Featuring:
Cramer Kern - The Year in Movies
Paul B. Simon - Construction & Trees on ESA
Ethan Guagliardo - G. W. Bush Hypocritical
Maila Nelson - Jerry Springer and Our Culture
Hampton Myers - Politicians Don’t Try To Think
Morgan Weiland - ESA English Not Obscene
Josh Guagliardo - A Celebration of Sports
Tommy Fertel - The Saints Stink
Ethan Guagliardo - Genetics and Abortion
Hampton Myers - Television Season Preview
Ricky Miers - “Fight Club” Review
Paul B. Simon - Babies and Guns in Politics
Greetings, and thank you for taking the time to read this second issue of The Eclectic. We realize that your choice of school newspapers is great, and we thank you for making The Eclectic your premier source of student opinion.

As with the last issue, much work went into completing this fine literary exposition. I hope you all shall congratulate the courageous writers who bravely put forth their opinions and ideas for your enjoyment and consumption. For those cynics out there who view these articles with scorn and an air of superiority, I challenge you to do better, you pompous little punks, and I ask you why you do not have the guts to present your own thoughts.

As Editor-in-Chief, I feel that I must thank the writers, who did a stellar job in obeying deadlines and producing outstanding, entertaining pieces of work. I especially extend my gratitude to those who had not previously written or expressed an interest in The Eclectic; the new perspective was greatly appreciated, and we eagerly anticipate further contributions from this group.

Additionally, I must thank Mr. Tutwiler, our courageous faculty advisor and English emeritus, and the Administration, particularly Ms. Blevins, for their understanding in our dealings with contents and deadlines. Trust me when I say that these two people care as much about this paper as anybody on campus and their effort is greatly appreciated.

Despite all the joy surrounding the arrival of this second issue, I must somewhat dampen the mood with an apology for this edition’s late arrival. Those of you bored enough to keep track of such things will notice that we have not published since the first quarter. The reasons for this delay are many, ranging from pneumonia to computer failure, but we persevered and think that you shall enjoy the superior quality of this edition. A couple of articles, most noticeably those in entertainment and sports, may be slightly out of date, however, we believe that their general content is still intriguing and entertaining.

If you have any questions or comments about The Eclectic or any of its articles or writers, please feel free to contact me, Paul Simon, a senior, locker #414. We constantly strive to improve our paper in any manner possible, and student input is greatly appreciated.

With thanks,
God Bless,
Paul B. Simon
Editor-in-Chief
Response to Parent's Slandering of ESA’s English Department
By: Morgan Weiland

Earlier this year, a parent complained about the literature that was being taught at this school. She wrote a letter, a plea, to the other parents, calling for them to intervene and take action. She claimed that the novel being taught was a literary joke because the style of writing gleamed with grammatical errors and choppy, often difficult to understand logic. She claimed that this form would confuse the students, operating off of the premise that the students could not understand a novel that is not grammatically perfect.

In addition to the problems with the book's writing, the letter also claimed that the book was entirely inappropriate for eighth graders to be exposed to because its content was much too risqué. The parent claimed that the book, which dealt with topics of murder, incest, and rape, are too lurid for the impressionable children, surrounded by a society of teen suicide and school massacres. The parent proceeded to attack the teacher, saying, in so many words, that she was corrupting the youth. She cried out to the other parents, demanding that they take a stand and ensure that their children receive a, “real education.”

“The parent claimed that the book, which dealt with topics of murder, incest, and rape, are too lurid for the impressionable children, surrounded by a society of teen suicide and school massacres.”

So what is this wretched novel, this vile molester of innocence that so concerned this parent? The novel is Ellen Foster, one which a majority of the Upper School and I have read with no ill effects, and I would like to clear up a few points about the book. First, the novel is written in a literary style known as “character voice”. Specifically, it is written in the voice of an young, uneducated child. Furthermore, it is also written in a “stream of consciousness” format, in which the text represents the character’s thoughts as they flow from her mind, regardless of how uneven or confusing they may be. Given these facts, the story’s grammar and writing are not going to be correct; a young, uneducated girl does not think along the rules of grammar and good writing. When presenting this story, the English teachers at ESA make a point of these important literary devices, which appear later in the student’s education in such texts as Huckleberry Finn. The techniques that received such criticism in Ellen Foster are legitimate literary tools that broaden the students’ literary horizon; they do not distort his or her view of correct grammar and writing style.

Second, I do not believe that the corruptive influences in Ellen Foster that so incited
the mother in any way relate to teen suicide or school murder. Maybe this parent wants to shelter her child from reality, but the points in Ellen Foster are certainly not of such importance that they warrant a letter to all of the 8th grade parents. Does she really believe that thirteen and fourteen year olds have never heard of murder, rape, and incest? If these children have ever watched the news, then they have been corrupted far more than Ellen Foster could ever hope of doing. I honestly question if the parent has even read the book in its entirety, because if she had, she would have known that Ellen is a very strong character whose perseverance and independence steer her through a difficult life. True, Ellen’s life is a little more extreme than most, but the students at ESA have such a narrow view of society; most of us do not truly realize how good our lives are. This novel might actually open our eyes to the realities of other kids, and then we might not take our lives for granted.

