk town in Florida where not only is writing seen as somewhat bizarre, but reading is something you're not supposed to admit that you do," described Sean Carswell, who recently published his first novel *Drinks for the Little Guy*. "To be in a room full of freaks like me [at the conference] was a little slice of heaven."

While his own fiction is somewhat removed from the potpourri nature of zines, Carswell feels there is a kinship between them.

"Once you start reading zines, you'll never go back to the traditional media," he continued. "Underground writers give you their pure, unaltered view. Traditional writers are full of self-censorship."

Having previously dealt with literary magazines, Carswell came upon an obvious realization: "I'd get calls from editors saying things like, 'We really like your story and we want to publish it, but do you think you could send us a paragraph explaining the significance of the bottle of whiskey on page five?' or 'We want to publish this story but you have the word motherfucker in it five times. We think we can only get away with two motherfuckers.' Sometimes I'd get belligerent and say, 'Give me my story back!'"

Resolving to self-publish his own long-form fiction, Carswell worked on *Drinks* for five years before it finally went to press. Through the UPC, the author made deals with distributor Tree of Knowledge and online retailer Insound.com to handle his untainted prose.

"I was very excited to have a chance to meet tons of other publishers from around the country [at the conference]," said Laris Kreslins, an employee of New York-based Insound who also publishes his own music zine, *Sound Collector*. "All the people were extremely nice and completely enthusiastic about their craft."

Kreslins has encountered a wide range of efforts since taking on the task of selecting the zines offered on Insound.

"I personally like the zines that have a unique angle or perspective," he continued, "like *Greatest Hits*, for example. That's a list of people's mix tapes they've made, or *Loud Paper*, which focuses on furthering a discourse on architecture, or *The Itch*, which takes a very thorough investigative approach to underground comic artists and underground comic trends and institutions."

Even with Insound's catalog numbering roughly 150 titles (compared to the thousands that presumably exist worldwide), the subject matter covered is indeed vast and furious.

During the UPC, Kucsma and Angel wisely utilized the nearby classrooms and lecture hall to stage workshops related to the various aspects of zine production and distribution. Through the sponsorship of Philadelphia-based Bloodlink Records & Motion Pictures, they also scheduled independent film showings that tied into a broader-based discussion of alternative media. The films included Esther Bell's *Godsaw*, whose main character goes to New York City to drum up interviews for her music zine, and Rusty Nails' *Aene*, a spoof of Cold War-era science fiction and paranoia films with a post-modern sensibility.

COMIN' HOME

The end-all, be-all directory *Zine Guide*, published in the Chicago suburb of Evanston by Brent Ritzel and Jenn Solheim, features the straight dope on thousands of zines, what they're like and where to get your hands on them. It is this publication that first alerted me to underground publishing and the counterculture that it stems from. *Zine Guide* #3, published back in the spring, features a superlative essay by Kucsma touching on the need for libraries across the country to preserve zines alongside their other collections.

In the essay, Kucsma writes, "Outside the realm of books, popular magazines, scholarly journals, reference materials and an infinite number of databases, there exists printed material that has yet to be universally recognized as worthy of library attention. Alternative literature, if

ON THE COVER: Chicago cartoonist Anders Nilsen and his *Big Questions* birds strike up a timely conversation.

COVER STORY

incorporated into the library seeking to expand its scope, will help fill in the gaps of cultural representation left empty by focusing collection attention primarily on elite or 'accepted' literature." Beyond academic inclusion, zines are extremely valuable as an informal work-in-progress which documents "we the people."

So, what about "we" in Champaign-Urbana, the home of the University of Illinois and many intelligent folks? Amidst all the newsletters, fliers, and student-produced journals that traditionally infest this town, one can find zines that reflect the local culture and do not necessarily emerge from academia. In the seven years that I've lived here, I have seen several independent efforts come and go. Some defunct titles include Holly Rushakoff's music zine *Squirrel Scream*, the literary zine *twenty-two*, and the Bloomington-Normal culture zine *The Weigh Station*. Current bearers of the torch include *Low Hug*, *Micro-Film*, and Brad Bugos' *Silly Little Trouser Monkees*. Yes, you read that correctly.

