FRIDAY - SUNDAY, MARCH 27 - 29, 2009

WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE

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Formula 1 makes adjustments to help it through stormy times

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WSJ.com/Lifestyle

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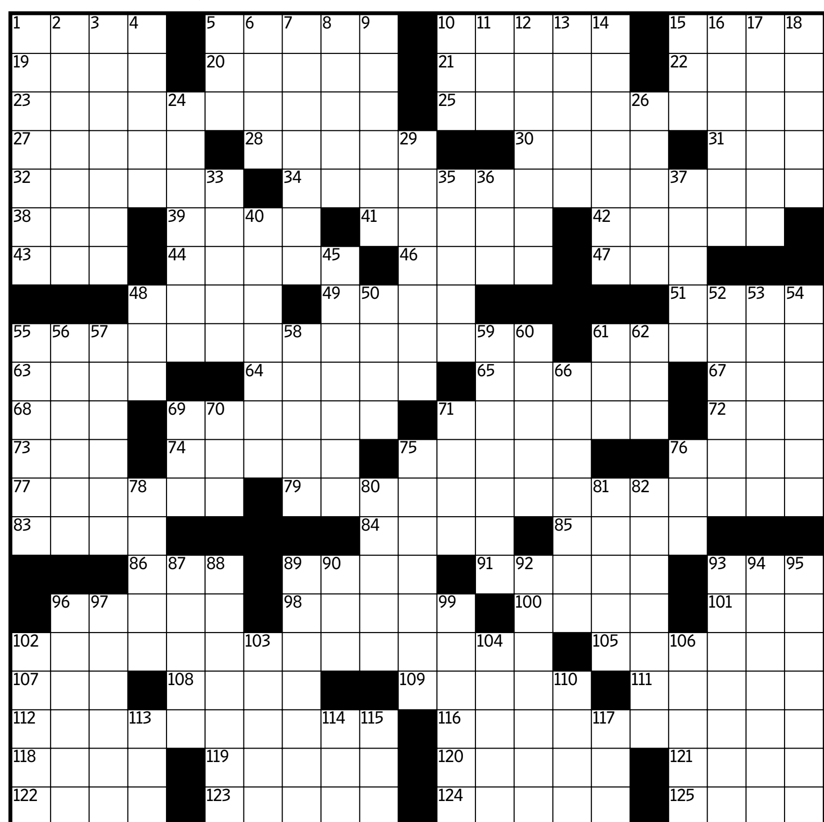

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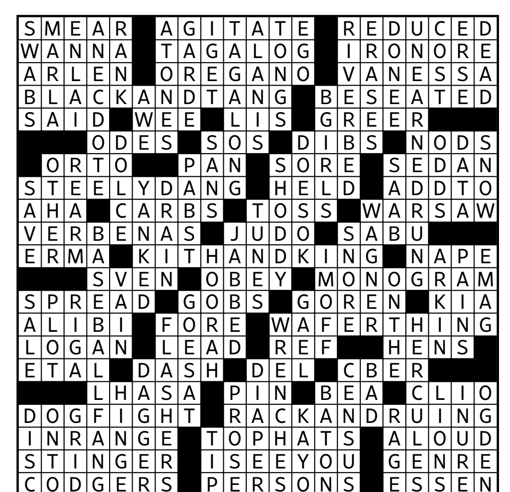
Last Week's Solution



An inspired riff on ‘The Jazz Century’

By Craig Winneker

Paris

IF YOU'VE EVER STARED at a Jackson Pollock thinking, “This is what a Charlie Parker solo looks like,” or been moved enough by Thelonious Monk to announce, “He is the Picasso of the piano,” here is a show for you.

“The Jazz Century” is being staged in an ethnological museum, the Musée du Quai Branly, but don't expect a collection of native curiosities from a strange, lost world. “This is not a music history exhibition,” says curator Daniel Soutif. “You won't see Louis Armstrong's trumpet.”

Rather, Mr. Soutif has turned the museum's cavernous exhibition space into a multimedia exploration of jazz music's influence on Western culture and art—as well as its roots in African and American traditions. It's an ambitious goal, but there's no denying the premise: Jazz may not be as popular as it was in its heydays in the 1920s and 1950s, but as even the contemporary artworks on display show, the music's vibrant spirit is still very much alive.

Mr. Soutif spent three years working on “The Jazz Century,” which premièred at the Mart museum in Rovereto, Italy, and heads to the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona after it ends here on June 28. It is clearly an aficionado's labor of love, but you don't have to be a jazz fan to appreciate its scope. The works include painting, sculpture, installations, photography, film, graphic design and, of course, music from some of the greatest artists of the last 100 years.

Like a swinging jazz tune, the show is built on a steady rhythm: A visual timeline runs the length of the exhibition, providing context in an evolving series of colorful sheet-music covers, posters and album sleeves. Those covers are like the grotesques in the Uffizi: They are a backdrop and easy to overlook as you admire the main works on display, but they reward close inspection. From “My Little Zulu Babe” (1900) to “Good-Bye Broadway, Hello France” (1917) to “Louis Armstrong's 125 Breaks for Jazz Cornet” (1927), they tell an intricate story of their own. And, like those Uffizi frescoes, they are a feast for the eyes.