“Ellen’s life is a little more extreme than most, but the students at ESA have such a narrow view of society; most of us do not truly realize how good our lives are.”

Third, I thought that the parent was very unfair in her attacks on the teacher. The one component of this school that defines and separates it, makes it special, is its teachers. The teachers here are trusted confidants and mentors to the students, and they are certainly deserving of more respect than the parent granted them.

In truth, what worried me more than the specifics or the parent’s argument was its implications. When I read the letter, I felt transported into the world of Fahrenheit 451, and I was just waiting for her to call the fireman to burn down the school because we had books. High schools definitely should not promote censorship. I was alarmed at the references to teen suicide and Columbine High School, with the connection between those tragedies and the risqué issues in Ellen Foster and with the implication that we should hide these aspects of life from students. Of course, no sane person wants their child to be shot at school, but it is the parents’ fault if they ignore these realities. Parents should not be so hidden about what

“I felt transported into the world of Fahrenheit 451...”

they expose to their children; that stifling censorship is why more children go to their peers for information on sex, drugs, and violence than their parents. Many parents seem scared that their children might approach them about such issues, but we cannot act as if our ignoring an
issue shall make it disappear. Eighth graders are about to enter high school, and if parents do not accept that their children are growing up, then they are only doing them harm. I feel that it is much safer to educate kids about life and its realities in the home, instead of avoiding complicated and upsetting issues all together just to set the child up for eventual disaster when he or she goes to college and suddenly encounters all of the evils of life with no parents to guide him through the issues.

"The distance that the letter shows between the teachers and parents alarms me, because those two groups should be united by the common interest of the child, not at odds for control of the child...the essence of ESA cannot survive without intimacy and loyalty between all people involved in the school."

On a more immediate level, I worry what this letter suggests about ESA. Parents should not undermine the school by immediately sending letters to other parents without first consulting the teachers. The school publishes teachers’ phone numbers for a reason, so that parents can address their complaints with teachers on an honest, up-front level that most benefits the students. The distance that the letter shows between the teachers and parents alarms me, because those two groups should be united by the common interest of the child, not at odds for control of the child. I worry that as we increase in class numbers and chapel sizes, we also expand the rifts between the factions of this school, namely, the administration, the teachers, the parents, and the students. ESA is so rooted in the close ties that exist between these groups that losing them would destroy a major part of what makes the school special. Greek city-states could not survive if they became too large because the intimacy, and therefore the loyalty, could not be maintained. Likewise, I worry that the essence of ESA cannot survive without intimacy and loyalty between all people involved in the school. Perhaps this lack of intimacy that accompanies growth is somehow related to the stolen CD cases and other items, facts which I believe also signifies that trust and respect so vital to the school are threatened. Regardless of the connection or the actual reasons, something is not quite right, and we should all be searching for the reason.
Preserve the Trees on Our Campus
By: Paul B. Simon

If you look at the new chapel construction, you'll notice a small problem; there is a giant oak branch hanging where the building shall supposedly stand. This poses a problem for the builders, but it also poses a greater question for our community about how we shall handle these great symbols of our past as we deal with the necessities of our future.

There is a giant oak branch hanging where the new chapel shall supposedly stand.

The oak trees do not presently face serious danger from construction. The designers of the master-plan last year performed an outstanding and lasting service for E.S.A. when they made the preservation of the oak trees a priority in the campus’ design. However, as the current situation with the branch and the chapel construction illustrates, we cannot simply rely on those plans to ensure the oak trees’ future; we need to make the preservation of the oak trees a priority for our community. We need to come to a consensus that the oak trees that provide our campus with the shade and feelings of a natural, outdoors atmosphere, must not be chopped down or otherwise interfered with in a manner that might permanently harm them.

With the case of the oak tree hanging over the future chapel, the builders shall, at the very least, have to remove one of the tree’s main limbs, and the cosmetic eyesore that shall result shall stand as an unfortunate and presumably unforeseen victim progress. However, if at all possible, we must save the tree itself; we should not harm the area the tree needs to survive, including the ground above its sensitive roots. Additionally, though alteration of the tree seems unavoidable and understandable in this instance, we should attempt to avoid any cosmetic changes, such as the chopping of limbs, beyond the minimum required.

We, as a community, did an outstanding job in the master plan of making the trees a priority for the school’s future, but we must ensure that we do not lose sight of this important objective amid the excitement and anticipation of constructing new facilities.
Genetics, Abortion, and Their Consequences

By: Ethan Guagliardo

The ethics of genome tampering, or genetics, are very muddled indeed. On one hand, this new science could save the lives of many of the unborn; while on the other, it could result in a race of "perfect" humans, superior physically and mentally, who could become a defined social and economical upper class, essentially a nobility. History proves that when social classes become as clearly defined as this, with one group much wealthier and stronger than others, the social fabric and thus all of civilization begins to crumble. When I first sat down to write this article, I had the intention of completely denouncing genome tampering, even if it was used to save the lives of the unborn. I quickly realized that the situation was far more complicated, and I deleted my first paragraph. How could I, a supporter of most pro-choice legislation, decree that a couple may not save their yet unborn child from a disease that could easily be eradicated by changing some genetic material? How could I believe that a mother may abort a baby, and not believe that she could save her child? I am not pro-death. But if I allow her the right to save her baby, where do her rights end when it comes to genome tampering? Should she be able to change her child's looks as well? Yes, the situation is very muddled indeed.