"I have been putting together my zine since 1996," said self-anointed "lead jackass" Bugos, who published *SLTM* #12 at the beginning of the summer. It usually appears unannounced in places like Record Service on campus and Record Swap in downtown Urbana, primarily because it shares a common subject matter with the majority of zines — music. "I try to profile bands I like," he continued. "Ones that have taken the time to contact me and labels that put the effort into getting the bands out there." The rest of the real estate in *SLTM* is filled with short fiction, rants, and CD, concert, and zine reviews.

And why does he bother whipping out the *Trouser Monkees* on a whim?

"My only game plan is to get enough pages to go to the printer and to make it interesting so one person will write or e-mail me and tell me how wonderful I am and how *SLTM* saved their life," he confided.

THIS IS NOT WHERE THE STORY ENDS

On a more serious note, why do these zine-makers and other independent creators have such personal high stakes invested in their activities? A cliché response would be that alternative media is produced specifically and only to piss off "The Man," but the reality runs somewhat deeper than that.

"Part of my inspiration for my writing comes from the mass media," proposed Carswell. "The repetition and transparency of the mass media boggles me. I'm supposed to be shocked that Dennis Rodman has green hair? Hell, I had a mohawk when I taught at Northern Arizona University! While the rich and famous are posing for paparazzi, the working class are living bizarre lives of poetic malaise. I write for and about these people."

Looking through several zines at the conference, I discovered personal stories aplenty about drunken nights, strained weekend trips, impromptu conversations with strangers, and frank experiences about rape, discrimination, and political injustice.

They've even coined a term for this sector of zine publishing, the "perzine." As vital as this material is, zines are a widely-produced media that aren't nearly as widely available as mass-produced media, but that is possibly the price of speaking about culture and issues often truncated or dismissed in corporate-owned forums.

"It's funny, but I realize that I only seem to talk about zines with other zine editors or people who really enjoy reading zines," admitted Michel, whose *Low Hug* contains articles that are well-written and acerbic while dissecting accessible subject matter like rock music and television programs.

"Sure, I'd like to get other people turned on to the zine culture — reading as well as creating them — but I just think there are a lot of people out there who just wouldn't understand. They're happy with their *Time* magazine, *TV Guide*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Sports Illustrated*, and so on," Michel continued.

"It would've been much easier to send my novel to a bunch of different publishers," added Carswell, who's currently working on his next book, "[but] I guess I just wanted control over my own future. There's also another, equally important factor. It is the job of the artist to move his art into new and unexplored directions. It is the job of the publisher to publish what he knows will sell. This is a fundamental contradiction."

Especially for those self-publishers like myself who work on more complex projects, and who stand to gain or lose a lot more than the ambitious kid putting together his punk rock zine at Kinko's in the dead of night, this standpoint can be a hard one to accept. If you're good at what you do, striking the big corporate deal with a smidgen of control thrown in is the ultimate ideal. Right?

To some, maybe.

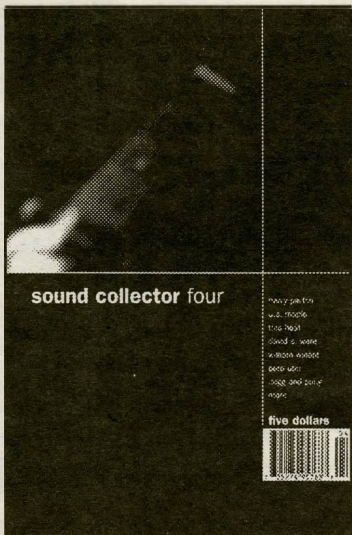
To many others, think again.