But the show also has something as important to jazz as it is to any other art form: improvisation—a willingness to leave convention behind and chart new territory. At various points, the gallery space suddenly veers off in a different direction as the show riffs on a theme—album covers designed by famous artists, bizarre European jazz-festival posters, an evocation of the Harlem Renaissance.

Screens show clips from films that use jazz as subject matter (Norman McLaren's avant-garde take on an Oscar Peterson piano performance, “Begone Dull Care,” from 1949) or soundtrack (the Miles Davis trumpet in Louis Malle's “Ascenseur pour l'échafaud,” from 1958) or visual gag (the Count Basie Orchestra's desert cameo in Mel Brooks's “Blazing Saddles,” 1974).

Other highlights include black-and-white portraits of jazz greats by photographer Carl Van Vechten, visually striking album covers by Lee Friedlander (Coltrane's “Giant Steps”) and Andy Warhol (1950s Blue Note LPs by Kenny Burrell and Monk), and James Weeks's stunning 1960 painting “Two Musicians.” The latter's vivid brushwork in blue, brown, pink and yellow captures two very cool cats—one of whom chills regally in an armchair while his bandmate stands to the side holding a tenor sax like a guard's halberd.

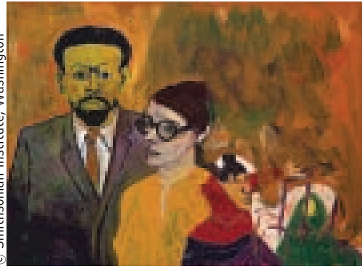
The six emaciated musicians in Jean Dubuffet's “Jazz Band (Dirty Style Blues),” from 1944, look more like a combo you'd find in a real dive; these guys have been on the road (and who knows what else) too long, but they've still got their chops.

There are offbeat little surprises. A dog-eared copy of Sartre's “La Nausée” is open to a page on which the protagonist listens to his favorite tune, “Some of These Days.” A screen shows a clip from one of Georges Méliès mesmerizing short films, “The Infernal Cake-Walk” (1903), in which demons perform a version of the African-American “cakewalk” dance. David Hammons's 1989 installation “Chasing the Blue Train” runs an electric train through a pile of coal (get it?) in a landscape of piano-lid mountains.

The show also features several works entitled “Jazz”—the great 20th-century artists obviously relished the challenge of depicting the music visually—including an abstract Man Ray photograph, a Matisse book of cutouts and a Jean-Michel Basquiat collage painting.

And yes, there is a Pollock (“Watery Paths,” from 1947), and a few Picassos (including a 1918 sheet-music cover for Igor Stravinsky's “Ragtime”).

Like any great jazz piece, this show has so much going on at once you might need to play it a few times to catch all the nuances. But amid the flurry of notes, the beat is always there. It's like the Duke said, It don't mean a thing if you ain't got that swing.



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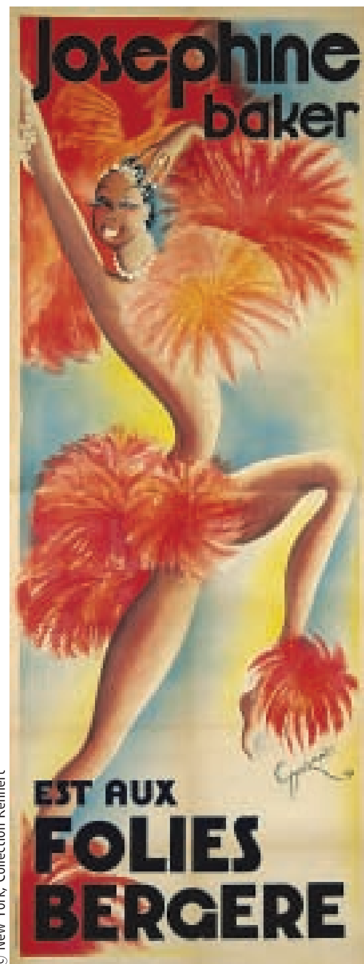
From left: ‘Jones, LeRoi and His Family’ (1964), by Bob Thompson; ‘Portrait of a Musician’ (1949), by Thomas Hart Benton; ‘Two Musicians’ (1960), by James Weeks.



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‘Josephine Baker est aux Folies Bergères’ (1927), by Michel Gyarmathy.

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Cindy Sherman as every woman

Berlin: Berlin's most dramatic new space for showing contemporary art is the gallery of Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers, the Cologne dealers who relocated to the German capital last fall. Housed on two floors once belonging to a 19th-century social club, the gallery is capable of presenting museum-quality shows thanks to its main hall, a naturally lit former ballroom. The room's combination of monumental charm and unmistakable harshness creates the perfect backdrop for a major series by American photographer Cindy Sherman.