I believe that the mother should have the right to choose whether her baby should live or die. Unlike my views on abortion, I believe that the mother should be able to meddle with genomes in order to save her baby. Yes, it is not "natural." But we are the human race. Since when have we lived in harmony with nature? Humanity and nature should exist in balance with one another. Humans need nature to survive, and nature obviously has some use for us since it hasn't discarded us quite yet. There is a thin line between keeping and tipping this balance, and admittedly, genetics and abortion are right on it. However, I do not believe that these issues quite cross the line. On the other hand, fooling with the human genome for any other reason than basic survival does cross this line, and it crosses it with leaps and bounds.

Before scientists began mapping the human genome, men attempted to meddle with nature in other ways in order to create a superior physique and mental state. These men were called Nazis, and they would do anything to achieve their goals, including the mass-murder of millions of "inferior" Jewish and other people. Engineering human genomes for certain traits in order to make a "better" human being is not as far as one would think from the grotesque experimentation practiced by Germany during World War II. Just the mentality that there could be a group of "superior" human beings is dangerous.
One could say in defense of genetic engineering that we might all one day be equal. Equality is a noble goal, but people should be equal in the treatment they receive, not in a physical sense. This may be cliche, but if everyone were really equal, then the world would be incredibly boring. The absence of individuality is destructive: take communism, for instance. Enough said.

Human greatness comes from how one makes him or herself. We take the hardships we have to live with daily and learn from them, making ourselves better in the process. How can we improve ourselves if everything is handed to us at birth? The psychological effects on those whose parents could not afford genetic tampering would be tremendous. What would it be like to know that you could never be as good as a genetically "improved" person?

Obviously, parents should not be choosing the traits of their children. The problem arises when genetic engineering can save lives. Where does one draw the line between survival and cosmetics? The answer lies in responsibility. We must be sure to only allow genetic tampering in the case of extreme disease and survival alone. Even the genomes of children with Down Syndrome should not be altered. If this was allowed, it could eventually be acceptable for parents to choose what their children would look like and what their talents would be, and humanity would suffer drastic consequences. If the human race can handle genetic engineering in a responsible and ethical manner, all will not be

The Age of Jerry Springer, Why?

By: Maila Nelson

Has society truly reached an all time low? At nearly every television sitting, I flip through the stations to find numerous distasteful shows. With the exception of PBS and Disney, scenes of violence, crime, and perversion pollute our screens. A prime example is Jerry Springer, of which I have struggled through an episode or two. What purpose does his televised existence serve? Does this seem necessary to take up an hour of airtime to exploit filth, immorality, and, "large women avenging their adulterous mates?" After viewing his show, I felt no intellectual development, no motivation to fulfill good deeds in the world, nor do I feel morally enlightened. His program is supposed to entertain us, but if it does, we should be embarrassed of ourselves as a society.

I feel that the evil that exists today is a shadow of the past, limp and easy to brighten.

Because of the trash on television, some people deem it true that American culture is decaying and currently stands at its all-time worst. In some events, television acts only as a mirror, reflecting real situation and problems that humanity faces. However, I must doubt that the troublesome issues that we face today are new to mankind's existence. Although one can claim that television
Maila's article continued...

is partly responsible for the our decay, as it may influence some criminal cases, evil was not just recently born into the world. All people who have taken Western Civilization, regardless of how much one actually retains from the class, no doubt remember the "raping, pillaging, plundering, burning, looting, and destroying." Today's difficulties seem like nothing compared to the brute corruption people faced in the past. Monarch of the past had their own, "Monica Lewinskys", and yet Clinton is thoroughly tormented for, "betraying his country", as if he were the first to have extracurricular marriage activities. Wrong is wrong, but affairs are not a new issue. King Henry VIII had his wives executed when they did not produce sons; is this not crazier that the petty troubles of today's marriages? If the past, there was wretched slavery, the dreaded holocaust, the plague, and innumerable wars and pestilence. To say the least, our world has been through a lot. Reflecting upon the grave malignancy of the past leads me to the conclusion that today's world, despite what I see on television, is not at a low. Instead, I choose to see these present days as virtuous, improved, and changing for the better. I feel that the evil that still exists in the world is a shadow of the past, limp and

Gun Control, Abortion, and the Presidential Election

By: Paul B. Simon

In the upcoming Presidential election, the Democratic candidate shall almost certainly make gun control a premier issue. The Republicans, dedicated against gun control, are on the wrong side of the issue with the voters, especially women, who favor tougher gun control by a two to one margin. Sadly, both parties overlook the core of the issue itself, the fact that tougher gun control laws would have done nothing to prevent the tragic school shootings that have recently occurred. In the case of Columbine, the shooters broke fourteen gun laws in performing their crime; as Congressman Chris John, an anti-gun-control Democrat asked me sarcastically, "Would it have helped if they had broken fifteen?" Gun control and school shootings, though emotionally linked and thus important to the voters, bare little relation to each other from any substantive public policy perspective, as the needed step in current gun-control is better enforcement of already existing gun-control laws, and the issue of the school shootings is a multi-dimensional problem that addresses the roots of our alienated society.