The Underground Publishing Conference served as a sobering antidote to the surface desires of our consumerist society. While many people have embraced multi-media and the Internet as the new vessel through which to channel our free speech, many others have resisted the new technology and fallen back on tried-and-true, hands-on methods to spread their own words, for posterity's sake if nothing more.

And to some, that may be good enough.

Kucsma, Jason. "Preserving Zines in the Library: Countering Marginalization & Extinction." *Zine Guide*. Vol. 1 No. 3 (Spring 2000): 11-19

For more information on the zines and resources mentioned in this article, feel free to e-mail the author at micro-film@artisticunderground.com.



'Sound Collector,' from New York, NY

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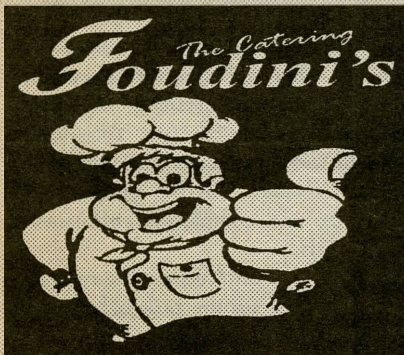
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By Gabe Rosen

There's a secret in C-U that's bound to get out. Well ... it was a secret. In any event, Foudini's will be a nice find for people looking for somewhere different to dine out. It's a little off the beaten path and hard to find at first glance, but that's what I'm here for —

to save you from idiotically wandering up and down Clark Street like I did. Foudini's is located directly downstairs from Ruby's, about two blocks west of the intersection at Neil and Clark.

It's a tiny little bar/restaurant with charm and good food. The folks there are known for catering and a brisk office/lunch delivery business, but the restaurant should be a nice addition to C-U.

ATMOSPHERE

When I walked down the stairs into the restaurant, my first impression was of a cozy, neighborhood type bar that would be a good place to hold a secret meeting and discuss various rackets. Really, this place looked right out of *Goodfellas*. However, there were no secret meetings taking place when I was there, just some good cookin'.

Foudini's has a dimly lit, relaxed atmosphere, and although it's moderately classy, you don't need to be dressed in your finest duds either, which is a definite plus.

Foudini's features a typical bar/restaurant atmosphere with a pool table and a jukebox, but the setting is versatile enough that you can also enjoy a nice quiet meal. You can belly-up at the bar and eat, drink and be merry or you can just kind of hang out, play pool and talk. Or you can sit down at a table, as I did, and enjoy a good dinner.

Although the restaurant area is tiny, it's set up nice. The tables are off to the side and

sectioned off just enough so that you aren't sitting in the middle of the room. It's a nice departure from those places that seat you at a table directly in the middle of the dining room. We've all been somewhere like that: people all over the place, waiters and waitresses are bumping into you and you can hear about 10 different conversations going on at once. It's not so at Foudini's.

FOOD QUALITY

Foudini's features a diverse menu with many different types of cuisine. There are Italian type dishes like "Alfredo Primavera" and "Flamin' Cheese Ravioli," plus Mexican dishes like "Tacos Cilantros" and "Cheese Quesadillas." Shrimp lovers will like Foudini's as well since there are a variety of shrimp dishes available.

I fall into the shrimp lover category and decided on the "Magic Shrimp Sampler."

The Shrimp Sampler came with nine jumbo shrimp, which weren't all that jumbo, but were very tasty nonetheless. The shrimp is served over a bed of Tomatoe Basmati rice with a side of garlic bread, French fried potatoes and a substantial salad. The fries were fat, fried cuts of potatoes that were mildly spicy and let me tell you something — Foudini's fries, or potatoes as they call them, are excellent. The meal also came with a salad, which featured fresh greens and was rather large. The Tomatoe Basmati rice was kind of bland and therefore so-so, but the

shrimp was phenomenal.

