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Tusk

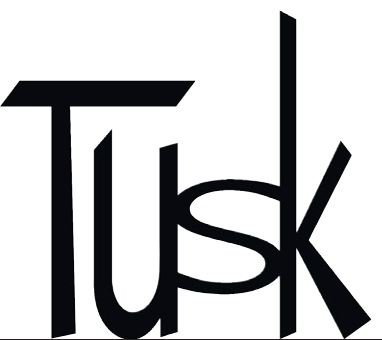
Godzilla



TOP SECRET



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Publication Data

Tusk is published each Friday by
The Tuscaloosa News.

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INSIDE SECTION D

editor's note

So I finally decided to like Godzilla when he attacked Megalon by leaping feet first, hanging in the air for literally three full seconds, bloated tailpiece scarring the ground, stunted face staring meaninglessly up at studio lights, until his Payless-slippers booties impact with a poof onto Megalon's guy-in-a-rubber-suit suit.

Godzilla seems to be taking a nap as he soars, and who can blame him? Who knows how long it took bored Toho techies to successfully tow his wire harness, prone and thoroughly not ready to kung-fu fight, across that blasted desert scape?

This crushed so many laws of physics that Albert Einstein came back to life enraged and 50 feet tall, took one look, shook his furry head, and slowly walked off to drown in the Pacific.

Or Did He?

Whenever folks want to deride Hollywood for silliness, I remind them that while Steve McQueen was quick-freezing "The Blob" — Or Did He? — in Tokyo the response to the popularity of T-Rex-like Gajira was a great honking raging turtle.

In addition to Daiei Motion Picture company's Gamera, Gajira spun off a carnival of monsters, including, but not limited to, Mothra, Rodan, Anguirus, King Caesar, Jet Jaguar, Varan, Gorosaurus, Kumonga, Zone Fighter, Baragon, Manda, MechaGodzilla, Gigan, Moguera, Fire Rodan, Mothra Leo, Medical Jet Jaguar, Fire Fighter Jet Jaguar

Meanwhile, in the U.S., we had to settle for a hot 50-foot tall woman in strategically ripped clothing, because hey, big and tall stores only stretch so far. Ask Hulk; those purple sweats last no time.

If anything, western movie monsters tend toward the modest, if you discount Tolkien-esque fantasy's dragons, trolls, oliphaunts and so on. Frankenstein's monster was a gigantic man — or concoction of parts of men — in Shelley's novel 8 feet tall, and in some film editions as much as 9 feet. Bruce the great white shark in "Jaws," at 25 feet and 3 tons, was quite sizeable.

But actual great whites have been said to reach between 21 and 26 feet. And the world's tallest man, Robert Wadlow, reached 8 feet, 11.1 inches, according to Guinness.

In 1980's "Alligator," we got, umm, a hulking alligator, 36 feet long, in a script by indie legend John Sayles. That's more like it, as the largest alligator recorded tipped about 20 feet. Semi-related is the 1999 comedy-horror flick "Lake Placid," with a 30-foot crocodile.

Speaking of American, how about Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, also getting a polish this summer (Aug. 8, produced by, speaking of gross horrors, Michael Bay), who stand up to, oh, human size? Well, a leatherback sea turtle, properly mutated to stand, could dwarf those dudes. The largest Dermochelys coriacea was measured at 9.8 feet from head to tail, with a carapace of 7.2 feet.

Perhaps the future lies in blending the best of all monster cultures. Producer-director J.J. Abrams created his 2008 "Cloverfield" as a new American creature, not Kong, to compete with a Godzilla toy his son coveted. USA!

Clover stood 25 stories high, with slick, not scaly, skin, covered in dog-sized parasites — the better to show creature-human interaction, as mites fell off and leapt onto folks. He didn't breathe fire, but behaved like a cross between a gargantuan elephant/crustacean/lizard, a quadruped who nonetheless stood on hind legs for periods. He either fell from space, or arose from a thousands-of-years slumber on the ocean depths after the plunge of a satellite. And it was also a newborn baby, explaining the confusion and rage, and setting up terrifying possibilities for a sequel when Mama comes looking for Junior, nuked in what used to be Manhattan.

Last year's "Pacific Rim" pitted giant robots manned by human teams to battle-stomp interdimensional invaders, in the form of giant kaiju-like monsters. Next time, blend in ninjas, wizards, pirates, Jedi, Scarlett Johansson, dragons, swords, lightsabers and Mecha-Betty-White, and you're on to something big.

Mark Hughes Cobb

Log on @



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MOVIE REVIEW



7D

"MILLION DOLLAR ARM"

There's nothing
surprising about this
charming baseball film,
but that's OK.

ON THE COVER

Godzilla's 60th anniversary is being celebrated with a brand new big-budget American film. See our coverages on **pages 8-11D.**

COVER ILLUSTRATION
BY ANTHONY BRATINA

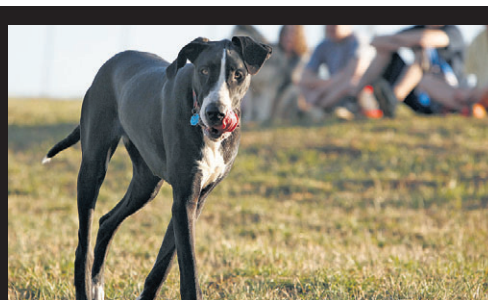
5 THINGS TO DO

COMPILED BY TUSK STAFF



BUY VEGGIES

The Home-grown Alabama Farmers Market sets up shop in its usual spot Thursday from 3-6 p.m. See where on **pages 12-13D**.



HEAD OUT WITH FIDO

Tuscaloosa Bark in the Park is Saturday at the Will May Memorial Dog Park. Learn more on **pages 12-13D**.

WANT A NIGHT OUT?

Check out our Things to Do calendar on **pages 12-13D**. It's loaded with local and regional events of the bar-crawling, music-loving and even family-oriented varieties.

THESE TWO JUST GO TOGETHER

Check out BBQ & Blues Saturday at the Historic L&N Station. The event benefits the DCH Foundation and features food and blues along with a silent auction. Visit **pages 12-13D** for details.



CELEBRATE WITH THEATER

Saturday, Theatre Tuscaloosa is hosting a one-night-only show for its 15th anniversary. See more on **pages 12-13D**.

LOCAL Q&A

Jill Price Parsons: Theater and amphitheater manager

By Mark Hughes Cobb
Tusk Editor

This week, meet Jill Price Parsons, who helps run big houses in Tuscaloosa and Birmingham; big houses like the Tuscaloosa Amphitheater and Red Mountain Theatre Company, providing art and entertainment for the masses, that is. She's also been seen on University of Alabama and Theatre Tuscaloosa stages, in shows such as "Rumors," "Christmas Belles" and "Crimes of the Heart."

Q: Who are you?

A: Jill Price Parsons.

Q: What do you do?

A: House Manager at the Tuscaloosa Amphitheatre and Box Office Manager at Red Mountain Theatre Company in Birmingham. As the house manager at the Amphitheater, I am in charge of hiring, training and managing all the event staff. Patron experience/safety and customer



FILE PHOTO

Jill Price Parsons works for the Tuscaloosa Amphitheater and Red Mountain Theatre Company, along with other theater-related projects.

service is number one in my book. As the box office manager at RMTTC, I am in charge of ticketing, season subscribers and the patron experience. I

graduated from UA with a degree in theater, with an emphasis on theater management. I made many connections while there, and that is how I have been employed over the years.

Q: Where are you from?

A: This is a difficult question to answer. I went to University Place Elementary School and moved to California. Graduated from high school in South Carolina, and moved back to Tuscaloosa as an adult. Tuscaloosa was always home to me. I always wanted to graduate from UA and I finally made it happen. Even though I work in Birmingham every day, I continue to live in T-town. It is home.

Q: What do you tell people or friends who've never been here about living in Tuscaloosa?

A: I tell them, Saturdays in the fall is like waking up on Christmas morning ... every Saturday. Although I am a theater connoisseur, I absolutely love football and Tuscaloosa could not be more perfect of a town. It is rich in

football and in the arts. It is a beautiful town.

Q: Where are the top places you take visitors and why?

A: The Tuscaloosa Amphitheater for concerts, Bryant-Denny Stadium for the excitement and a shaker, Tuscaloosa River Market for the farmers' market, Dirt Cheap for shopping, Taco Casa/Krispy Kreme for eating.

Q: What are your favorite places to eat? What do you order or suggest ordering?

A: DePalmas, Pasta de Palma; Hooligans, Chicken Gyro combo with unsweet tea; Don Tonos, Bama Bowl; Surin, Kaboom Maki sushi.