Another issue that shall certainly play a role in the election is abortion. It made headlines with both parties recently, first with the Democrats when Bill Bradley correctly accused Al Gore of blatantly lying about his past position on the issue. With the Republicans, John McCain, who is pro-life, had been
fiercely criticized by Alan Keyes for saying, in a statement that he later retracted, that he would allow his teenage daughter to decide if she wanted an abortion were she to become pregnant. McCain finally rebuked Keyes’ thoughtless rhetoric by stating, “I know the value of human life,” alluding to his POW days in Vietnam. The abortion issue is usually unimportant in legislative campaigns, but because of the President’s power to nominate Supreme Court justices, and because of the hope/fear of an appeal of Roe v. Wade, it shall always prove an important hurdle for candidates of both parties wishing to cast themselves in the correct light for their party’s most radical and generous supporters.

Regardless of what eventually happens on the abortion issue with the campaigns, the new President and both parties should address the issue of partial birth abortions, a completely unnecessary and inhumane procedure that is nothing more than the killing of a baby as it leaves the mother. A partial birth is performed in the middle of childbirth, as the baby is about to emerge from the womb, by turning him backwards so that he comes out feet first. When the only part of his body remaining in his mother is his head, the doctor reaches in with a vacuum and sucks out his brain an instant before it slides into the world. There is almost no legal argument for the procedure, as from the perspective of Roe v. Wade, to argue that the baby is still part of the mother in the middle of childbirth, when half of it is outside the mother, is ludicrous, as it implies that the position of the baby’s head, and that factor alone, determines when it is a human being. Most sadly, the procedure is completely unnecessary. Many pro-choice activists favor abortions as a means of avoiding a long, painful, and sometimes humiliating pregnancy, but with the baby so close to delivery, there is no reason that the mother should not simply deliver the baby and give it up for adoption. Given the long waiting periods most people wait to adopt a baby, and given the number of loving, capable couples on adoption lists who would like nothing more than to raise that baby, there is no reason for the mother to kill an almost-born child.

The moral implications of allowing this sick procedure to remain legal are scary, and given its lack of legal basis and necessity, Both parties should work to make this inhumane procedure illegal. Sadly, the woman’s groups, a powerful interest in the Democratic party, shall not allow the Democratic candidate, should he become President, to support such a measure, as they apply the same absurd logic to abortion that the NRA applies to assault-rifles. Just as the NRA viewed assault-rifles as only a piece of the larger gun-ownership issue, so the woman’s groups view partial-birth abortion only in terms of the larger abortion issue; neither group wants to grant an inch on the lesser issue for fear of the larger issue involved. The country had the resolve to stand up to the NRA and secure the safety of its streets; we should now have the resolve to secure the safety of our children.
We’re Not Even Pretending to Think Anymore
By: Hampton Myers

Politics is politics is politics. One shouldn’t get depressed when our representatives stop caring about the good of the society and start paying more attention to party agendas. It happens. It has happened. It will remain this way forever. Why? People like to control their environment, and they do this by forming groups. The under ten crowd makes treehouse clubs, teens form gangs, and politicians join parties. But it is not just politicians anymore. The masses are joining the club as well. People are increasingly approaching issues as a Republican or a Democrat instead of simply a rational person. Look at the arguments for the nuclear test-ban treaty. Liberals shout about how republicans are being irrational oafs to be concerned with party boundaries. Republicans are shouting about Clinton’s obstinacy. Look at the reaction to the Columbine shootings. Politicians seized the tragedy as an opportunity to support any of their personal agendas. In the end, although everyone agreed that change was needed, everyone refused to budge, and they argued into a stalemate. Although I believe that the lack of change was ultimately beneficial, the way that this came about represents the very worst of American politics.

It is assumed in the Constitution that each of the three bodies will stay within its bounds to avoid displeasing the other two branches. For instance, if Bill Clinton uses his veto excessively, the Congress will stop passing his legislation, so, theoretically, they will strike a compromise of what is an acceptable use of the veto. However, in the present situation, Republicans have taken their discontent with Clinton’s vetoes and translated it into opposition to absolutely any liberal legislation. This naturally displeases both Bill Clinton and the Democratic portion of congress; so, in response, they each become far more hostile. Instead of trying to appease the other party to avoid further belligerence, the Republicans and Democrats each give no concession at all to push past this obstinacy. And together, they engage in a contest of who can provoke the other most.

No one will elect a candidate with no official party, one willing to listen to all sides of every issue.