The Sampler came with three fried shrimp, three Shrimp Scampi and three Bayou Shrimp. The Bayou Shrimp caught my attention first with its zesty flavoring. These grilled shrimp were skewered with green peppers and red onions and topped with a blend of Cajun spices. The Bayou Shrimp were excellent to say the least and the Scampi was good as well. It was served floating in what appeared to be a mini bowl of soup but was actually a soup-like mixture of garlic, Italian seasonings and olive oil.

Along with my shrimp, I had a bowl of chicken noodle soup. The soup was also good and had a homemade kind of taste to it. It was jazzed up with seasonings and had large chunks of tender chicken in it.

Overall, the food was very good, and it's obvious the chef at Foudini's knows what he's doing.

SERVICE

The service was good as well — if you don't mind a bit of a wait. It took about 20 to 25 minutes for my food, which is no big deal since the food was so good. However, if you're one of those people who want your food instantaneously, you might be in for a disappointment. But the staff seemed like a bunch of nice people and was attentive and on the ball.

VALUE

Foudini's isn't the cheapest place around either when it comes to the main entrees like the "Magic Shrimp Sampler." The Shrimp Sampler was \$11.25, but that was pretty much the most expensive item on the menu and it tasted good enough to justify the high price. As a matter of fact, I've seen much worse when it comes to overpricing.

If you are going to go to Foudini's on a dinner date, expect to spend about \$20 a person or more if you plan on having a few drinks with dinner. You can get away with spending less if you just get a couple of sandwiches. Foudini's serves sandwiches such as the "Italian Beef Round-Up" and the tasty-sounding "Hot Sweetie," a hot and sweet grilled chicken sandwich and all the sandwiches are priced at \$4.25, which is definitely doable.

402 North Race, Urbana

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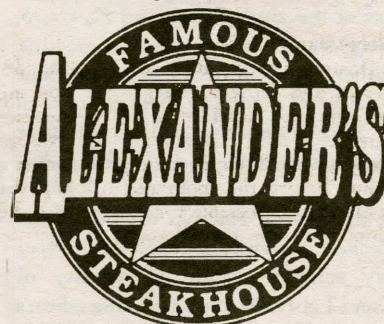


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The Replacements 1:10, 4:15, 7:05, 9:25 (Fri/Sat 11:45)

Coyote Ugly 1:10, 3:15, 5:20, 7:25, 9:30 (Fri/Sat 11:35)

The Cell 1:30, 4:30, 7:15, 9:30 (Fri/Sat 11:45)

Whipped 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15 (Fri/Sat 11:15)

X-Men 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 9:50 (Fri/Sat 12)

Space Cowboys 1:20, 4, 7, 9:30

Highlander: Endgame 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 (Fri/Sat 11:15)

Autumn in New York 1:15, 3:25, 5:35, 7:45, 9:55

(Fri/Sat 12)

Saving Grace 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15 (Fri/Sat 11:15)

What Lies Beneath 1:35, 4:10, 7, 9:35

Croupier 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 (Fri/Sat 11:15)

Bless the Child 1:25, 5, 7:15, 9:30 (Fri/Sat 11:45)

Hollow Man 1:10, 4, 7, 9:15 (Fri/Sat 11:30)

Nutty Professor II 1:45, 5, 7:15, 9:30 (Fri/Sat 11:45)

Bring It On 1, 3:10, 5:15, 7:30, 9:40 (Fri/Sat 12)

Dinosaur 1:15, 3:15, 5:15

Gone in 60 Seconds 7:10, 9:35 (Fri/Sat 12)

The Crew 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 (Fri/Sat 11)

The Art of War 1, 4:15, 7, 9:30 (Fri/Sat 12)