Known for her decades-long investigation into female stereotypes, usually starring herself, Ms. Sherman, 55 years old, often succeeds at creating a contradictory response in her viewers. Her work, especially her large body of costumed self-portraits, can both repel and appeal, producing images that are somehow both disturbing and exquisite.

Some of Ms. Sherman's work has been merely shocking, like her photographs of dolls in pornographic poses. Her new series, comprising 14 untitled large-format color self-portraits, does have its shocks—a few of Ms. Sherman's women are outright ghouls—but the series as a whole creates a quality of mounting pathos. The official subject is the aging female body, but the larger theme is the nature of portraiture itself.

The photographs, in which posed figures are digitally placed in odd or mocking backgrounds, resemble commissioned portraits of wealthy women whose attempts at looking beautiful, with the help of

make-up and jewelry and expensive clothes, backfire badly. The lack of titles, and the similarity of subject matter, play tricks with our memory, forcing us to recall Ms. Sherman's heroines in terms of their appearance: the lady in the blue caftan, the lady with the ugly earrings, the lady with the décolletage. But what we remember vividly are the facial expressions, which suggest a longing for love, and a near complete lack of lovability.

Ms. Sherman has used tacky commercial frames to encase her figures, and the frames come to stand for self-knowledge, which is fixed just beyond the figures' view. Ms. Sherman's women recall Velázquez's court dwarves, along with the plain Spanish queen, María Luisa, whom Goya painted with such patience and perversity. They are all grotesques, but they are unmistakably us, and the depiction of their deepened humanity makes us feel more human. *—J.S. Marcus*

Until April 18
www.spruethmagers.net

Two untitled works from 2008 by Cindy Sherman, on show in Berlin.

Courtesy of the artist, Metro Pictures, Spr?th Magers (2)

A video artist's uncompromising political takes

Zurich: Josephine Meckseper, a German artist who lives and works in New York, creates complex sculptural collages and video projections aimed at satirizing the capitalist system—and provoking the viewer.

This self-titled, one-woman show, her first in Switzerland, opens with "Untitled" (2009), two monumental, looming oil rigs. Nearby, "Untitled (Bunker)," also created at the beginning of this year, adds to the anti-Iraq War message with a dark structure evoking a World War II machine-gun emplacement.

Sculptural collages evoke the paradoxes of capitalist values and the absurdities of Western culture. Ms. Meckseper, who was born 1964 in the north of Germany, says she has never owned a car, and is an outspoken critic of the American way of life, the auto industry and the politics of George W. Bush. "President's Day" (2007) is a painting made up of sharp lines and opaque squares in black and white, as uncompromising as the artist's own political convictions.

Ms. Meckseper's political activism is also evident in her video projections attacking consumerism: "0% Down" (2008), a collage of various car advertisements, and "Mall of America" (2009). *—Mariana Schroeder*

Until May 3
www.migrosmuseum.ch

Niamh Cusack (left) and Michelle Fairley in 'Dancing at Lughnasa.'

Manuel Harlan

Brian Friel's 'Dancing at Lughnasa' is a kick at the Old Vic

London: The only question about Irish playwright Brian Friel's "Dancing at Lughnasa," now showing in-the-round at the Old Vic, is whether it's his greatest masterpiece.

Lughnasa is not a place, but the old pagan beginning-of-harvest festival; in this sharply Chekhovian and sad comedy, the moral seems to be that we've never really lost the pagan cast of mind, and that acknowledging the robustness of pagan practices isn't such a bad idea for modern folk.

Like Chekhov, Mr. Friel is able to show you the wretchedness of some aspects of life while making you laugh at the way the misery manifests itself. Peter McDonald plays the tough role of Michael, who is not only the adult narrator in the 1950s, but also has to slip back into character as the child Michael was at the time of the events portrayed in 1936; he does as well as any actor can when you've got to hold all 360-degrees of the stage by yourself for fairly long soliloquies. Michael is the love-child of Chris (played winsomely by singer Andrea Corr) the most attractive of the five sisters living in a remote Irish village.

The child was the result of Chris's fling with a raffishly dressed but feckless Welshman, Gerry (Jo Stone-Fewings), who easily re-lights her fire when he shows up now and again, before going off, from eccentricity rather than conviction, to fight for the Republic during the Spanish Civil War. She dances a mean foxtrot with him, but has better sense than to marry him.

The other sisters, each finely characterized in this production, are the stern, bossy, eldest Kate (Michelle Fairley); the mischievous Maggie (Niamh Cusack); the rebellious, simple Rose (Simone Kirby); and the put-upon Agnes (Susan Lynch), who does more than her share of the domestic chores. It's ensemble acting of a high order.

The one thing they can all do is dance. And as Lughnasa approaches, they let go, high-stepping, knees in the air, backs straight, in a display that makes you want to jump from your seat and join in. *—Paul Levy*

Until May 9
www.oldvictheatre.com

An intriguingly royal collection of Flemish masters

London: For the first time ever the Royal Collection is showing its holdings of Flemish paintings, 51 choice works from the 15th to 17th centuries, at the Queen's Gallery in Buckingham Palace.