A perfect example of this is the liberal reaction to the partial birth abortion issue. I have heard absolutely no liberals defending the procedure. Instead, they cite this as the first step in a right-wing scheme to end all abortion. In truth, they are probably right, and given half a chance, Republicans certainly would try to end all abortions. Regardless, the mentality of their opposition to the ban is clear. They do
not care about the specific issue; they care about halting the overall Republican legislation at every turn, leaving no room for compromise to accomplish the goals of either party.

This is a crime of which the Republicans are no less guilty. The most moderate gun restrictions are stalwartly resisted and met with the claim that this is just one in a series of regulations that will end with the destruction of all gun rights. They do not care about the specific issue; they care about the overall schemes and intentions of the political rivals.

Worst of all, no one will elect a candidate with no official party, one willing to listen to all sides of every issue, who cares what the majority of his constituents have to say, and who thinks outside of the care of conventional party politics. Because of the disillusion most voters feel towards the current political establishment, only staunch liberals and conservatives are dependable voters. Until those undecided resolve to be heard, the system shall not change. Government shall continue on this path of petty bickering, with everyone speaking, but no one listening.

G. W. Bush and
Compassionate Conservatism
_The Walking Oxymoron_
By: Ethan Guagliardo

America will have to face a strangely unpredictable national election November 2000. Strange, because only four months ago the election seemed to have an inevitable conclusion. Al Gore seemed to have the Democratic nomination locked up, as did George W. Bush for the Republicans. Bush, with a huge sum of money, was the favorite among pollsters for the Presidency as well. However, now things have taken a surprising turn. Former Senator Bill Bradley (D-New Jersey) is actually beating Gore at the polls in New Hampshire, where the first primary takes place. Also, Senator John McCain (R-Arizona) is gaining on Bush. The reason for McCain’s success is that not only has George W. been absent from two debates, but he has not given any real political agenda, either. The things he has said are broad statements, such as “the military needs to be strong.”

The only reason Republican voters even tolerate Bush is that deep down inside they will stoop to any low to get a conservative in the White House, after eight years of hating Bill Clinton. But wait—what exactly is the difference between Clinton and Bush anyway? They both are masters at playing up to the majority of the public’s desires. Clinton and Bush’s political strategies have the same objective: to triangulate themselves from both the left and the right to make themselves ap-
The only reason Republican voters even tolerate Bush is that they will stoop to any low to get a conservative in the White House likely snorting cocaine in a fraternity house at Yale. Clinton, on the other hand, was in Oxford broadening his horizons, not killing his brain cells. When the war got heated, Bush's powerful daddy conveniently found a place for Bush in the Coast Guard. People claim that Clinton believes in nothing. He, at least, has a political agenda and a record of governmental service, whereas Bush is a product of the new "compassionate conservatism" movement. In other words, Republicans now sympathize with the suffering poor that they refuse to help.

The bottom line: Bush is a phony. Of course, Gore isn't that much better. While I support Bradley, it wouldn't be that bad if McCain was elected president. At least we would know that we had a decent man in the White House.

Why Sports Are So Great
By: Josh Guagliardo

Have you ever had that tingling sensation inside you when you hit a baseball or catch a touchdown? It is like, in that moment of time, nothing else matters. To me, that emotion is one of the greatest feelings of our lives.

Sports fill a void in our lives; that void is having fun. We work so hard day after day in our jobs or at school (especially at ESA), that we forget the simple joys of life. Sports fulfill much more than any TV or movie ever could. It is that interaction we feel with the game. Even if you're only a spectator at a sports event, you are still part of the game. It is not like a movie tape for which you can read the plot on the back of the box. Instead, it is a completely unpredictable event that you are there to witness. You cheer and cry for the team you root for.

It burns me up when people say that sports are nothing more than meaningless competition. Competition is part of our lives, one of the things that makes us who we are. The very same people who say this about sports are involved in their own "meaningless competition," like competing for grades or playing a game like the card game Magic, a favorite among sports haters.

Did you ever notice that almost all of the people who hate sports stink at sports? For the most part, they could be a lot better if they were not so lazy. Sports can be a great way to exercise and can have many good...
Josh’s article continued...
long-term effects. One of the dumbest comments I ever heard was, “What good is running up and down a court for forty minutes going to do for you when you are sixty and have a gut the size of Alaska?” If you exercise, you will more likely be healthy at the age of sixty; whereas, if you play Magic, you will just have wasted $200 and have no health benefits in old age.

Did you ever notice that almost all of the people who hate sports stink at sports?

One of the greatest things about sports, though, is winning. This may sound ridiculous, but it is true. There is nothing better than that feeling you get when you win – the feeling that it was all worth it. It is like receiving a pay check after a long month’s hard work, or receiving a star on a journal that you spent several hours writing for Mr. Tutwiler’s class. I have experienced that feeling on the basketball court, and I hope to one day feel it for a journal.

Saints Midseason Report
By: Tommy Fertet

Editor’s note: yes, we know it’s a little late, and it’s the editor’s fault, but read it anyway, it’s still more interesting than that homework you were gonna try to do.