Country Fair

113 S. Mattis Ave., Champaign, 356-8000

The Patriot (Sat/Sun 1:30) 4:45, 7:45

The Kid (Sat/Sun 2:15) 4:30, 7, 9:15

Godzilla 2000 (Sat/Sun 2:15) 4:30, 7:15, 9:30

The Perfect Storm (Sat/Sun 1:30) 4:15, 7, 9:30

Scary Movie (Sat/Sun 2:45) 5, 7, 9

Lorraine Theatre

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The X-Men (Sun 3:30) 7:30 (Fri/Sat/Sun 9:30)

Big Momma's House 7 (Fri/Sat 9) *No show Sun & Mon*

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Chuck & Buck (Sat/Sun 12:30) 4:15, 8

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The Replacements 4:35, 7:05, 9:20 (Fri/Sat/Sun 11:30)

Autumn in New York 11:05, 1:10, 3:20, 5, 7:40, 9:50

(Fri/Sat/Sun 12)

What Lies Beneath 11:05, 1:35, 4:10, 6:50, 9:20

(Fri/Sat/Sun 11:50)

Whipped 11:15, 1:05, 2:55, 4:45, 6:45, 9:35

(Fri/Sat/Sun 11:40)

Coyote Ugly 7:25, 9:25 (Fri/Sat/Sun 11:35)

Highlander: Endgame 11:25, 1:30, 3:35, 5:40, 7:45, 9:40

(Fri/Sat/Sun 11:45)

Bless the Child 2:40, 6:55

Saving Grace 11:10, 1:05, 3, 4:55, 7, 9:10

(Fri/Sat/Sun 11:20)

Hollow Man 12:35, 4:50, 9:05 (Fri/Sat/Sun 11:10)

Chicken Run 11:10, 1, 2:50

The Cell 12:50, 2:50, 3:10, 5:20, 7:40, 9:35, 10

(Fri/Sat/Sun 12:10)

Godzilla 2000 11:20, 1:20, 3:25, 5:20

Space Cowboys 11, 1:25, 3:50, 6:30, 9 (Fri/Sat/Sun 11:25)

Nutty Professor 2 12:40, 5:10, 7:25 (Fri/Sat/Sun 11:55)

The Original Kings of Comedy 12:30, 2:45, 5, 7:20, 9:40

(Fri/Sat/Sun 12)

The Crew 11:30, 1:20, 3:25, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30

(Fri/Sat/Sun 11:15)

Art of War 12:35, 2:55, 5:15, 7:35, 9:55 (Fri/Sat/Sun 12:10)

Bring It On 11, 1, 3:05, 5:05, 7:10, 9:15 (Fri/Sat 11:25)

Gone in 60 Seconds 7:15, 9:30 (Fri/Sat/Sun 11:50)

Dinosaur 12:55, 3:10, 5

Movie capsules by:

Chuck Kopinski (CK) • Elizabeth Klett (EK)
Marry McKee (MM) • Ed Johnson-Ott (EJ)

CINEMA-SCOPING

The Art of War

By Ed Johnson-Ott

★½

Rated R • Running time: 1:57

Don't be misled by its title. *The Art of War* sounds intriguing, but the actual film is just another glossy B-movie thriller, the kind of forgettable action fare that turns up at odd hours on TV with titles like *Strike Force*, *Terminal Impact*, or *Deadly Velocity*. Besides Wesley Snipes' charisma, the most interesting facet of this production is its peculiar outlook on the capacities of the human body.

During most of *The Art of War*, gravity is, at best, an inconvenience. When chased by an opponent, characters routinely leap off the top of tall buildings, plummeting hundreds of feet only to emerge unscathed. Apparently, the trick is to use glass ceilings of adjacent structures to break your fall. In the absence of a glass roof, simply tuck and roll just before hitting the concrete far below. And don't worry about broken glass. Although it makes a great sound while shattering, it will not cut you.

Important safety tip: These rules only apply until the climactic battle scene. During the fight-to-end-all-fights, a 10-foot fall will knock the combatants into a stupor and a shard of glass can prove deadly (but only to a bad guy).