In addition to masterpieces by Hans Memling, Peter Bruegel the Elder, Jan Brueghel the Elder, Van Dyck and Rubens, there are thrilling paintings such as Quinten Massys's 1517 portrait of Erasmus (painted as a gift for Sir Thomas More); Frans Francken's bizarre 1617 "Cabinet of a Collector," with its depiction of a painting of a roast chicken next to one of a classical figure in a landscape; and Hans Vredeman de Vries's 1566 "Christ in the House of Mary and Martha," which shows the overwhelming grandeur of the house of a prosperous Antwerp merchant.

Part of the fun of this exhibition is in looking at the royal provenances of the pictures, and finding the patterns in the taste of the various monarchs.

The mid-16th-century anonymous "Boy at a Window" seems to have been bought by Henry Prince of Wales, the elder brother of Charles I, who also acquired the de Vries. Henry VIII bought some fine things, but Charles II is my favorite collector, because he bought the pair of 1615 miniature roundels of fantasy palaces by Henrick van Steenwyck the Younger, both breathtaking in their architectural detail and amazing treatment of light.

Did Rubens himself paint the vegetables in the wheelbarrow at the right-hand side of his 1617-18 "The Farm at Laken"? We know he collaborated with Frans Snyders, who painted the artichokes in the huge circa 1618-30 "Pythagoras Advocating Vegetarianism," which has now been restored and is on show in the adjacent collection of "Treasures from the Royal Collection." In the Rubens/Snyders the philosopher is clearly trampling something under his left foot: the fava beans Pythagoras famously forbade his followers from eating. *—Paul Levy*

Until April 26
www.royalcollection.org.uk

'The Three Children of Christian II of Denmark' (1526), by Jan Gossaert.

The Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Shakespeare meets Kabuki

Yukio Ninagawa's London production of 'Twelfth Night' blends Western theater with traditional Japanese style

By Paul Sharma

SHAKESPEARE productions in London by Japanese classical director Yukio Ninagawa are scarce enough. This time, the rarity is compounded, as the new work is a one-off collaboration between the director and one of Japan's leading Kabuki theater groups.

Until now, Mr. Ninagawa's productions mixed Western conventions with Kabuki styles and imagery, but in this production he has worked directly with Kabuki actors for the first time. While maintaining the genre's strict conventions, he has added new features such as Western-style perspective staging and new sound effects.

The result of this collaboration is being performed in London's Barbican Theatre until March 28: a production of Shakespeare's darkly comedic "Twelfth Night," performed by the Shochiku Grand Kabuki Theatre.

The lead performers are the Kabuki stars Onoe Kikugoro VII and his son Onoe Kikunosuke V, who grew up within Kabuki's hereditary system, joining the troupe and beginning their training at an early age. The production is also a departure for the Kabuki theater group, which normally performs a traditional repertoire of plays that were written mainly in the Edo (1603-1868) and Meiji (1868-1912) periods.

"Coriolanus," the last Ninagawa production seen in London, used multiple fast-sliding Japanese screens to catch and reflect that society's mercurial moods and changing power dynamics. The production before that, "Pericles," depicted a neo-classical world, with water slowly dripping out of bamboo pipes into pools, adding to a sonic backdrop of resonating wooden flutes. The look and feel of the productions is so distinctive that in Japan the rich visual style and its dynamic group work is known as the "Ninagawa aesthetic."

While Kabuki uses flat panels to create a horizontal backdrop—which Mr. Ninagawa believes has parallels with reading a Japanese scroll—this "Twelfth Night" uses modern visual devices such as backing the entire stage with mirrors, depicting cherry tress in full bloom and a series of arched bridges. A production that brings Kabuki's narrow staging and the stylized physical presence of its actors together with modern theater Western-style perspective and sound effects shows why Mr. Ninagawa has been called by one critic "nature's great synthesizer."

Kabuki is an all-male theater where men, known as *onnagata*, play the female roles. In this production, Kikunosuke plays the three roles of Sebastian, Viola and Cesario using the *hayagawari* (quick-change) technique to move between roles.

A quick plot refresher: Cesario is actually Viola, who has disguised herself as a man—Sebastian is her brother. Further on in the play, Viola/Cesario gets mistaken for Sebastian.

This cross-dressing follows the Elizabethan era practice of boy actors playing the female roles which allowed gender ambiguity. Normally, Sebastian and Viola/Cesario are played by two actors, but the use of hayagawari enables roles to become even more blurred than usual, emphasizing even more the play's use of mirroring and twinning.

Director Yukio Ninagawa; below, Onoe Kikugoro as Feste, Onoe Kikunosuke as Sebastian and Nakamura Tokizo as Olivia in the Tokyo production of 'Twelfth Night'; above right, Onoe Kikunosuke as Viola.

Mr. Ninagawa was an actor for 10 years before making his debut as a director in 1969. In 1972, he founded the theater company Sakura-sha, which led the small-theater movement in Japan. He started working in the commercial theater in 1974 and his first overseas production was "Medea" in Greece in 1983. Mr. Ninagawa worked with the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1999 directing "King Lear" in London and Stratford-upon-Avon.