At the time of this article, the Saints have now lost their, what is it, seventh game in a row, five of which should have been wins. The game against the ‘Niners was the biggest let down and started the whole skid. At Candlestick Park, the Saints were winning with two minutes to go when they gave up a quick touchdown on an interception return of 64 yards by Lance “I like to return interceptions for touchdowns” Schulters. HOW THE HECK DID WE LOSE THAT GAME!! The Saints were supposed to have one of the better defenses in the league, but as they displayed by allowing the ‘Niners several fourth quarter scores, they lack leadership on that side of the ball.

In game 3, against the Chicago Bears, Ditka’s old team, the same thing happened, another fourth quarter comeback, with the Bears, led by a journeyman quarterback, scoring two touchdowns in the last two minutes of the game. That is simply outrageous! You know you have lost your season when the Bears score two touchdowns on you in two minutes, and so far, we have done nothing but repeat that sorry performance.

In game four, against the Falcons, our biggest rivals, former Saints kicker Morten “I
always beat the Saints, who were too cheap to fork up the jack to keep me.” Andersen kicked the game winning field goal, marking another, you guessed it, fourth quarter comeback.

At that point, I wanted to jump off the Mississippi Bridge, but I decided to wait things out to see if ol’ Ditka and the two Billy Joes could turn things around, but, not surprisingly, our problems only continued.

For week five, it was the same story, different players. Who: Tennessee Titans. When: Second Half. What: Somehow, they throw two late touchdown passes to comeback from Where: behind. You can all see the trend.

But ah, week six came against the awful, awful Cleveland Browns, who were seeking their ‘first’ franchise win. It is great seeing them back and all, they are beloved. However, once again, in the...(can anybody guess when?) fourth quarter, Tim “I like to lie on my” Couch threw a 56 yard Hail Mary pass that was caught by Kevin “Big Dog” Johnson that made for another fourth quarter comeback against the Saints.

In short, life as a Saints fan stinks. These late-game losses, combined with the two blow-out defeats at the hands of the Giants, Bucs, Jaguars, and Rams in both of which the Saints’ defense gave up late scoring touchdowns, make life as a Saints fan miserable, make people in New Orleans party so much that they never have time to focus on the true condition of their team, and they make me say about the Saints season, in the words of the immortal Mike Ditka, “(Bleep) (Bleep) stinking (Bleep) ridiculous.”

---

The State of Television
By: Hampton Myers

There are two times of year in TV land that please me the most. First, the new season. New shows, new faces, and fresh ideas pile onto my TV screen, battling for my attention like demons wrestling for my soul. I can smell the hopes of the new shows, the dreams of their directors and writers. It is a joyous time. Second is the two ensuing weeks ensuing, when the networks try to get in shape by burning their fat. Elation fills me when I watch them dump show after show like last week’s garbage.

This season is one of the more eventful ones in recent memory. The new shows are, by and by, startlingly thoughtful, and the evicted tenants are thrown out in the most delightfully shameful ways. But as the creativity surges, sadly some old favorites are left in the dust. So, while this has been a time of promising upstarts, it has also been a time of fading dynasties.

Take the most obvious example: Chris Carter, creator of X-Files. Three years ago, he was one of the most promising men in Hollywood. X-Files was at its high point, there was a movie in the works, and he was directing an additional show called Millennium. In contrast, flash forward to today, when Millennium is in the dumpster, his latest offering, Harsh Realm, was canned after two episodes, and the excitement that people have felt in previous years toward the season premier of his flagship series is nowhere to be seen. Carter originally avoided the nerd stigma that
comes with a show about aliens by using skillful subtleties and not directly addressing the alien conspiracy. When he abandoned this format last season, he sealed his doom, and this season will be slow and painful as Carter’s X-Files gasps its last breath.

The Carter dynasty is in shambles, but the David E. Kelly, producer of The Practice and Ally MacBeal reign is at its height. Sadly, though, a closer look reveals Kelly’s signs of aging. What Kelly does well is write emotional confrontations. However, in this third season of The Practice and Ally Macbeal, Kelly’s confrontations are becoming increasingly predictable. Maybe it is because the viewers have become smarter, maybe it’s because Kelly’s attention is divided between the four shows (Practice, Ally MacBeal, and their two respective spin-offs) maybe it’s because I’m overly critical, but he needs to rectify this problem to avoid crumbling under the weight of public expectations. Episodes like the October 15 and 22 episodes of The Practice make me believe that there is still hope, but I doubt that he can keep up that level of brilliance past this season. I can only hope that he won’t drag out his two defining series, Ally Macbeal and The Practice, past this season.

Not all is lost, however, as some of the great minds in TV land are expanding. Law and Order, considered one of the best dramas around, expanded to form Special Victims Unit, the success of which is phenomenal. The new show has all the gritty professionalism of Law and Order, with just a little more personality. The producers of ER formed the show Third Watch, probably the best new show of the season. It is so utterly gripping and fiercely entertaining that it becomes very difficult to leave the set for even a moment. If these producers can only remember the lessons of the two former dynasties, then maybe they will sop expanding here and consolidate their talents.