Originally intended as a Jet Li vehicle, the story begins in Hong Kong at a lavish party on December 31, 1999 (I wonder how long this lil' epic sat on the shelf). China is finally ready to sign a trade treaty, with United Nations Ambassador Wu (James Hong) and his assistant David Chan (Cary-Hirokyu Tagawa) working closely with U.N. Secretary General Thomas (Donald Sutherland) on the historic agreement.

Meanwhile, a group of dead Chinese refugees are discovered packed away at the New York harbor by wheezy Agent Cappella (Maury Chaykin).

Cut to the U.N. where Wu is assassinated while delivering his key speech. FBI Agent Neil Shaw

(Snipes) leaps into action, chasing the killer off several rooftops. It turns out that there is an elaborate scheme to block the treaty, one that soon draws in Shaw, his wisecracking partner Bly (Michael Biehn), their boss, Eleanor Hook (Anne Archer) and U.N. translator Julia (Marie Matiko).

Readers concerned about plot descriptions that give away the ending of a film have nothing to fear in this review. The convoluted storyline is so confusing that I couldn't explain all the twists and turns even if I wanted to. Basically, Agent Shaw spends 117 minutes chasing bad guys or being chased by both good and bad guys, pausing only long enough to drag poor Julia into the fray.

Director Christian Duguay seems far more concerned with style than substance, devoting most of his attention to fights, flights and gadgets. In fact, a way-cool palm sized computer gets almost as much screen time as Snipes.

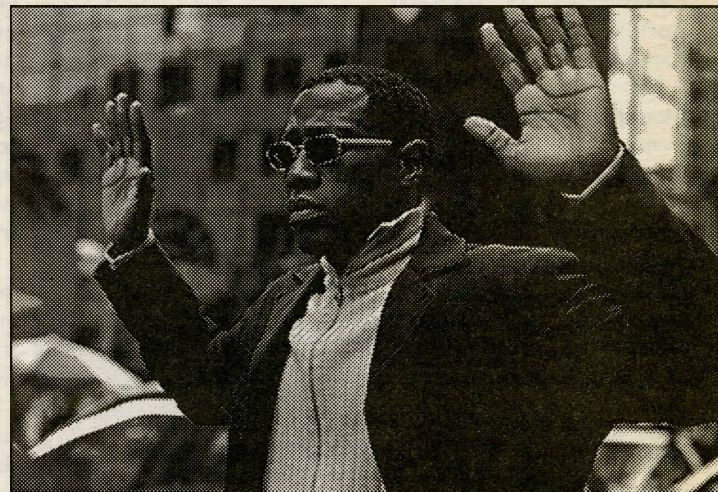
After roughly an hour of struggling to keep up with the plot, I surrendered and simply tried to enjoy the excesses of the production. On a guilty pleasure level, there are moments to savor.

Like the scene where Agent Cappella states, "So our boy gets rescued by the Triad, pops one in the melon and turns the rest into Chinese salsa." Who says that quality film writing is dead?

Or the early segment where Agent Shaw parachutes off the top of a skyscraper. A bad guy leans over the edge and uses a machine gun to cut the chute in half right down the middle, forcing Shaw to make one of his dazzling tuck and roll landings.

Now, to split a parachute in half from above, the bullets must be aimed directly at the top of Shaw's head, but somehow, he manages to land without a scratch. I guess top-notch FBI agents come equipped with bulletproof hair.

Despite the tsunami of illogic, Wesley Snipes plays it straight and the talented actor projects an



THE ART OF WAR: Wesley Snipes washes his hands of the entire thing. For the record, Mr. Snipes had absolutely nothing to do with the lack of logic in his new film.

appealing James Bond vibe. Several supporting players also show some flair, although the overloaded screenplay allows scant time for any of them to shine.