We caught up with Mr. Ninagawa at the Barbican Theatre during final rehearsals for "Twelfth Night," while a small crowd was waiting at the stage door for the stars to arrive. (Translation was provided by Yuriko Akishima.)

Q: This will be the only time you will work with a Kabuki theater. Why did you choose "Twelfth Night"?

Kabuki and Shakespeare developed, more or less, at the same time. The basic structure of the stage and the theater is very similar. So I wanted to work with a good play, with universal themes. The play also needed to allow for a man playing the woman, which is a major Kabuki characteristic, which of course is present in "Twelfth Night."

Also, in Kabuki and in Shakespeare's time, an actor would play many roles. There would also have to be a large element of entertainment, which you get from hayagawari—and like Shakespeare, the plays were aimed both at high society and the groundlings.

Q: What do you think we can learn from this high level of artifice?

My generation studied European theater and Greek plays. By contrast, Kabuki doesn't need a director—there is a troupe leader, but no director—that would be very anachronistic. We have denied that kind of theater for a long time while we looked overseas, but now we can look again at our own Japanese theater forms. We can have nourishment from Kabuki, we can learn from the history of the hundreds of years of this theater. But we can't change the mixture of wonderful and unchangeable things within Kabuki. For me it was like studying in a foreign country—where the core can never be reached. I think that for young people in Japan, they see Kabuki in the same way as tourists.

Q: While you can't change Kabuki, you have added new elements to it, such as sound design. You kept it all, but added more.

You could say that I took advantage of Kabuki.

Q: Normally you improvise with the actors—that isn't a usual Kabuki practice. How did they react when you started that process?

They responded very well and really tried hard to work with my suggestions. In Kabuki, there are many, many forms—you could call it a toolbox—and it was a matter of choosing the right ones and putting them together. Because they know the forms so well—some of which I didn't understand—they normally rehearse and put on a play in three days. So, I had plenty of brilliant toys to choose from.

Q: "Twelfth Night" was first performed in 1602—what was happening in Kabuki at that time?

Kabuki started around one hundred years earlier, by the river in Kyoto. Kabuki very much went on to perfect its own form, but the mixture of political statement and sexual jokes has its clear parallels to the theater of Shakespeare's time. Kabuki has a flat perspective, whereas the Barbican is a deep stage and I try to mix the two views. For that, I use mirrors to blend the two worlds together.

Q: In this production, Sebastian and Viola are played by the same actor, but have scenes where they speak to each other. The same applies to Malvolio and Feste. How do you stage that?

Part of the enjoyment of Kabuki is the quick change, which is particular to this form, and seeing the actors change character in the blink of an eye—but some techniques are secret! A big element is entertaining the audience with the speed of technique, to trick the eye. The physical element is very important, Kabuki is not just about the text. It mixes high and low, literature and jokes.

Q: How do you feel about working in films?

I have made four films; what I liked was that you can show small details such as a running stream—the imagery can be very delicate. This is harder to show in a theater. Pure love story films are very popular, and in one of my films I wanted to do a love story that was gritty, but the crowds didn't come.

Q: So, what is next for you?

Next year, I would like to bring [to London] a production called "Musashi," which is running in Tokyo now. It is about a samurai swordsman; it is a revenge story, about where the cycle of revenge can stop. But it is a comedy too—with ghosts.

© Shochiku Grand Kabuki Theatre (2)

❖ Theater

The art of turning Paris into Brooklyn

By Alexandra Alter

Christopher Hampton, a British playwright, screenwriter and translator, chooses words with a diligence that borders on obsession. He speaks slowly and deliberately, sometimes pausing for 10 seconds to formulate a phrase or find an example.

Mr. Hampton put this Talmudic approach to language to work in translating "God of Carnage," a searing dark comedy by French playwright Yasmina Reza that opened on Broadway last week. He's currently rewriting lines to update his comedy about an overly polite British university professor, "The Philanthropist," which he wrote in 1970, for a revival starring Matthew Broderick next month.

He translated "God of Carnage"—from French into English for its London debut, and then from British into American English for the Broadway production, which stars James Gandolfini, Hope Davis, Jeff Daniels and Marcia Gay Harden.

It's rare for a well-known playwright to devote so much time to translating a contemporary writer's work. Mr. Hampton, an Oxford-trained linguist, has translated five of Ms. Reza's seven plays, among them "Life x 3" and the smash-hit "Art," which grossed more than $300 million world-wide.

"I feel quite strongly about translators because they're so underestimated," says Mr. Hampton, a 63-year-old with shoulder-length gray hair. "Sometimes you read a novel and you can't see who translated it, or they get paid very badly, and I think it's a very vital cultural exercise."

Playwright Christopher Hampton

Translating Ms. Reza's plays, which are littered with slang and technical jargon used by lawyers and other professionals, can be tricky, Mr. Hampton says. He usually works on them alone for five or six weeks, and then sends her the results and waits "for the complaints to come in."

A publicist for Ms. Reza said she was unavailable to comment.