Q: What are some of the best hang-out locations around town?

A: The Alcove International Tavern.

Q: What are some of your favorite local activities?

SEE LOCAL | 5D

TUSKTUNES

MEET THE BAND: Ham Bagby

By Mark Hughes Cobb
Tusk Editor

This week meet Ham Bagby — like you didn't know him already — and The Siege. Even if you're not familiar with him under various incarnations, you probably know Ham. He's that lanky dude with the facial hair and the big smile, running open-mic nights, sitting in with bands from the original Blaine Duncan and The Lookers to the Ne'er Do Wells.

Such a big, friendly man deserves big, friendly music, and his is about as interestingly eclectic as you'll find, including oddball covers few others bother with — “Walking on Sunshine” or Christina Aguilera — and originals that “range from mildly serious to absolutely absurd in content, and I like to pretend that people like it (although I honestly don't pay attention to such things).”

And expect guitar solos. Lots and lots of guitar solos.

“I think the guitar solos are where it's at. I suffer from having learned a lot of really big and crazy guitar stuff in my younger years, so I try to fit all of it into my sets to validate those chops. I'd hate to think it was all a waste of time.”

Les Nuby from Vulture Whale once told Bagby he sounded like “Waylon Jennings meets '80s rock.”

Decide for yourself next weekend when Egan's hosts its annual Ham Ham Jam Jam, celebrating not only Bagby his own self, but many of his friends and fellow travelers in the rock 'n' roll wastelands. The list at press time included Elliot McPherson and Sweetdog, Blaine Duncan, Shiny Machine, Baak Gwai, Ne'er Do Wells and Ham Bagby and The Siege. More will be added; stay tuned to the May 23 Tusk for more. Meanwhile, meet this group:

Q: How did the band get started?

A: In 2003/2004 we started as a five-piece band called the Paper Scissors Rock Band which eventually became a trio when two guys stopped showing up to practice. Shortly after that we started going by Ham Bagby and The Siege.



STAFF FILE PHOTO

Ham Bagby performs in 2012 at Green Bar in Temerson Square in downtown Tuscaloosa.

Q: Who makes up the band and what do they contribute?

A: When we play it's usually as a trio and it's Michael Ray, Mike London and I. Sometimes we add more members for fun. At Ham Ham Jam Jam we will have Seth Hanna on drums also, Billy Smart and Jon Kilgore and Cat Mountain all on guitar as well. Egan's is the smallest room in the world to play a show in, so it's important to bring as big a band as possible.

Q: How would you describe your sound?

A: Good old rock 'n' roll, country and groovy R&B.

Q: Where have you been playing and what are some of your upcoming shows?

A: We don't play often anymore because we are all in different bands, but when we do it will most likely be at Egan's or Green Bar.

Q: Do you have any recordings available? If so, where can they be found?

A: My last album is easily obtained on the Internet at a multitude of

places, but I think the easiest is ham-bagby.bandcamp.com. (Editor's Note: It's called “ ‘(Expletive)'s Crucial' is Track Seven,” after his much-beloved, ambling and rambling — longer than “Free Bird” — paean to all that is most important to life).

Q: What are your short-term and long-term goals for your music?

A: I'm looking quite forward to another Ham Ham Jam Jam, and I'd like to record another record in 2014. As far as long-term goals, I don't know. I think I'm just going to keep playing and see where that takes me. ■

Alabama Shakes shaken up by sudden success

By Scott Mervis
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Count Steve Johnson, drummer for Alabama Shakes, among those who didn't have pie-in-the-sky expectations for what the band could accomplish.

"One of the first times I played with Zac and Brittany," he says, "I was like, 'This band has a better chance of going places than any other band I played with.' I was thinking along the lines of just putting out a decent album and playing in our town and surrounding bigger cities. That would have been fine for me, but I knew it had potential. I just didn't think it would be as well received by everybody as it was."

Since breaking out in late 2011, the Southern roots band led by soulful frontwoman Brittany Howard has taken its debut to No. 6 on the charts, played Bonnaroo and "Saturday Night Live" and received two Grammy nominations, including Best New Artist.

Bassist Zac Cockrell and singer-guitarist Howard started playing together in high school in their hometown of Athens. Johnson, a few years older, worked in a music store and had toiled in a variety of bands: "Punk bands, experimental bands, guys who were into Tool and Primus and Chili Peppers' psychedelic funk, hardcore bands that were just thrashing it out, dumb stuff."

He had grown accustomed to his bands lacking a crucial ingredient.

"Your frontman, frontwoman, is always the missing the link, the hardest piece to come by, that can vibe so well and at the same time not be like a (jerk). There's a couple of them I've played with where I'm like, 'Man, you're killing me.'

"She was always just different, and I've known Brittany since she was in like ninth grade. She would come in to buy like guitar strings and sit down and play little things she would come up with and she had a friend who was super cute, so I was like, 'Hey, ya'll



The Alabama Shakes perform at Egan's bar on Nov. 23, 2012.

STAFF FILE PHOTO

wanna come play some music?"

He knew that to suit her style, comparable to Janis Joplin and like-minded soul belters, he wasn't going to be playing as if he were in Tool.

"When I started playing with Brittany, I was 24 and she had just turned 20 or 21, and that's when I started holding back, not trying to squeeze as much into the song, because before that we kind of had to make up for our lack of a frontman by our playability, playing all this cool stuff to keep people interested. Now I'm playing with someone who's got a good voice and it's not necessary for me to be back there doing this dumb stuff while she's while trying to sing something beautiful."

They formed the band in 2009, added guitarist Heath Fogg and went out as The Shakes before adding Alabama for legal reasons. Their 2011 EP got them a gig at the CMJ showcase in New York and a New York Times rave that called them a "buzz band" with an unpretentious singer who could wail.

Before their debut album even came out, they were invited to tour with veteran

Southern rockers Drive-By Truckers.

"They were so inspirational and cool and good with us," Johnson says. "Had we not gone on the road with them first, we would have had some band who probably hazed us or were obnoxious. You come across bands sometimes like that that are just not friendly. But Drive-By Truckers, they were good to us. They would invite us on the tour

bus and be like on the side of the stage fist-pumping us."

With the success of the album, which was recorded in Nashville and released in April 2012 on ATO, Alabama Shakes watched its stock rise quickly.

Two years have gone by now, and constant touring has made it hard for the Shakes to generate a quick follow-up.

"Being new to it and touring as nonstop as we did," the drummer says, "that's so taxing on your body and your mind, and we're all just really big homebodies as it is, family people. It got to the point where, if you want anything decent from us, we need to get home and get our heads right, time to get back to normal mode and out of this chaos."

"So, we went back and had some time to just play at home and have some rehearsals in garages again and pay our bills and mow our lawns and stuff, and get a chance to write some more and go back in the studio, and we were doing that, and now we're to the point where we're itching to get back on the road. After you get your head cleared, you just wanna play music."

He expects a sophomore record to hit early next year and be a change of pace from the debut. ■

LOCAL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3D

A: UA Theatre and Dance. The theater and dance programs are both amazing and I love to catch shows whenever I can. I obviously like concerts — so I see every concert that comes through — it is kind of what I do. I occasionally catch a show at Theatre Tuscaloosa. I enjoy Alabama softball. I am a proud member of The Mystic Krew of the Druids, an organization that raises money for West Alabama

AIDS Outreach, and we have an annual Mardi Gras Bal Masque that I work on all year long.

Q: What things do you think Tuscaloosa needs or needs more of and why?

A: I'm pretty happy with the growth of Tuscaloosa. It could slow down a bit, as far as I'm concerned.

Q: How do you urge people to get more involved around town?

A: Bring them with me.

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DVD REPORT CARD | By Corey Craft, Tusk Writer

"HER"

The magic of "Her," Spike Jonze's Oscar-winning melancholy science-fiction love story, is that it shouldn't work half as well as it does. The story could either be played for straight comedy or seized upon as an opportunity to make a comment about our modern reliance on electronic devices. There is comedy and there is commentary, but Jonze, working from his original screenplay, treads into territory altogether more unexpected.

Joaquin Phoenix stars as Theodore Twombly, a lonely man in Los Angeles whose solitary life consists of working for a company at which he writes emotional, personalized letters for the relationships of others, and not much else. When he upgrades his computer's operating system, the voice that becomes his assistant and companion dubs herself Samantha, voiced by Scarlett Johansson.

Samantha and Theodore get to know one another, and despite their differences, form an emotional attachment — even as Samantha's intelligence evolves, grows closer to human and, eventually, beyond.

Without Phoenix and Johansson grounding this story, it wouldn't work; considering only one of these two leads is on screen, it's all the more remarkable that Johansson's contribution is so memorable and effective. "Her" largely avoids the broad looks you might customarily get in a different science-fiction work and focuses on the love story.