Compared to most of the utter dreck released this August, *The Art of War* was easy to sit through. Remember, though, that due to my job, I don't have to pay to see this stuff. For those who must shell out hard-earned cash for movies, I suspect the minor pleasures of this one will be best enjoyed on a TV screen at home, where it should turn up in three to four months tops. In the meantime, stick with films like *The Matrix*, where invulnerable heroes making gravity-defying leaps remain in a fantasy world more appropriate to their superhuman skills.

OPENING THIS WEEK!

Chuck & Buck

By Chuck Kopinski

★★★★½

Rated R • Running time: 1:35

Miguel Arteta's *Chuck & Buck* appears to begin as a potential screwball comedy, as it throws two childhood friends whose lives have taken divergent paths into many awkward situations. While Chuck (Chris Weitz) has gone on to a successful career as a record producer, his pal from yesteryear Buck (Michael White) is a poster child for arrested development, never having grown emotionally past his 11th year and subsisting on a diet of Blow-pops, Coca-Cola, and pizza, while dressing in clothes his recently deceased mother surely bought him.

Then the film's plot takes a turn ... and then another turn ... and yet another until it ends up being one the most curious, engaging, and unsettling movies of the year.

This is due primarily to the script by White who smartly holds his cards close to his chest, expertly revealing one unexpected piece of the puzzle concerning Chuck and Buck's past after another at a pace that deceptively sucks the viewer in. Just when you think you have it all figured out and know exactly where the film is heading, White throws us a curve that suddenly puts us off stride and has us reevaluating everything we've witnessed.

This is a movie that wastes no time as before the end of the opening credits, Buck's mother has died



CHUCK & BUCK: Buck (Michael White, left) makes a new friend who should be wary of his companionship.

and his childhood friend Chuck has made the mistake of coming to the funeral, paying his respects, and then mentioning offhandedly that if his old buddy is ever in Los Angeles, he should look him up. Buck takes him at this word and two weeks later has relocated to a motel room in the city of Angels with his most prized possessions (stuffed animals, Matchbox cars, his hi-fi, etc.), and is ready "to hang out and catch up" with Chuck. Needless to say, Buck's unannounced visits and constant phone calls put a crimp in Chuck's life and though his fiancée (Beth Colt) does her best to welcome this intruder into their home, he immediately views her as his enemy. Then Buck starts showing up at Chuck's workplace ... and at restaurants where he eats ... and begins harassing Chuck's assistant ... and when his autobiographical play called "Frank and Hank" opens at the theater across from Chuck's workplace we know that all the answers to any questions we

might have about this duo are to be found within.

Buck is an interesting creation, a contradiction of elements that is all too human, tragic, and frightening. Like Miss Havisham from *Great Expectations*, the clock has stopped for this young man. His room, stuffed with childish posters, toys, and music, hasn't changed a bit since he was 11 and he is given to moments of excruciating social awkwardness. He is unable to engage in the most rudimentary adult conversation, is naive enough to carry around \$10,000 in cash, and child-like in every aspect of his behavior. And yet, Buck drinks, sneaks into Chuck's workplace, is a voyeur, and engages in other less than admirable adult behaviors that gives this seemingly innocent character an edge that is completely unsettling. White pulls this off wonderfully, putting forth a childlike persona and allowing us just a glimpse of the troubled psyche that lurks beneath, while his light-complexion and seemingly stunted physical features reflect Buck's sheltered existence. Coupled with the film's masterfully paced, intelligent script, White proves to be a talent worth watching.

Chuck & Buck does have its problems. Weitz's performance is stiff and not completely convincing and the film's ending seems a bit too pat considering the complex issues the movie is wrangling with. And yet, it's a film that gets under your skin and yields other surprises upon further reflection as it stays with you, particularly after seeing Buck's new home. I couldn't help but think that, though on the surface it appears to be the right place for him, there is nothing but disaster lurking in the wings for him and those who frequent it. That I would continue to worry about Buck and those in his new circle speaks of this movie's power.