Director Matthew Warchus, who worked on both the London and the U.S. productions of "God of Carnage," said Mr. Hampton's background as a playwright enables him to preserve the rhythm and musical quality of Ms. Reza's language. "They're both quite gritty writers," he says.

With "God of Carnage" for Broadway, Mr. Warchus, Mr. Hampton and Ms. Reza changed the setting from a Parisian neighborhood to Cobble Hill, Brooklyn. Previously, her plays had always kept their original setting. Hope Davis, a Brooklyn resident, suggested the neighborhood during rehearsals after they had decided on a New York locale.

The plot centers on a meeting between two sets of parents whose sons have gotten into a playground fight. The hardest element to capture in translation was "orchestrating that escalation from the slightly strangled politeness at the beginning to the total anarchic rage at the end," Mr. Hampton says.

Last December, the playwright, director and translator met with the New York cast for several days and ran through each line to Americanize the dialogue. In London, one character called another's child a "grass" or tattle-tale; in New York it became "snitch."

On the London stage, when Alan, the lawyer, describes the unwanted side effects of the drug made by the pharmaceutical company he represents, he says it makes "you look permanently pissed," or drunk.

"Christopher said, 'I know that's too English,'" Jeff Daniels, who plays Alan in the Broadway production, recalled. "Then we came up with 'You look completely retarded,' and everyone was laughing because it was so wrong and completely inappropriate, and it stuck."

Mr. Hampton and the cast cycled through dozens of English phrases for the French word "caractériel," someone who relishes in behaving badly, including "self-centered brute," "hooligan," "delinquent." In the current Broadway version, Mr. Gandolfini calls himself a "f— Neanderthal."

Mr. Hampton reined in the actors if their diction veered too far from the original script. "It's one thing to Americanize it from 'Shall I get you a drink?' to 'Would you like a drink,' but what we didn't want to do as actors was change the meaning," Mr. Daniels said.

Mr. Hampton traces his fixation with languages to his childhood living overseas in Alexandria, Egypt, where his father worked for a British cable company. Mr. Hampton studied French and German as an undergraduate at Oxford. His first play, "When Did You Last See My Mother?," was staged at London's Royal Court Theatre when he was just 20.

He has written a dozen plays, two opera librettos, lyrics for two Broadway musicals, and more than 40 screenplays, 14 of which became films, including the Oscar-winning adaptation "Dangerous Liaisons" and "Atonement," which was nominated for best adapted screenplay. Universal Pictures and Imagine Entertainment recently recruited Mr. Hampton to write a screen adaptation of John Steinbeck's novel "East of Eden." He has translated Chekhov, Ibsen, and Molière.

His play "The Talking Cure," about the relationships between Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung and Jung's brilliant and troubled young patient Sabina, is being made into a movie. Mr. Hampton is directing a film based on "White Chameleon," a play about his childhood in Alexandria.

Recently, Mr. Hampton has been attending rehearsals for "The Philanthropist," and tinkering with the text. "It's quite hard to rewrite a play that was written 40 years ago," he says. "But it's quite fun to try."

London auctions feature major works of 20th-century design

Collecting

MARGARET STUDER

Several auctions in April will give a sweeping overview of 20th-century decorative arts—from the delicate, nature-loving glassware of the Art Nouveau movement to the cool, metal creations of contemporary furniture designers.

The sales follow the enormous success of the 20th-century decorative arts section of the Yves Saint Laurent/Pierre Bergé auction at Christie's Paris in February. The section was sold 95% by number of lots and set a world record for a work of 20th-century design at auction: Irish designer Eileen Gray's "Dragons" armchair (circa 1917-1919) sold for €21.9 million.

Nevertheless, given the present economic climate, Christie's has erred on the site of caution in making estimates for its coming sale on April 7, says Joy McCall, the auction house's London head of 20th-century decorative art and design.

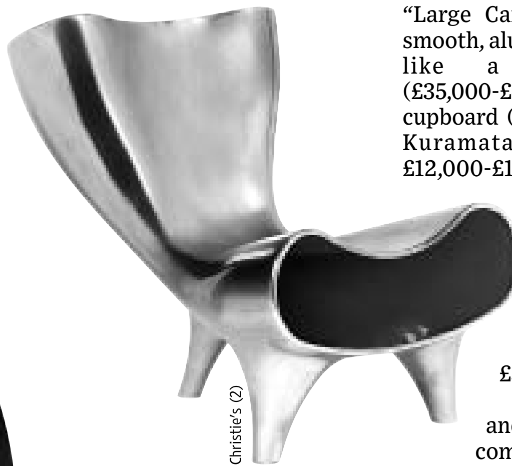
The Christie's auction will open with a private European collection of 40 glass vases by France's Émile Gallé, Gabriel Argy-Rousseau and Daum Frères. Gallé's ochre red vase with waterlilies (circa 1925) and his ethereal butterfly vase (circa 1900) are each estimated at £25,000-£35,000. A striking vase featuring stalking wolves (1926) by Argy-Rousseau is expected to fetch between £15,000 and £25,000. A vase that seems to glow from within (circa 1900) by Daum Frères is estimated at £25,000-£35,000.