Anything else would prove unwieldy, but Jonze perfectly navigates tone with this potentially silly conceit, even as it spirals into peculiar places and takes twists and turns you might not see coming, culminating in one of those endings that surprises by encapsulating everything that came before in an unexpectedly perfect way. \$28.98 DVD, \$35.99 Blu-ray.

"THAT AWKWARD MOMENT"

That awkward moment when three likable male leads — Zac Efron, Michael B. Jordan and Miles Teller, who have all been in much better movies and done much better things — turn up in and do nothing to elevate a terrible romantic comedy. So little about "That Awkward Moment" is truly romantic or amusing that I suspect those seeking this out for a date or something would find themselves in ... well, you know, the title says it all.

The trio of young actors play long-time friends; Jordan is married, while Efron and Teller are lotharios whose hard-partying ways invariably lead them to sexual success with a carousel of at-



LIONSGATE

Aaron Eckhart stars in "I, Frankenstein."

tractive young women. The movie portrays this as excruciatingly difficult to manage, given Efron's allergy to commitment of the most basic sort (even when it comes to moments of simple human decency).

But a few things happen all at once: Efron meets The One (Imogen Poots), while Teller's best friend/wingwoman (Mackenzie Davis) suddenly strikes him as being a compatible long-term romantic partner, and Jordan's wife (Jessica Lucas) asks for a divorce.

Out of that sort of solidarity you only see in films portraying male friends and rarely, if ever, in real life, Efron and Teller pledge to Jordan they will remain single, which would not normally be a difficult thing to manage were it not for their new circumstances.

What it comes down to in these sorts of movies: Are the leads likable or funny enough to overcome the fact that these guys are playing, in essence, horrible people that we are expected to sympathize

with? And the answer to that question: Nope. Not one bit. \$30.99 DVD, \$35.99 Blu-ray.

"I, FRANKENSTEIN"

I, unimpressed. Were Mary Shelley, author of the novel "Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus" raised from the grave today — and had she not already been driven to madness by Kenneth Branagh's 1994 adaptation — surely "I, Frankenstein," which imagines her pitiable literary creation as the linchpin of a cosmic battle between angels and demons, would send her willingly back to eternal slumber in a despondence comparable to her monstrous character's.

Why does "I, Frankenstein" exist? What purpose does it serve? Market-based purposes? Well, it failed there. Its steampunk-inspired, twisted literary classics aesthetic would feel more at home in a music video for the band Evanescence from about 2002.

Aaron Eckhart and Bill Nighy, portraying the anti-hero Frankenstein's creation and his main demonic adversary, are respected actors, despite having a predilection toward schlock like this (between the "Underworld" franchise and "The Core," the two of them either have a fondness for cinematic cheese, or are related to the craft services guy on all of these sets).

Anyway, Frankenstein's monster, here named Adam (I, disgusted), is found in the wilderness and adopted by a group of angelic gargoyles to sequester him from the forces of darkness. An empty living vessel such as Adam is of considerable interest to the demons, who would love to have such a being for the dark forces of hell to inhabit, free of those pesky souls that humans possess. Or something.

Writer-director Stuart Beattie throws endless exposition at the viewer and yet not for one moment does it make sense, or at least make you care to parse it out. I, so bored. \$29.95 DVD, \$39.99 Blu-ray. ■

MOVIES | "MILLION DOLLAR ARM"

Jon Hamm's baseball film is corny but fun

By Jocelyn Noveck
The Associated Press

Let's face it: There's something about a baseball movie that just invites corniness. The hardest hearts soften at the mere sound of a cracking bat. It's hard for a filmmaker to resist laying the syrup on too thick.

And so it is with the Disney film "Million Dollar Arm," which makes a direct, uncomplicated, er, pitch for your heart — a pitch that will probably hit its mark, despite your best instincts telling you this movie should really be subtler at almost every turn.

Oh well. Somehow, this flaw doesn't feel like the biggest crime — especially when you have a high-quality cast at work. The quality starts with Jon Hamm, who by virtue of his well-known charisma makes a good case for his future film career, now that his days as Don Draper on TV's "Mad Men" are sadly ending.

Like Draper, Hamm's character here, the real-life sports agent JB Bernstein (the film's based on a true story), has a certain narcissism at his core. Unlike Draper, however, this isn't a deeply drawn character. Whatever faults he displays at the beginning (he prefers to date sexy models, and he wants to make money — oh no!) are pretty much neatly cured by the end.

In any case, the best parts of the story are actually not about Bernstein, but about the two young Indian men he brings to America in hopes of creating the next international baseball sensation — and opening up a huge, untapped market in the world's second most populous country.

Hence the title, "Million Dollar Arm," which is the contest that Bernstein devises to find his young stars. As the film begins, Bernstein and his partner Ash (the always-entertaining Aasif Mandvi) are searching for ways to revive their flagging business. A failure to land a major account means they can't even pay their LA office rent. One night, though, idly channel-flipping between a cricket game and Susan Boyle's famous out-of-nowhere audition on "Britain's Got Talent," Bernstein comes up with the idea to find cricket players who might be able to pitch a baseball.

And so it is with the Disney film "Million Dollar Arm," which makes a direct, uncomplicated, er, pitch for your heart — a pitch that will probably hit its mark, despite your best instincts telling you this movie should really be subtler at almost every turn.



DISNEY

From left, Jon Hamm, Madhur Mittal, Suraj Sharma and Pitobash in a scene from "Million Dollar Arm."

Thus begins a picturesque journey through the Indian countryside — making for director Craig Gillespie's most compelling visuals — for Bernstein and the wise-cracking, constantly napping baseball scout he recruits, Ray (the reliably cranky Alan Arkin) and a local baseball fanatic working for free, Amit (sweetly played by the comic actor Pitobash).

Most of the young men they find can't pitch worth a darn. But ultimately they come across Dinesh (the handsome Madhur Mittal, of "Slumdog Millionaire") and Rinku (the soulful Suraj Sharma, who starred in "Life of Pi.") Neither is actually a cricket player. But no matter — they can throw.

Back in Los Angeles, Bernstein gets to work setting up a Major League tryout, hiring a canny baseball coach (Bill Paxton) to get the boys ready in the impossible time frame of several months — a demand of their financial backer — despite the fact that they've barely touched a baseball and don't even know what the glove's for.

Of course, there are yet more obstacles. The two are homesick. Forced to live in Bernstein's apartment, they wreak havoc in his dating life. Luckily, the next-door neighbor, Brenda, is a pretty, smart, caring medical student (Lake Bell). This eventual relationship is telegraphed in such an obvious way, there might as well have been a

subtitle when Brenda first appears: "SOON-TO-BE GIRLFRIEND."

★★★
(OUT OF FOUR)

'MILLION DOLLAR ARM'

Starring: Jon Hamm, Aasif Mandvi, Alan Arkin, Madhur Mittal, Suraj Sharma, Bill Paxton, Lake Bell

Director: Craig Gillespie

Rated: PG for mild language and some suggestive content

Running time: 124 minutes

Will the two players overcome their lack of training, their nervousness and the cynical baseball press corps to have their moment of glory? Will Bernstein realize that there's something more important than making money?

Uh, have you ever seen a baseball movie? (And besides, we told you this was a true story.)

But let's not nitpick. It's a baseball movie! It's heartwarming, and hey, it has Jon Hamm.

Enough said. ■

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MONSTER CELEBRITY

A loving look back at a worldwide phenomenon

By Corey Craft
Special to Tusk

The King of the Monsters is once again returning to the big screens — and long may he reign, as this year marks not only the release of the latest iteration of Godzilla, but the beast's 60th anniversary.

From his earliest iteration in Ishiro Honda's 1954 Japanese classic through the series of cheesy but still captivating films that pitted Godzilla against a litany of giant monsters, all the way through Roland Emmerich's 1998 attempt to kill Godzilla dead once and for all with the first American remake, Godzilla has endured. But there's plenty about Godzilla you might not know, even if your childhood memories of a man in a fake-looking suit stomping through an unconvincing model city might be the only things that may come to mind.

Forthwith, a few interesting facts about the "Godzilla" series:

Ishiro Honda's 1954 "Godzilla" kicked off what has become a long-running and beloved film franchise with a film that may be far darker than many people remember. "Godzilla," the original Japanese film and its titular giant monster, was conceived by Honda as a metaphor representing the devastation wrought by detonation of atomic weapons above Hiroshima and Nagasaki only nine years before. The beast was mutated by nuclear experimentation, and Godzilla's destruction of Tokyo was intended to be representative not only of the horrors of what had happened, but the visceral anxiety of what could soon be, in a world of test detonations and nuclear arms races.