Besides these, the dramas are good, but nothing I would watch regularly. The ABC dramas especially are redundant in their sexual elements, like Wasteland, Snoopys, and Once and Again. They lack the focus of the new NBC dramas, which are mostly about job-related dramas, with the exception of Cold Feet, which I expect will be the next show to be shown the door. The West Wing receives an honorable mention. However, a show about politics is a perfect medium to discuss politics from every angle, and The West Wing fails to achieve this by making the actual politics a backdrop for the characters’ struggles in the job place. The small amounts of politics it does discuss are too dominated by the liberal perspective.

On the comedy side of things, I see only two shows worth my time. First, The Simpsons remains the premier comedy show, offering intelligent satire that if funnier than any sitcom, even in its very worst episode, which occurred three weeks ago. Second, Whose Line is it Anyway?, a relatively unknown show featuring impromptu, ad-libbed skits by some of today’s funniest comics, is entertaining every episode. Two other comedies, Just Shoot Me and Drew Carey, receive honorable mentions, but they rarely make me laugh out loud, the ulti-
with big front porches" - Hobbes...

"In the very long term, I know which will make better memories" - Calvin

mate gauge of a comedy's worth.

Finally, the network made several cancellations, and they were almost all good choices. Fox wiped their entire Friday night line-up off the face of the earth, replacing David Caulfield: Year One and Harsh Realm with The Funnest Commercials You've Never Seen and Totally Out of Control Vehicles. You cannot help but imagine the producers and actors of the cancelled shows with their heads held low, knowing the shows replacing them. CBS has replaced the sickening Work With Me with a poorly done rehash of the old Candid Camera show. Wasteland disappeared after a lenient three episodes. And lastly, and most joyously, Suddenly Susan finally met its maker. The cast were left with a dazed expression, wondering what took so long and barely remembering their last three years.

Most exciting of all, however, is the trend this year represents. Writers and producers are becoming more thoughtful and approaching more mature, intelligent subjects. If this season's attempts were not perfect, they were certainly a step in the right direction, making me anxious for the next season and the treasures it shall bring.

Video Review: Fight Club
Directed by: David Fincher; Written by: Jim Uhls;
Starring: Edward Norton, Brad Pitt, Helena Bonham Carter
Article by: Ricky Myers

Once in a while, a movie is released that exhibits so much originality and revolutionary thought that it shouldn't be missed by anybody with the time to go see it. This year's movie that fits that description has got to be Fight Club. It combines a very well written and refreshingly humorous script with brilliant performances by some of today's best young actors.

First thing that you think when you see a preview for this movie is: great, a movie about a bunch of guys beating the living daylights out of each other in some basement. If that had been the case, then the movie would have stunk. However, the actual fight club only serves as a cover for the underlying plots in the movie. The rest of the movie revolves around Tyler Durden (Pitt) and his vendetta against the commercialism of today's world. It starts out with a fight club for the working man but soon turns into a militia against commercialism. Durden represents everything that the nameless Narrator (Norton) wants to be. Norton lives in a condo and represents the poster boy for consumer America. The Narrator suffers from insomnia and decides to start attending group help meetings at the local church. This activity soon becomes an addiction for The Narrator, and he starts going
on why he sleds in the snow rather than doing homework. “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord”—Priest

to all of the group help meetings at the church. The Narrator meets Tyler on an airplane and then he must go to him for a place to stay when his condo is blown up. The Narrator and Tyler start the fight club and things roll from there.

The performances in this movie are, in a word, brilliant. Each character is deep, believable, and well acted. Norton does well switching between the person that he is and the person that he and Durden want him to be. Pitt is confident, arrogant, and carries himself with that certain swagger that takes the character of Tyler Durden to a whole other level. Throw in a creepy and morbid job from Helena Carter as Maria Singer, a group session faker just like The Narrator and a wonderfully thoughtful performance from Meat Loaf as a man with testicular cancer and huge breasts, and you get to see one of the best ensemble performances in a movie in a long time.

_Fight Club_ is a movie that stands out for its originality when all it seems a person can find at the theaters these days is stupid teen angst. Its clever humor and interesting assault on commercialism leaves the audience wondering about the necessity of its material possessions. However, there is fighting in this movie, so I don’t recommend it for those who get squemish at the sigh of blood and violence. But for those who can stomach the occasional busted up face, _Fight Club_ offers a wonderfully original movie that should be considered a contemporary American classic.

---

**THE YEAR IN MOVIES**

**By Cramer Kern**

It was an _annus mirabilis_, a year of marvels. Though the year started off slow in the cinematic world, by mid-autumn an unprecedented string of excellent movies emerged that convinced me that 1999 was the best movie year of the decade. I found myself going to the movies with such frequency and returning with such joy that at one point in mid-December I thought that, Y2K be damned, it was a great time to be alive. And now, without further ado, my ten favorite movies of 1999.

1. _Being John Malkovich_—The most exhilarating, thoughtful, and wonderfully imaginative film of the year came from famed music video director Spike Jonze (Weezer’s “Buddy Holly,” The Beastie Boys’ “Sabotage”). John Cusack plays a nihilistic puppeteer who discovers a portal into the head of actor John Malkovich (who, as playing himself, delivers his best performance in years). Wonderfully acted, brilliantly directed, and brimming with creativity, _Being John Malkovich_ reminded my why I love seeing movies in the first place. If the premise alone doesn’t excite you, then check your pulse because I think you’re dead.

