

Anti-Oscars

'War of the Worlds' star is nominated for a Razzie award for poor acting.

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Your guide to music, movies, festivals, the arts and anything else that's cool

SECTION C

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Music to your funny bone

Stage show combines eccentric wit, music

BY ANNETTE JONES
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Performance duo Rob Swimmer and Mark Stewart live in an imaginary world on stage.

The pair perform a mix of serious music and quirky humor for gigs at the Polygraph Lounge, a fictional nightclub in the heart of beautiful downtown Montezuma, Iowa, where it's always Saturday night.

As their alter-egos Chuck McCubbin and Ernest Tuber, the men go for laughs aimed at the funny bone of pop culture. Their modern jazz and contemporary classical music give the show a unique style.

Swimmer and Stewart bring their array of instruments and witticisms to The Commons Centre in downtown Columbus at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 10.

The show comes as an installment of the seasonal Anti-Freeze Performance Series, sponsored by the Columbus Area Arts Council. Tickets for \$20 to \$22 are available at www.artsincolumbus.org.

Soprano Melissa Fathman will join them that night at the Polygraph Lounge.

Swimmer and Stewart's invented Iowa locale is far removed from their New York roots.

As serious musicians, they have individually worked with Paul Simon, Steve Reich, Stevie Wonder, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Willie Nelson, Bette Midler and others. Together they worked with Simon and Garfunkel.

The Polygraph Lounge act showcases their professional experience, says Donna Stouder, spokeswoman for the arts council.

The performance isn't slapstick comedy, she says.

"They are so smart. They are out there where most of us don't travel," says Stouder, who saw clips of the show.

Stewart is a multi-instrumentalist, singer, composer and

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Mark Stewart, left, and Rob Swimmer incorporate a bit of zaniness into their music-comedy routines. The New York entertainers will perform in Columbus on Feb. 10.



Expect jazz and contemporary classical music during a comedy show staged by Mark Stewart, left, and Rob Swimmer. Tickets are \$20 and \$22.

IF YOU GO

Stage show

What: Rob Swimmer and Mark Stewart provide a night of serious music and intelligent comedy

When: 7:30 p.m. Feb. 10

Where: The Commons Centre, Third and Washington streets in downtown Columbus

Admission: \$22; \$20 for seniors

Tickets: Available online at www.artsincolumbus.org or through the Columbus Area Arts Council, (812) 376-2534

Coming up: Mike Armstrong performs two shows March 4 at The Commons. The ex-cop turned comedian is a regular on radio's "The Bob and Tom Show."



Kenya (Sanaa Lathan, right) finds herself falling in love with a landscaper (Simon Baker) in "Something New." Although he's not her IBM, or ideal black man, they fall into a comfortable friendship that turns into love.

There's something believable about romance in comedy

BY CHRISTY LEMIRE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

"Something New" lives up to its title: a romantic comedy that's both romantic and funny and not nearly as formulaic as so many films of the genre tend to be.

It's not perfect: Director Sanaa Hamri and writer Kriss Turner get a bit obvious with some of their dialogue and imagery. This is a movie in which a woman literally lets her hair down as an indication she's loosening up.

But the debut film from both women shows a refreshing approach to a premise (an interracial romance), characters (total opposites) and a city (Los Angeles)

that we've seen many times before.

And if you didn't know you were in the hands of female filmmakers walking into "Something New," it should become pretty obvious as soon as Brian (Simon Baker) pulls out the red nail polish and gives Kenya (Sanaa Lathan) a lovingly attentive pedicure.

A man never would have thought to include that. Unless he had a foot fetish.

Brian is a landscape architect with an easygoing personality,

something we could have deduced solely from the beat-up truck he drives and the golden retriever by his side. Brian is also white.

Kenya is an uptight workaholic on the verge of making partner at her high-powered accounting firm, and we could have figured her out based just on the beige-on-beige decor that dominates her home. She happens to be black.

She's also looking for love.

She laments her single state over cocktails with her equally beautiful, professional girlfriends (in a scene that feels a bit too much like a black version of "Sex and the City").

When a co-worker sets Kenya up on a blind date at a Star-

bucks, she's shocked to find the blonde-haired, blue-eyed Brian waiting for her, and not her IBM, or ideal black man.

They don't exactly have crackling chemistry with each other, but they eventually fall into an easy, comfortable friendship that turns unexpectedly (for Kenya perhaps, but not for us) into something deeper.

That the relationship evolves so subtly is one of the loveliest parts of "Something New," no forced witty banter, no game-playing.

It just sort of happens believably, and the fact that they're vastly different is never played in a heavy-handed fashion or for cheap, wacky laughs.



Martin Sheen as Josiah Bartlet, Gary Cole as Robert Russell and Jimmy Smits as Matt Santos, from left, star in "The West Wing." The show about a fictional president will end this year after seven seasons.

'West Wing' ends in executive style

Final episode of drama airs in May

BY DUSTY SAUNDERS
SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE

HOLLYWOOD, Calif.

The president, on a hotel stage rather than in the West Wing, gave his state-of-the-TV-union address.

"I love 'The West Wing' for many reasons," Martin Sheen said. "The show has been a fantasy. But we have offered a parallel universe to reality."

Sheen, aka President Josiah (Jed) Bartlet, then looked around the stage at fellow cast members.

"To have been a part of this crowd and those who were here before has been a powerful gift for me. It's a great inspiration to older actors, like me. If you stick around long enough, something good may happen," said Sheen, 66.

"There have been occasions where people have asked me if I was interested in public political

life. And I thought, 'My God, are we in that bad of shape?'"

Sheen, fellow actors, writers and producers of "The West Wing" gathered last week to meet with the press following executive producer John Wells' announcement the seven-year-series will end May 14.

It was an emotional weekend for "The West Wing" crew. The day before the announcement they attended a final service for the late John Spencer.

"I don't think anyone was really surprised. The rumors had been all over the place," Wells said. "I had conversations with Warner Bros. and NBC late last year. We agreed the time had come.

"But I'm thankful we'll have the opportunity to finish in graceful style, while providing a legitimate ending to Jed Bartlet's administration."

"The West Wing," off the air during the Winter Olympics, will return with episodes leading up to shows April 2 and April 9

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Pre-Oscars a jittery time for people who make celebs shine

Never mind the price: Gowns are about image

BY LEIGH GROGAN
SACRAMENTO (CALIF.) BEE

There wasn't an A-list celebrity stylist on the East or West Coast sleeping in Wednesday morning.

There's no rest for the fashion-frazzled this time of year, with one awards show tripping over another along the red carpet.

The Oscar nominations were unveiled Tuesday. That means stylists have little more than a month to find the perfect outfit for the high-profile stars they're well-paid to make look like somebody on March 5.

The list of nominated actresses includes a mixed bag of fashion veterans and fresh faces:

- Charlize Theron, nominated for "North Country" and a star who seldom misses a style beat, will likely have something made just for her or pull something from her own closet.



ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES PHOTO

Charlize Theron dressed in gold to receive her best-actress Oscar for "Monster" in 2004. Celebrities keep stylists busy during award season.

- Michelle Williams, receiving an Oscar nod for "Brokeback Mountain," moves into the fashion big leagues as a newcomer;

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