"Godzilla" in fact opens with a fictionalized version of a March 1954 incident in which a Japanese fishing trawler, the Daigo Fukuryu Maru, cruised within 85 miles of an American hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll. The boat was show-

ered with radioactive ash and its crew developed radiation sickness; the beginning of "Godzilla" ups the ante as it introduces its monstrous villain from the depths of the ocean as three fishing trawlers are consumed in a sea of flame.

You may not know how famous American author Ray Bradbury relates to the creation of Godzilla. 1951 saw the publication of Bradbury's short story "The Fog Horn," depicting a massive leviathan emerging from the sea, having mistaken a remote lighthouse's fog horn for a fellow beast. This story inspired the 1953 science-fiction classic "The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms," with stop-motion special effects from the legendary visual effects guru Ray Harryhausen. "The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms" also warned of the cumulative effects of nuclear testing on nature — and Honda, drawing off a fondness for Harryhausen's work, designed his own destructive giant partially based on the monster in the American film. (This film is widely regarded as one of the first in the resurgent craze of giant-monster films of the 1950s, along with a re-release of the 1933 classic "King Kong" in 1952; see the sidebar on pages 10-11D for more information.)

In 1956, Godzilla came to American shores with the recut "Godzilla, King of the Monsters!," which features most of Honda's original "Godzilla" film mixed with new footage surrounding an American reporter played by Perry Mason himself, Raymond Burr. Remastered editions of both of these versions were released on Blu-ray in 2012 as part of The Criterion Collection, with the original film playing right now in select theaters around the

country as part of the lead-up to Warner Bros.'s massive-budget remake. Needless to say, the "Godzilla" franchise became massively popular in Japan, spawning 27 sequels made by the

original Japanese studio, Toho, in 40 years. Many of these have received conspicuously timed Blu-ray releases in the past few weeks. During this series of sequels and spinoffs, Godzilla morphed into a more light-hearted anti-hero of sorts, usually defending Japan, if not the entire planet, against a worse giant monster foe. These tremendous kaiju battles would inevitably level Tokyo over and over again. Godzilla would face King Kong himself, along with new invented foes like the prehistoric flying reptile Rodan, three-headed dragon King Ghidorah, the fearsome Mothra and Hed-

semble cast including Bryan Cranston, Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Oscar nominees David Strathairn, Sally Hawkins and Ken Watanabe, and Oscar winner Juliette Binoche.

But you may not expect the reins of such a massive undertaking to be entrusted to a first-time studio director — yet Warner Bros. and Legendary Pictures did just that. 2014's "Godzilla" is directed by Gareth Edwards, whose only previous feature film was the 2010 independent creature feature "Monsters." The film is a love story set in a quarantined, abandoned Mexico overrun by giant alien creatures, following a photojournalist and a young woman on their trek toward the American border and back to safety.

Edwards shot the film in three weeks and completed some fairly extensive visual effects work on consumer-grade laptops in his bedroom during the course of five months. Its budget was well under \$500,000. The film got the attention of many in Hollywood, perhaps most important Legendary Pictures's CEO Thomas Tull, who was looking for the right filmmaker to restore the luster lost in the previous American "Godzilla" iteration.

Edwards was given a budget estimated at \$160 million to make his second feature — needless to say, a considerable increase in scale and resources. The filmmakers have said that this new "Godzilla" returns to the grittier origins of the 1954 film, portraying the big green guy as an anti-heroic force of nature. Whether it's tied once more to nuclear energies, or a more contemporary anxiety, just as Guillermo Del Toro's "Pacific Rim" served as a metaphor for climate change, remains to be seen. But audiences will soon check it out for themselves, and Godzilla may soon prove to be just as durable — and popular — as ever. ■

Not all was a total loss; the American iteration of Godzilla was renamed Zilla and introduced into the Toho continuity in "Final Wars," with the clarification that Zilla was merely misidentified as Godzilla by the Americans.

In 1998, Sony, with "Independence Day" director Roland Emmerich at the helm, attempted to bring the feared beast to American shores with his terribly received remake starring Matthew Broderick and Jean Reno. Despite seemingly endless promotional attempts, "Godzilla" was poorly reviewed by critics and audiences alike, and Sony's attempt at a new American "Godzilla" trilogy was ditched after one film. Not all was a total loss; the American iteration of Godzilla was renamed Zilla and introduced into the Toho continuity in "Final Wars," with the clarification that Zilla was merely misidentified as Godzilla by the Americans.

The production company Legendary Pictures acquired the American rights to the Godzilla character and has brought the character once again to the big screen with the big-budget remake opening in theaters today. The film features, amid kaiju terror and destruction, an en-

Godzilla

Name: Godzilla

AKA: Gojira, Gigantus, "Da Monstah!"

Born: 1954, or perhaps in the late Cretaceous Era

Height: Between 50 and 106.68 meters

Weight: 20,000 to 55,000 tons

Race: Irradiated Godzillasaurus Kaiju

Distinguishing features: Gray to green scales; serrated fins down tail

WANTED: For Random Acts of Violence, Wantonly Tromping On Scale Models of Cities, Heat-Ray/Flame Breath in Defiance of Anti-Smoking Ordinances

Known Associates: Mothra, Rodan, MechaGodzilla

Known Enemies: King Kong, humankind

Notes: Considered short-armed, but extremely dangerous



WANTED

MONSTER LINEAGE

Godzilla's the king, but who were its ancestors?

By Mark Hughes Cobb
Tusk Editor

As Corey Craft points out in his Godzilla ode, the King of the Monsters grew not only from the warlike follies of men, but from literary and filmic precursors similarly irradiated into existence.

And going back three decades or so, Godzilla has ancestors in just plain old bigness.

In conjuring the first gigantic movie monster, many might, predictably enough, jump back to the hairy ape King Kong. But one film full of overgrown beasts beat Kong to the silver screen. It's probably not as well-known or often-shown, in part because it's a silent, and perhaps because the filmmakers weren't clever enough to cutesy-name one of its monsters. Like Tex Rex or something.

The mother of all gigantic monster movies is 1925's "The Lost World," featuring stop-motion animation by Willis O'Brien — who improved on his techniques for 1933's "King Kong" — and based on the novel by Sherlock Holmes creator Arthur Conan Doyle, positing that dinosaurs and other prehistoric animals still stomped the earth, albeit on just one Venezuelan plateau.

Back in the day, you got bang for your big bucks. The titular great ape of "King Kong" was in fact just one gargantuan from an island — Skull Island — full of monsters, including outsized dinosaurs. But Kong had the catchy name, so he's the one they captured and brought back to put on the ritz, on Broadway.

Originator Merian C. Cooper may have based his story on a number of confluences. Gorillas had only as late as 1847 been found and described by Western naturalists, and little was yet known about their range and rage (they're actually quite docile).

Proto-humans might have carried forward tales of an extinct genus of ape, Gigantopithecus, which existed up until about 100,000 years ago, and stood as much as 10 feet tall and weighed up to 1,190 pounds.

And of course there was Doyle's belief that, with much of the world still uncharted, some pockets of ancient, thought-to-be extinct creatures might survive on isolated places, such as islands. Add in the fact that islands encourage gigantism in some species — in part through lack of predators and availability of food — et voila! Skull Island.

Sequels and remakes and spin-offs followed — including 1949's "Mighty Joe Young," featuring animation work by O'Brien with Ray Harryhausen, who'd go on to create many monsters of his own — though few are as beloved as the original Kong.

In the '50s, movie monsters exploded, almost literally: As Corey notes, the fears of post-Hiroshima fallout and mutation, and of the follies of men with their fingers on nuclear triggers, created 1953's "The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms," the colossal ants of "Them!" (1954), the mammoth octopus of "It Came From Beneath the Sea" (1955), the towering spider of "Tarantula!" (1955) and the prodigious dinosaur of "Behemoth, the Sea Monster" (1959), which was very much a remake of "Beast from 20,000 Fathoms."

Interesting also to the origins of Godzilla, and Kong's abiding influence: The original conception of the beast was as a cross between a gorilla and a whale. The Japanese title "Gojira" came from words gorira, meaning gorilla, and kujira, meaning whale. When Toho developed the edition for English-speaking audiences, it came up with Godzilla as the closest English transliteration of Gojira. ■

1925

"The Lost World"

1933

"King Kong"

1949

"Mighty Joe Young"

1953

"The Beast from
20,000 Fathoms"

1954

"Them!"

1954

"Godzilla"

1955

"It Came
from Beneath
the Sea"

1955

"Tarantula!"