A two-meter display model of a leaping jaguar designed in 1938 by Britain's Frederick Gordon Crosby for SS Cars (later renamed Jaguar) is estimated at £4,000-£6,000.

A number of furnishings by Italy's Giò Ponti made for a legal office in the 1950s will be included in works from the mid-20th century. An office suite with desk, cabinets and chairs is estimated at £5,000-£8,000.

The contemporary design section features Israel's Ron Arad, Australia's Marc Newson and Britain's Tom Dixon. Mr. Newson's "Orgone Chair" (1990s), a futuristic, mirror-polished aluminum chair, leads the sale with an estimate of £200,000-£300,000.

Sotheby's



Christie's (2)

From left: Gabriel Argy-Rousseau's 'Loups Dans La Neige' vase (1926), estimate: £15,000-£25,000; Shiro Kuramata's 'Side one' cupboard (1987), estimate: £12,000-£15,000; Marc Newson's 'Orgone Chair' (1990s), estimate: £200,000-£300,000.

Mr. Newson will also head Phillips de Pury's London design sale on April 30, where his "Lockheed Lounge" (1985), a futuristic, aluminum lounge, will be estimated at £500,000 to £700,000.

At Sotheby's 20th-century design sale in London on April 28, highlights will include Mr. Arad's "Large Cartier Table" (1998), a smooth, aluminum table that looks like a Rorschach blot (£35,000-£45,000), a cherry wood cupboard (1987) by Japan's Shiro Kuramata (estimate: £12,000-£15,000), and a maple wood table by the Antwerp-based design studio Studio Job (2006), covered in the skeletons of gorillas, turtles and seahorses (estimate: £30,000-£50,000).

Meanwhile, antique and fine arts fairs are becoming increasingly interested in modern design. Last week, Tefaf in Maastricht had a special section devoted to modern design for the first time. And at the BADA Antiques & Fine Art Fair, which runs in London's Sloane Square until March 31, director Gillian Craig says that the noticeable move toward modern and contemporary pieces this year at her fair is likely to continue.

Among the works being offered at Holly Johnson Antiques' stand is a large screen by Italy's Piero Fornasetti from circa 1960, covered in boots, whips, rifles, anchors, canes, hats and keys (price: £16,000).

Debunking the Beethoven myth

By Paul Levy
Special to The Wall Street Journal

ON MONDAY, LONDON'S Barbican Hall hosts the world première of Phil Grabsky's gripping, feature-length biographical film with TV channel Sky Arts, "In Search of Beethoven." Using a strategy developed in his previous film, "In Search of Mozart," also narrated by actress Juliet Stevenson, Mr. Grabsky's documentary aims to debunk both the gossip of Beethoven's contemporaries and the myths we've derived from it, with two hours of crisp interviews and illustrative performances by musicians and Beethoven experts, including Riccardo Chailly, Claudio Abbado, Hélène Grimaud, Sir Roger Norrington, Paul Lewis and Emanuel Ax. As in the Mozart film, each piece of music is presented chronologically and linked with Beethoven's letters and biography.

There are humorous moments, as when the genial Mr. Ax speculates about Beethoven's musical jokes. Though just as the Mozart film unpicked the myths perpetrated by "Amadeus"—Mozart did not die a pauper and was not poisoned by Salieri or anyone else—we discover that Beethoven was not the unkempt, unhygienic, tormented figure of romantic tradition, struggling, unloved and alone, against his tragic deafness. Rather, he was a handsome young man, whose misfortune was falling in love with women from a superior social class to whom marriage was simply out of the question.

Mr. Grabsky, 45 years old, was born in New York but brought up from the age of two in England. He has made more than 200 films, and, for the last five years, has specialized in documentary movies that launch first in cinemas, are licensed for TV broadcasting, but mostly make their profits from DVD sales. His visually stunning 2003 film "The Boy Who Plays on the Buddhas of Bamiyan"—starring Mir, a winsome eight-year-old and his family, who lived in the Afghanistan caves adjoining the Buddhist sculptures irreparably damaged by the Taliban—won 14 awards.

Mr. Grabsky has close-cropped hair and piercing dark-blue eyes. He works (and travels) at lightning speed, doing almost all the jobs himself—camera-work, lighting, sound, direction and scripting, helped in the post-production stage by his long-time editor, Phil Reynolds. The breakneck work-schedule allows maximum time with his wife, who looks after the business side, and their two young children.

We spoke to Mr. Grabsky over coffee at the Grosvenor Hotel near London's Victoria Station.

Q: How did you get started?

My first film, while I was 20 and still at college, was "The Dalai Lama of Tibet: 25 Years in Exile." Somebody recently said to me "It's time to make 'The Dalai Lama: 50 Years in Exile,'" and I felt very old. In 2000 I did my first full-length film, which had a lot to do with Michael Moore, thanks to whom "documentary" was no longer a dirty word. Also technological changes now allowed me to film by myself, without a big crew.

Q: What led you to make films for cinema release?