2. _American Beauty_—Sam Mendes’ brilliant look at postmodern America stars Kevin Spacey as a middle-aged man trying desperately to regain the _joie de vivre_ that he once had. As insightful as it is tragic, _American
Beauty joins David Lynch’s Blue Velvet in the pantheon of movies involving the insidious nature of suburban life.

3. Magnolia—Paul Thomas Anderson’s epic follow-up to Boogie Nights starts as the portrayal of 24 hours in the lives of a dozen lonely Californians, but ends with Biblical overtones so rich that Cecil B. DeMille would have been proud. At times melodramatic, at times operatic, but never unoriginal, Magnolia, like Malkovich, ushers in a new millennium in movies.

4. The Talented Mr. Ripley—Anthony Minghella’s taught psychological thriller features Matt Damon as the most convincing sociopath since Hannibal Lecter. Damon stars as a down-on-his-luck piano player who manipulates his way into the life of a trust-fund playboy (Jude Law) in an attempt to assume his upper-crust identity. An amazing look at one man’s attempt to gain wealth and fame vicariously in a world that turned its back on him.

5. Three Kings—A hilariously biting Persian Gulf satire finds four disillusioned GI’s searching for hidden caches of Saddam Hussein’s gold in the Kuwaiti desert. Combining cutting-edge visuals with a sense of humor and heart, David O. Russel’s film stands as one of the most entertaining and thought-provoking war films of the decade.

6. Bringing Out the Dead—Perennial favorite Martin Scorcese delivers yet another marvelous movie, this time featuring Nicolas Cage as a New York ambulance driver on the edge of a nervous breakdown. Visceral, emotional, gut wrenching. These are all words that have been used to describe the best of Scorcese’s work, and Bringing Out the Dead is no exception.

7. Man On the Moon—Milos Forman’s delectable biography of Andy Kaufman features Jim Carrey in the performance of a lifetime. In playing the cryptic and ground-breaking comedian/performance artist, Carrey essentially channels the spirit of the late Kaufman to create a film that is hilarious, enlightening, and sometimes infuriating, but never boring (much like Kaufman himself).

8. Princess Mononoke—A visually amazing piece of Japanese animation that (of all things) deals with man’s passing from agrarian to industrial society. This is hand-drawn animation unlike anything I have ever seen, and in my opinion sets the new standard for the way that cartoons are made. Simply breathtaking.

9. Run Lola Run—A German attention-deficit extravaganza that plays like a live-action video game. The story: Lola’s got twenty minutes to find half a million dollars or her boyfriend gets killed, so she starts running through the streets of Berlin searching for the cash. Every time she fails, the movie restarts itself and she starts running again. This film has aptly been described as “post-human,” and I feel that it represents the dawn of a brave new world in moviemaking.

10. Election—Alexander Payne’s hilarious political satire features cynical history teacher
Matthew Broderick trying to foil the overachieving Reese Witherspoon in a Student Council election. Like all good satires, we laugh because it is funny (and this movie is very funny), but then we start to think about the message that it carries.

Special Jury Prize—Certain film festivals give out a “Special Jury Prize” for films that though not the best deserve some form of recognition. Thus, you can consider the next five films (in no particular order) a tie for 11th place:

Go! — A Pulp Fiction-esque comedy centering on the rave culture of Los Angeles. Excellent performances by Sarah Polley, Katie Holmes, and Timothy Olyphant accentuate a very intelligent script.

Fight Club—David Fincher’s epic of men so desensitized by society that they have to beat each other to a pulp in order to feel human. Though the film did not set well with many critics, I feel that its willingness to take chances and nihilistic atmosphere made it highly enjoyable.

Dogma—This religious satire features the same bizarre humor that made Kevin Smith (the director of Clerks and Mallrats) famous, but this time he adds a level of thoughtfulness and, yes, piety that had previously gone unrecognized in his work. And any film with the audacity to cast Chris Rock as a long-lost apostle and Alanis Morissette as Jehovah deserves a place on my list.

Summer of Sam—Was I the only person alive who enjoyed Spike Lee’s story of the paranoia surrounding the Son of Sam killings? Granted, the three-hour film was a tad slow in certain places, but I thought that it distinctly captured the mood of a time and place that most of the people who lived through it would like to forget.

South Park: Bigger, Longer, and Uncut—What can I say? Never a big South Park fan, I laughed at this social satire/musical comedy in spite of myself, and by the end of the film, I didn’t know whether to applaud or demand my money back. I guess that’s the best compliment to the filmmakers that I can give.

Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels—A charming British crime comedy centering on four Cockney lads attempting to rob a local drug dealer in order to pay delinquent gambling debts. Though I was at first hesitant to put such a light-hearted film on the list, after another viewing I realized that the movie was full of too many wonderful surprises for me to leave it off.

“A robot walks into a bar, orders a drink, lays down a bill. The bartender says ‘Hey, we don’t serve robots!’, and the robot says, ‘Oh, but someday you will’...”
- D. C. Berman; Chad Cosby’s Senior Quote