1959

"Behemoth,
the Sea
Monster"

Chilling 'Godzilla' reboot upholds legacy

By Jessica Herndon
The Associated Press

No one can blame Gareth Edwards for admittedly feeling nervous when asked to helm a remake of the biggest monster movie of all time. Sure, the only other film he had directed happened to be 2010's "Monsters." But this time, it was Godzilla.

Well, the latest iteration of the 60-year-old franchise is in capable hands. Edwards' "Godzilla" is a pleasingly paced 3-D spectacle that pays chilling homage to the artful legacy of the original 1954 film — Ishiro Honda's "Gojira" — while emerging as its own prodigious monster movie.

Created as a symbol of the nuclear threat following America's atomic attacks on Japan in World War II, Godzilla's reappearance suggests the nuclear tests conducted by the U.S. in the Pacific after the war were really meant to hold the radioactive dinosaur back.

This story begins in Japan in 1999 as nuclear physicist Joe Brody (Bryan Cranston, edgy in an unbearable wig) investigates questionable seismic activity at the Janjira nuclear power plant.

When a team at the plant, including his scientist wife, Sandra (an underused Juliette Binoche), dies in what everyone believes is a natural disaster, Joe dedicates his life to proving that what caused the devastation was anything but natural. His obsession creates a rift between himself and his son, Ford.

Fifteen years later, we catch up with Ford (played by a placid but sexy Aaron Taylor-Johnson) in San Francisco, where he lives with his wife (Elizabeth Olsen) and their son.

Serving in the U.S. Navy, Ford disarms bombs, a skill that later helps him save the planet from MUTOs — "Massive Unidentified Terrestrial Organism" — that emerge from a long dormancy and begin traveling the globe, feeding on radiation.

Screenwriter Max Borenstein, working from a story by Dave Callaham, doesn't bombard us with multiple narratives or a multitude of characters (Ken Watanabe and Sally Hawkins play scientists, and David Strathairn plays an admiral).

Instead, the film focuses on Ford's family story, which Borenstein takes his time developing. When we finally see Godzilla — just shy of an hour into the film — the anticipation has built to such a degree that we expect to be awe-struck. And we are.

The tallest of any Godzillas before him, this one stands 355 feet high — about 30



PHOTOS | WARNER BROS. PICTURES

This film image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows a scene from "Godzilla."

★★★
(OUT OF FOUR)

'GODZILLA'

Starring: Bryan Cranston, Juliette Binoche, Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Elizabeth Olsen, Ken Watanabe, Sally Hawkins and David Strathairn,

Director: Gareth Edwards

Rated: PG-13 for intense sequences of destruction, mayhem and creature violence

Running time: 123 minutes

stories — with glistening, scaly skin and dorsal fin spikes down his back. His terrifying yet textured roar shakes the theater.

Aiming for a realistic take on how we might react to an invasion by giant creatures, Edwards makes sure our view of them rarely shifts from the human perspective.

Honoring the eerie music of the original, this film's score by Alexandre Desplat ("Argo") is equally menacing, rich with horns that complement the consistently serious tone of the movie.

In the original film, made using stop-motion photography, an actor stomped around a miniature Tokyo in a latex suit. But in the hands of visual effects guru Jim



Aaron Taylor-Johnson, left, and Elizabeth Olsen in a scene from "Godzilla."

Rygiel ("The Lord of the Rings" franchise), the contemporary take looks incredibly fluid and Godzilla's movements appear far more natural.

But we're not bombarded with excessive CGI here. Godzilla isn't oversold, although for some, his lack of screentime won't be satisfying enough. However, the balance between the family-focused story line and intense action sequences is bound to please others.

A threat to the planet in the '50s version,

Godzilla isn't out to take the world down this time. He's here to be its hero and his massive showdown — fiery radioactive breath and all — against the MUTOs is the highlight. He's more than a catastrophic beast and we're on his side when he swims off into the sunset.

While the predictable sequel has not yet been confirmed, one thing is clear: Edwards' version of "Godzilla" remains the ultimate monster movie. The legacy has been upheld. ■

CALENDAR

WHERE TO GO

T-TOWN VENUES
WITH LIVE MUSIC

■ The Bear Trap, 1137 University Blvd., behind the Strip. 205-346-2766.
 ■ Big Al's, 2108 14th Ave. 205-759-9180.
 ■ Capone's 4th and 23rd, 401 23rd Ave. downtown, Temerson Square. 205-248-0255.
 ■ Egan's, 1229 University Blvd. on the Strip. 205-758-9413.
 ■ The Filling Station, 411 23rd Ave. 205-764-0924.
 ■ Gallette's, 1021 University Blvd. on the Strip, 205-758-2010.
 ■ Gnemi's Top Shelf Tavern, 407 23rd Ave., 205-343-0020. www.myspace.com/topshelftavern.
 ■ Harry's Bar, 1330 Hargrove Road. 205-758-9332.
 ■ Innisfree Irish Pub, 1925 University Blvd. 205-345-1199.
 ■ Green Bar, 2209 Fourth St., connected to Wilhagan's. 205-752-2060.
 ■ The Jupiter on the Strip, 1307 University Blvd. 205-248-6611. www.jupiterbar.com
 ■ Mellow Mushroom, 2230 University Blvd. 205-758-0112.
 ■ Pour Cafe, in Capstone Church, 1907 University Blvd., www.myspace.com/pourcafe.
 ■ The Red Shed, 509 13th Ave., 205-344-4372.
 ■ Rhythm and Brews, 2308 Fourth St., downtown in Temerson Square. 205-759-2992. www.rhythmnrbrews.com
 ■ Rounders, 1215 University Blvd., on the Strip.
 ■ Temerson Square Bar, 407 23rd Ave. 205-343-2229.
 ■ The Yellowhammer, 2310 University Blvd. 205-752-6330.
 ■ Wilhagan's, 2209 Fourth St., 205-366-0913. www.facebook.com/wilhagans.

OUT OF TOWN

■ Alys Stephens Center, 1200 10th Ave. S., Birmingham. 205-975-2787. www.alysstephens.org.
 ■ Barking Kudu, 2929 Seventh Ave. S., Birmingham. 205-328-1748. www.barkingkudu.com.
 ■ Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex, 2100 Richard Arrington Blvd. N., Birmingham. 205-458-8400. www.bjcc.org.
 ■ Courtyard 280 Oyster Bar, 4643 U.S. Highway 280 S., Birmingham. 205-980-9891.
 ■ The Nick, 2514 10th Ave. S., Birmingham, 205-252-3831. www.thenickrocks.com.
 ■ Metro Bistro & Market, 2125 Second Ave. N., Birmingham. 205-323-7995.
 ■ WorkPlay, 500 23rd St. S., Birmingham. 205-380-4082. www.workplay.com.
 ■ Zydeco, 2001 15th Ave. S., Birmingham. 205-933-1032, www.zydecobirmingham.com.

THINGS TO DO

LOCAL MUSIC

TODAY

■ **Casey Thrasher:** 10 p.m., Rhythm & Brews. 205-750-2992.
 ■ **Matt Bennett Trio:** 10 p.m., Rounders, 1215 University Blvd, www.roundersonthestrip.com. 205-345-4848.

SATURDAY

■ **Seymour Blue for Live at the Brewery Series:** 8 p.m., Druid City Brewing Company, 607 14th St.
 ■ **Nic Snow Duo:** 10 p.m., Rounders, 1215 University Blvd, www.roundersonthestrip.com. 205-345-4848.
 ■ **Triggerproof:** 10 p.m., Rhythm and Brews. 205-750-2992.

MONDAY

■ **"A Requiem":** 7 p.m., \$10 adults, \$5 students, Holy Spirit Catholic Church, 733 James Harrison Jr. Parkway, performed by Prentice Concert Chorale, directed by Leslie Poss with Terry Moore on piano. "A Requiem" is a compilation of greatest hits from some of the best known, most beloved musical settings of requiem texts, from legendary composers including Johann Sebastian Bach, Gabriel Faure', W. A. Mozart, Franz Schubert and Giuseppe Verdi, as well as living composers Paul Basler, Eleanor Daley and K. Lee Scott.

THURSDAY

■ **Amy McCarley and Chambless & Muse (Jil and Scooter from Henri's Notions) for Acoustic Night at the Bama:** 7:30 p.m., \$5, Bama Theatre's Greensboro Room. No smoking, full bar. 205-758-5195.
 ■ **Glen Templeton:** 10 p.m., Rhythm and Brews. 205-750-2992.

REGIONAL

TODAY

■ **Willie Sugarcapps (Grayson Capps, Will Kimbrough, Corky Hughes and duo Sugarcane Jane featuring Savana Lee and Anthony Crawford), Brigitte De-Meyer:** 7:30 p.m., \$30, Moonlight on the Mountain, Birmingham. www.moonlightonthemtn.com. 205-578-2444.
 ■ **The Joy Formidable, Preston Lovin'good and Velouria:** 8 p.m., \$10, Iron City, 513 22nd St. S., Birmingham. 205-202-5483. www.ironcitybham.com.
 ■ **Rebel:** 10 p.m., Iron Horse Cafe. www.

ironhorsecafe.net. 205-978-5599.

■ **Fire Mountain (album release show), Joel Madison Blount:** 9 p.m., \$10, 18 and older, Bottletree Cafe, Birmingham. www.thebottletree.com. 205-533-6288.
 ■ **Randall Bramblett Band, Seven Handle Circus:** 8 p.m., \$18, WorkPlay Theatre. www.workplay.com. 205-879-4773.
 ■ **All the Locals, JB Strauss:** 10 p.m., \$8 Zydeco, Birmingham. 205-933-1032.
 ■ **Jasper Coal:** 10 p.m., \$6, The Nick, Birmingham. www.thenickrocks.com. 205-252-3831.

SATURDAY

■ **Mark Stuart, Raquel Lily:** 7:30 p.m., \$12, Moonlight on the Mountain, Birmingham. www.moonlightonthemtn.com. 205-578-2444.
 ■ **Peter Bradley Adams, Caitlin Canty:** 8 p.m., \$15, WorkPlay Theatre. www.workplay.com. 205-879-4773.
 ■ **Eagulls, Twin Peaks:** 9 p.m., \$10 in advance, \$12 day of show, 18 and older, Bottletree Cafe, Birmingham. www.thebottletree.com. 205-533-6288.
 ■ **Beitthmeans (CD release party), Leaderdog:** 9:30 p.m., \$8, Zydeco, Birmingham. 205-933-1032.
 ■ **Fly By Radio:** 10 p.m., Iron Horse Cafe. www.ironhorsecafe.net. 205-978-5599.
 ■ **Amigo, The Old Paints, Yellow Hammer Heart, Reverse Order:** 10 p.m., \$7, The Nick, Birmingham. www.thenickrocks.com. 205-252-3831.

SUNDAY

■ **George Clinton and Parliament Funkadelic, Fishergreen:** 8 p.m., \$30, Iron City, 513 22nd St. S., Birmingham. 205-202-5483. www.ironcitybham.com.
 ■ **Truckfighters, Stoned Cobra:** 8 p.m., \$10 in advance, \$12 day of show, WorkPlay Theatre. www.workplay.com. 205-879-4773.

MONDAY

■ **Open-mic night:** 7:30 p.m., \$5, Moonlight on the Mountain, Birmingham. www.moonlightonthemtn.com. 205-578-2444.
 ■ **SoulSwitch, Undisclosed:** 9 p.m., \$5, The Nick. www.thenickrocks.com. 205-252-3831.

TUESDAY

■ **10 Years, Twelve Foot Ninja, Catholicist, Koralyst:** 7 p.m., Iron Horse Cafe. www.ironhorsecafe.net. 205-978-5599.

■ **Killswitch Engage, Trivium, Battlecross and Nothing More:** 7 p.m., \$30, Iron City, 513 22nd St. S., Birmingham. 205-202-5483. www.ironcitybham.com.
 ■ **Corey Nolen (CD release show):** 8 p.m., \$10, Moonlight on the Mountain, Birmingham. www.moonlightonthemtn.com. 205-578-2444.
 ■ **Stevie Monce Band:** 9 p.m., \$5, The Nick. www.thenickrocks.com. 205-252-3831.

WEDNESDAY

■ **Pop Evil, Escape The Fate, Avatar, Glamour of the Kill:** 7 p.m., \$22.50, Iron City, 513 22nd St. S., Birmingham. 205-202-5483. www.ironcitybham.com.

THURSDAY

■ **Buckcherry, Fozzy, Nonpoint:** 7 p.m., \$32, Iron City, 513 22nd St. S., Birmingham. 205-202-5483. www.ironcitybham.com.
 ■ **Dayna Kurtz, Robert Mache:** 7:30 p.m., \$12, Moonlight on the Mountain, Birmingham. www.moonlightonthemtn.com. 205-578-2444.
 ■ **PJ Morton, Clinton Babers:** 8 p.m., \$20 in advance, \$25 day of show, WorkPlay Theatre. www.workplay.com. 205-879-4773.
 ■ **Ces Cru, L. Cole:** 9 p.m., \$7, The Nick, Birmingham. www.thenickrocks.com. 205-252-3831.
 ■ **Pine Hill Haints, Lost Bayou Ramblers:** 9 p.m., \$10, 18 and up, Bottletree Cafe, Birmingham. www.thebottletree.com. 205-533-6288.

LOCAL EVENTS

SATURDAY

■ **Tuscaloosa Bark in the Park:** Bark in the Park dog event, free at the Will May Dog Park in Sokol Park. Registration from 9-10 a.m.; dog blessing at 10:30; Paws on Parade at 10:45; announcement of parade winners at noon; vendor demonstration at 12:15 p.m.; dog weddings at 1. Prospective volunteers can call 205-886-0187 or email jack@jackryanhomes.com. Pet-specific exhibitors can call 205-345-7323.
 ■ **BBQ & Blues:** 6-10 p.m., The Historic L&N Station, 301 Greensboro Ave., benefiting the DCH Foundation, featuring McAbee Pigfitter's barbecue, sides, silent auction and blues music by Tommie "T-Bone" Pruitt. 205-759-7349. www.thedchfoundation.org.

■ **“Command Performance”:** A one-night only gala celebrating 15 years of the Bean-Brown Theatre at Shelton State Community College, featuring scenes and songs from Theatre Tuscaloosa’s years in its first permanent home. Tickets \$50, include pre- and post-show receptions and a reserved seat at the show. The pre-show reception in the Wilson Carr Rehearsal Hall begins at 6:30 p.m., and the show in the Bean-Brown at 7:30, with a closing reception following. www.theatretusc.com. 205-391-2277.

THURSDAY

■ **Homegrown Alabama Farmers’**

Market: 3-6 p.m., Canterbury Episcopal Chapel lawn, 812 5th Avenue on the University of Alabama campus, with 20 vendors selling fruits, vegetables, baked goods, honey, eggs, meat, canned goods, cheese, seedlings, cut flowers, soap, homemade herbal teas and more. Also kids’ table with free face-painting and crafts.

There will be live music by The Doctors and The Lawyers.

This week is an EBT/SNAP Double Day; all EBT/SNAP Benefits transactions will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$25.00 in EBT/SNAP market tokens.

Limited edition posters, T-shirts, and tote bags all designed by local artists will be for sale at the Homegrown Alabama Information tent. www.homegrownalabama.ua.edu.

UPCOMING

■ **MAY 24:** The 17th annual Freedom Creek Blues Festival, 11 a.m.-8 p.m., \$10 suggested donation, Aliceville, featuring Mudcat, Alabama Blues Project Band, DieDra and the Ruff Pro Band, “Birmingham” George Conner, Little Lee, Blues Women Review, Mississippi Blues Boys, Willie Lee Halbert and Band. Bring chairs. www.freedomcreek.org, email info@freedomcreek.org or call 205-366-1307.

■ **MAY 28-31:** Shakespeare’s “Julius Caesar,” performed by The Rude Mechanicals, 8 p.m., Marris’ Spring Park — between Campus and Stadium drives, behind Rowand-Johnson Building — on the UA campus. Live pre-show music begins at 7:30 p.m. Free. Bring chairs and blankets. Allen Bales Theatre in case of rain. 205-348-0343.

■ **MAY 29:** Styx, Foreigner and Don Felder, 7 p.m. Tuscaloosa Amphitheater. Tickets — \$20 to \$75 — on sale through the Amphitheater box office, www.ticketmaster.com, or 800-745-3000.

■ **JUNE 8:** Steve Martin & The Steep Canyon Rangers, with Edie Brickell, 8 p.m., Alys Stephens Center, Birming-



STAFF FILE PHOTO

Daniel Lovelady, an employee of Snow’s Bend Farm, restocks pints of strawberries at the Homegrown Alabama Farmers Market. The farmers market is open Thursday from 3-6 p.m. on the Canterbury Episcopal Chapel lawn.

ham. www.alysstephens.org.

■ **JUNE 10:** “Jesus Christ Superstar” Arena Spectacular, 8 p.m., BJCC Arena, Birmingham. Tickets, from \$41.50 to \$91.50, through Ticketmaster. www.bjcc.org.

■ **JUNE 11:** Bruno Mars, 8 p.m., BJCC Arena, Birmingham. Tickets, from \$49.50 to \$99.50, through Ticketmaster. www.bjcc.org.

■ **JUNE 13:** Fantasia and Joe, 7 p.m. Tuscaloosa Amphitheater. Tickets on sale at the Amphitheater box office, online at www.ticketmaster.com or by calling 800-745-3000. Prices will be \$39, \$49 and \$75.

■ **JULY 3:** Mary J. Blige, 8 p.m., Tuscaloosa Amphitheater. Tickets on sale at the Amphitheater box office, online at www.ticketmaster.com or by calling 800-745-3000, for \$49.50, \$69.50, \$99.50 and \$125.

■ **JULY 11:** Miranda Lambert, opening act TBA, 7:30 p.m. Tuscaloosa Amphitheater. Tickets on sale at the Amphitheater box office, online at www.ticketmaster.com or by calling 800-745-3000, for \$39.75, \$59.75 and \$69.75.

■ **JULY 18:** Peter Frampton, The Doobie Brothers, 8 p.m., Tuscaloosa Amphitheater. Tickets on sale for \$22.50, \$42 and \$62, with \$77.50 for Gold Circle seating, at the Amphitheater box office, online at www.ticketmaster.com or by calling 800-745-3000.

■ **JULY 19:** Ray LaMontagne, 7:30 p.m., BJCC Concert Hall, Birmingham. Tickets, from \$31 to \$61, through Ticketmaster. www.bjcc.org.

■ **JULY 26:** American Idols Live, 8 p.m., BJCC Concert Hall, Birmingham. Tickets, from \$37.50 to \$90, through Ticketmaster. www.bjcc.org.

■ **JULY 27:** Steely Dan, 8 p.m., BJCC Concert Hall, Birmingham. Tickets, from \$64.25 to \$129.75, through Ticketmaster. www.bjcc.org.

■ **AUG. 21:** Jake Owen, Parmalee and The Cadillac Three, 7 p.m., Tuscaloosa Amphitheater. Tickets will go on sale 10 a.m. June 13 at the Amphitheater box office, online at www.ticketmaster.com or by calling 800-745-3000. Prices will be \$32.50 and \$42.50.

■ **AUG. 22:** Crosby, Stills & Nash, 8 p.m., BJCC Concert Hall, Birmingham. Tickets through Ticketmaster. www.bjcc.org.

■ **SEPT. 18:** Darius Rucker, Chase Rice and Sam Hunt, 7:30 p.m. Tuscaloosa Amphitheater. Tickets will go on sale 10 a.m. July 18 at the Amphitheater box office, online at www.ticketmaster.com or by calling 800-745-3000. Prices will be \$25, \$39.50 and \$75.50. ■

ADVICE & CROSSWORD

GO AHEAD, MAKE HER DAY

By Merl Reagle | The Washington Post

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NOTE: Can you figure out (1) what the answers to the asterisked clues have in common, and (2) what this has to do with Mother's Day? (Hint: Write out the letters in these squares: 70-101-10-29-51-115-14-39-56.) Explanation next week.

- ACROSS**
- 1 Madame Bovary
 - 5 Battery refill
 - 9 Singer of the "Blazing Saddles" theme
 - 14 Rumble, as hair
 - 18 Bartlett's sample: abbr.
 - 19 Carefree places
 - 20 Part of FSBO
 - 21 Turn ____ (become)
 - 22 *
 - 26 Snoopy, in his dreams
 - 27 Reason for a food recall
 - 28 Sounds of relief
 - 29 Flip out
 - 30 Like a steno pad
 - 32 *
 - 37 Shoreline goo used in spa treatments
 - 39 1040EZ issuer
 - 40 As late as, on signs
 - 41 Special addition?
 - 42 Water cooler?
 - 45 What an anchor anchors
 - 48 * (continues at 80 Across)
 - 51 House person, briefly
 - 54 Makes public
 - 55 Instrument heard on "For All We Know"
 - 56 Approach the jetway
 - 57 Andean animal
 - 59 Quite a ways away
 - 60 Actor Mineo
 - 61 Oasis fruit
 - 62 Letter-shaped shop devices
 - 64 Trust busters?
 - 66 * Where this answer is located (and, if you add a word to the front, a former sitcom)
 - 69 They hang together
 - 70 States confidently
 - 72 Pay ____ way
 - 73 Bireme prop
 - 74 Toothpaste amount
 - 75 "Love, Not War," e.g.
 - 76 Leave broke
 - 77 Murray the singer
 - 78 Wild and crazy
 - 79 USN rank
 - 80 * (see 48 Across)
 - 85 Peruses again
 - 86 Reveal accidentally
 - 87 A ____ bit
 - 89 Inherit
 - 90 Patriotic women's org.
 - 91 Takes potshots
 - 95 *
 - 101 Underground blast, perh.
 - 102 Bagel flavor
 - 103 Writer Rand
 - 104 Raccoon cousin
 - 106 Cpl. or sgt.
 - 107 *
 - 113 Drink garnish
 - 114 Serious
 - 115 Invalidate
 - 116 Untainted
 - 117 Leaking sound
 - 118 Memory units
 - 119 Noisy birds
 - 120 Some studios, in ads
- DOWN**
- 1 Is, in math

- 2 Indiana city
- 3 Italian city (Pavarotti's birthplace)
- 4 Got stuffed
- 5 Specially created, as a committee
- 6 Rapper-producer Green
- 7 Like the monster in "Forbidden Planet"
- 8 Brit. mil. award
- 9 Ness and others
- 10 Up to our necks (in)
- 11 Country retreat
- 12 Intro to realism
- 13 Prohibition, e.g.
- 14 Cell division
- 15 Doffs one's topper
- 16 Visit, as the bank
- 17 More peeved
- 19 "Stuff like that," briefly
- 23 Lower
- 24 ____ the groundwork
- 25 Tognazzi of "La Cage aux Folles"
- 31 Gives off
- 33 Matzoh ____
- 34 Ferrell's frequent partner in "SNL" skits
- 35 Glutton of the grape
- 36 Sheet music squiggle
- 38 Bank transaction
- 43 Some cigars
- 44 Horseshoe-shaped fastener
- 45 "In other words ..."
- 46 Put a spell on
- 47 Humpty's perch
- 48 Go-between
- 49 Rap sheet data
- 50 Pollen producers
- 51 Period of fasting
- 52 Pre-board, e.g.
- 53 Appear briefly, as a parade rider
- 54 Burning
- 58 Napkin's place
- 61 Refuses to grant
- 62 Trolley alerts
- 63 Grocery boxfuls
- 65 Ready to go
- 67 Scent follower
- 68 Mr. Chips portrayal
- 71 Pre-bout attire
- 76 Vaquero's rope
- 77 Civil War photos and Mickey Mouse dolls, e.g.
- 78 "Button your lip!"
- 81 Craving
- 82 Spots
- 83 Dalmatian or Pomeranian, perhaps
- 84 Popular garden flower
- 85 Makes big changes in
- 87 Reacts to a sour note
- 88 Some ousted dictators
- 90 Yapper of Bedrock
- 92 Suppressed
- 93 Police ____
- 94 Puts away
- 95 Wet bars?
- 96 Corporate letters
- 97 Make jack-o'-lanterns
- 98 Moppets
- 99 Ill-fated Corleone
- 100 Lisbon's river
- 105 Bus. card abbr.
- 108 Putin's old org.
- 109 Like some smiles
- 110 Morsel a horse'll like
- 111 India-born character on "The Big Bang Theory"
- 112 Books reviewer

ANSWERS APPEAR ON PAGE 15D

SUDOKU PUZZLE

Difficulty: 5 (of 5)

					4			1
		8				9		
6	5				2		8	
	6							4
9	2		5					
		4				6	1	
					8	2		
		9	7					3
1					3		7	

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THURSDAY's ANSWERS ON PAGE 15D

TELEVISION BEST BETS

"Hawaii Five-0," 7 p.m. on WCBI, WIAT. Mary (Taryn Manning) is ill, so McGarrett (Alex O'Loughlin) and the Five-0 team must look after her new baby while investigating the death of a federal agent who was working under cover. Daryl Hannah guest stars as a real estate agent in "Ua Noholia"—Hawaiian for "in deep." Scott Caan and Daniel Dae Kim also star.

"Shark Tank," 7 p.m. on WCFT. In the season finale, entrepreneurs who received investments from the Sharks share their success stories. Hoping to join their ranks are a college student who's created an innovative storage box, a couple with a line of reinvented cookware, two moms who have designed an app to measure feet for shoes, and two men with a simple method for tying up water balloons.

"Whose Line Is It Anyway?" 7 p.m. on WTTQ. Jack Osbourne, TV presenter and former reality star ("The Osbournes"), is the guest star in this

new episode, taking on improvisational challenges with regulars Ryan Stiles, Colin Mochrie and Wayne Brady and guest comedian Nyima Funk. Aisha Tyler hosts the festivities.

"Grimm," 8 p.m. on WTVA, WTVM. Rosalee and Monroe's (Bree Turner, Silas Weir Mitchell) big day has arrived, and they couldn't be happier — but those around them aren't so fortunate. Nick and Juliette (David Giuntoli, Bitsie Tulloch) come to a realization that could change their relationship forever. Adalind (Claire Coffee) carries out a plan with disastrous consequences for Nick in the season finale, "Blond Ambition." Russell Hornsby also stars.

"Barbara Walters: Her Story," 8 p.m. on WCFT. This week marks the end of Barbara Walters' long career — at least the daily on-camera part, as she'll continue executive producing "The View." In this new two-hour special, she looks back on that career, concentrating on the untold stories and

other interesting bits of background.

"Kitchen Nightmares," 8 p.m. on WBRC. Gianfranco had a dream — to be a chef. So his mother, Rosaria, moved the family from New York to Pennsylvania to open a restaurant where he could make that dream come true. Unfortunately, the Italian eatery is failing, and the whole family's dreams could come crashing down if Gordon can't turn things around in the season finale, "Bella Luna."

"Hart of Dixie," 8 p.m. on WTTQ. Zoe (Rachel Bilson) makes a grand gesture in her attempt to be a good friend to Wade (Wilson Bethel), but she ends up forcing him into a tough decision about his future. Lavon and George (Cress Williams, Scott Porter) get a new perspective on their lives after meeting their idol, Don Todd (Reggie Hayes). Grandma Bettie (Maree Cheatham) urges Lemon (Jaime King) to take her husband-hunting more seriously in the season finale, "Second Chance." ■

GAME BYTES

No one will miss you, Kinect

By Phil Owen
Special to Tusk

It happened, and it was not surprising.

On Tuesday, Microsoft announced that it would begin selling a version of the Xbox One that does not include the long-useless Kinect camera (used, in theory, for vocal control over the system as well as to enable motion-controlled gaming), bringing the price of the system down to \$400, on par with the PlayStation 4. There will still be an Xbox One/Kinect bundle, and Kinect sensors will be available separately if somebody who buys the cheap SKU wants to circle back later on.

In the wake of the announcement, there was much celebration but also much whining, and Microsoft continuing to turn its back on its really terrible, anti-consumer vision for the Xbox One. Microsoft originally designed a system built to spy on you in your home for advertising purposes, built to exert strict control over how you use the system and its software, built for an age in which people are cool with that. It turned out 2013 was too early, and for a minute there Microsoft was a legitimate supervillain in plain sight.

Among the whiners this week are techie nerd apologists, the kind of folks who think all new tech is good and should be accepted. It's the same group of folks who think virtual reality headsets have mainstream appeal, and so they bemoan the fact that Microsoft no longer requiring consumers to get a Kinect camera with every Xbox One is a setback for the advancement of gaming. Or something.

Over on #SportsTwitter there was a running joke for a while about Mark Sanchez, the oft-maligned quarterback for the New York Jets. That guy was the starter for four years before missing this past season with an injury, and even when the Jets were good it wasn't really because of him. And when the Jets were bad, it certainly was in large part because he just wasn't very good or capable of canceling out deficiencies at other positions. On his best days, Mark Sanchez was pretty mediocre, and that's the story of Kinect as well.

In truth, there are two reasons Microsoft is dropping the Kinect: They have some kind of user metadata that says the people who have an Xbox One don't use the Kinect features like voice and gesture control all that much; and there aren't enough games that require Kinect, either in release or development, to justify the surcharge in the long term.

And whose fault is that? Even if you want to bemoan the seeming abandonment of Kinect, can you really blame Microsoft for this happening? The first-generation Kinect for the Xbox 360 was released in 2010. Developers have had a long time to work with it, and still there's nothing worthwhile there except dancing and fitness games. You could say Microsoft should have led the way, but Kinect was never about the games for them, anyway.

Still, the idea that we all should suffer for the sake of tech that is four years old and has proven to be mostly useless for consumers in that time is hilarious. Kinect absolutely had its chance, and it's certainly not the fault of consumers that nobody could figure out what to do with it. It doesn't justify its expense today, and Microsoft continuing to cling to it would have been a bad look. Period. ■

Phil Owen is a freelance video game critic and columnist.

DIRTY CASUAL

Voice chat is not something 'League of Legends' needs

By Keli Goodson
Design Editor

It finally happened. A third-party mod for "League of Legends" has been introduced that promises to offer integrated voice chat into the game. When you enter a game's character selection screen, you can be connected in a voice chat with the random people you're playing with.

I'd been hearing about it for a bit (and publisher Riot Games has released information reiterating its stance against third-party mods while calling this one out specifically), but I wasn't troubled until I got into a game where some random guy began raging over no one else on our team using the mod, called Curse Voice. It wasn't a ranked game, either. It was one of the noncompetitive just-for-fun modes. He went on to be a jerk in-game, too.

Way to prove the point that voice chat would be bad, dude.

So thank you, Riot, for refusing to bow to pressure and allowing a third-party program that would inevitably hurt the integrity of the game. Who wants to play a game where people can freely berate you until you actively mute them — with no ability for the game's makers to monitor or ban the jerks?

If a player is being a jerk via chat, you can mute them and then report them at the end of the game. With enough reports of bad behavior, a player will get punished through suspension or banning. Riot can't do this with jerks over voice chat.

Do I hate voice chat? Of course not.

I made liberal use of it during my "Warcraft" days, and I still make use of it when I play "League" with friends. The people I voice chat with are people I know, or people my friends

know. They've been vetted and at least one person in the group knows they aren't a terrible human being — or, barring that, any recurring non-civil actions would result in being shunned from the group.

This isn't the case with random games of "League." I don't know these people, and they don't know me. With the millions of gamers playing "League," odds are I'll never again run into someone I play with randomly.

I'd imagine it's different with higher levels of ranked play, but I'm more focused on the average player: someone who plays a few times a week for fun, not accolades or ranked rewards. Why do these people need to talk to each other when the in-game chat and ping systems work fine?

Sure, there are some cases where being able to say, "Hey, someone's heading your way" instead of taking the time to type it would save a player from death, but instances like that aren't prevalent enough to necessitate voice chat across the board.

I'm with Riot all the way on this one. With "Warcraft," mods and add-ons were a slippery slope. You could play without them, but if you wanted to be involved with any raiding guild at all, if you wanted to use the auction house reliably, or if you wanted to run a dungeon with random people and not get ragged at, you had add-ons. At least 10 of them.

The thing I like most about "League" is that it is incredibly easy to dive in to. You don't have to worry about installing mods and making sure they're updated. If you're not playing serious modes, you don't have to constantly look up strategies or theorycrafting. You just log in and play.

Which is why I'm seriously rethinking my decision to dabble in "Warcraft" again, but more on that next week. ■

Sudoku and crossword puzzles appear on Page 14D. Thursday's Sudoku answers are below, and today's crossword answers are at right.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

3	7	8	1	6	5	2	9	4
6	9	5	3	4	2	7	8	1
2	1	4	8	7	9	6	3	5
1	5	2	9	3	7	4	6	8
7	6	3	4	1	8	5	2	9
8	4	9	5	2	6	3	1	7
4	8	6	7	9	3	1	5	2
9	2	1	6	5	4	8	7	3
5	3	7	2	8	1	9	4	6

EMMA	ACID	LAINE	MUSS
QUOT	EDENS	OWNER	INTO
UNDER	THEVOL	CANOA	AUTHOR
ACE	ECOLIA	AHS	GOAPE
LINED	COSBY	SHOWC	OSTAR
SEAMUD	IRS	TIL	IST
ICECUBE	THE	NEWS	
LATEP	PUBLISHER	OF	A REP
AIRS	OBOE	TAXI	LLAMA
FAR	SAL	DATE	CCLAMPS
LIES	IN	THE	MIDDLE
ASSERTS	ONES	OAR	DAB
MOTTO	RUIN	ANNE	ZANY
ENS	BUSINESS	SMAGAZINE	
REREADS	LETS	SLIP	
WEE	GET	DAR	SNIPES
SIXTIES	ACTIVIST	NTEST	
ONION	AYN	COATI	NCO
ACLOCK	WORK	ORANGE	ACTOR
PEEL	GRAVE	ANNUL	PURE
SSSS	BYTES	JAYS	APTS