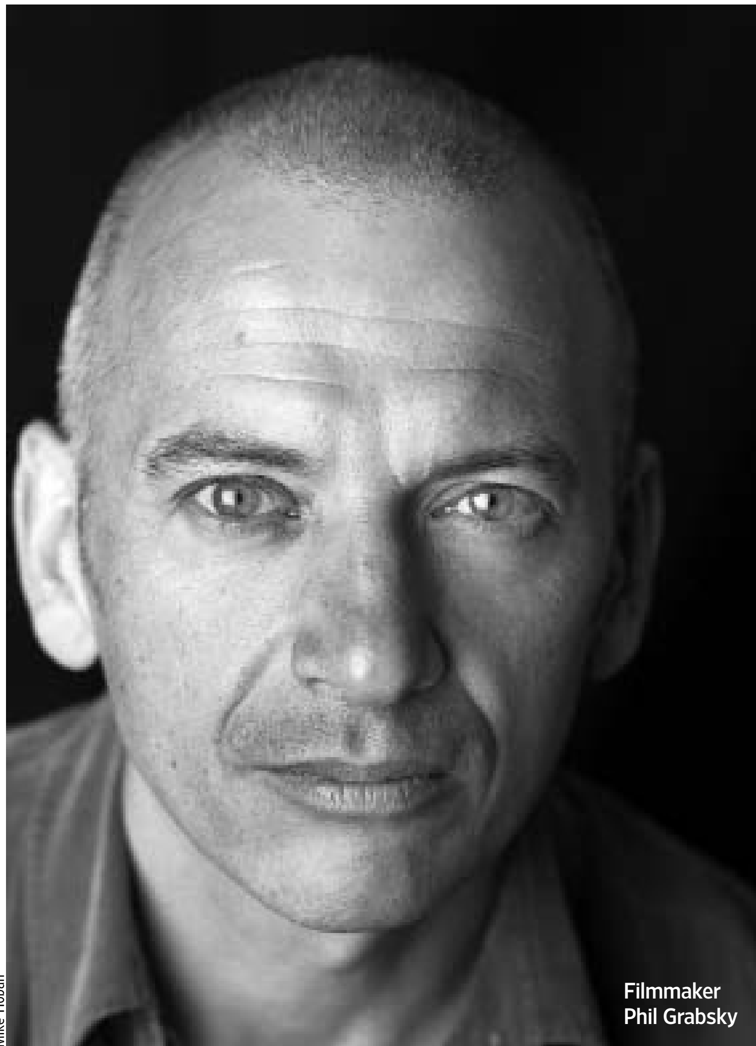
Having children changed my thinking. I began to feel that as I'm putting this effort into making something, I want it to have value. TV no longer values itself highly enough. The public may think it wants another reality show about conjoined twins or size-zero models. But the audience doesn't always know what it wants until it's offered—so there is an audience for international affairs, opera, music and art, as shown by cinemas using their screens for the Metropolitan Opera, Glyndebourne Opera, rock concerts, motor-racing, football matches and, occasionally, a little old documentary.

Q: You made films on Muhammad Ali and Pelé; why now composers?

The things that have linked my films, from "The Boy Who Plays on the Buddhas of Bamiyan" to "Beethoven," is a celebration and exploration of what human beings are capable of. I look at Beethoven and ask, how did he do that? And talk to great musicians, performers and conductors. I don't have a script when I begin. I just want to talk to people and find out from them how Beethoven achieved what he did. Take the little boy from Bamiyan, who had absolutely nothing, lived in a cave, and had no prospects. Yet there is laughter, humor and welcoming hospitality in his family: I celebrate their enthusiasm, their optimism, their ability to survive in extreme circumstances.

Q: All your films have depended on getting to the right people. Didn't even the Bamiyan film depend on having the right connections?

You have to engineer your own luck. Yes, I was going to do Afghanistan, and I knew Bamiyan had some name-recognition. But that little boy actually found me. Looking at the rushes, I saw a group of boys peering down through the lens at me, and one of them was Mir. I had meant to focus on an adult male (I knew filming a woman was out of bounds) but the men were all depressed, had no opportunities, could speak of the past, but not the present.


Mike Hoban
Filmmaker Phil Grabsky

Q: How do you find a narrative thread in these circumstances?

Yes, above all the audience needs a good story, a strong narrative. After 4-5 days, I saw that little boy should be the story, because he had energy, drive, and could take me places adults wouldn't. My job is to be there from 6:30 a.m. to record the landscape and sounds, and ask the right questions.

Q: You got the best people in the world to talk about Mozart and Beethoven. How did you do that?

With "Mozart" and "Beethoven" it was different. Nicky Thomas, my associate producer, said she'd work with me only if we do it properly, and with respect for the subjects themselves. No one else will do this for the next 50 years, she said, and it requires talking to the very best musicians. We made a completely unaffordable, mad list, with 60-70 bits of live performance, but discovered that once you get past the agents, to the musicians themselves, they were eager to participate.

Q: Did your budget stretch to this?

I'm not terribly successful in raising budgets from broadcasters. Even when I get them to say yes, they're in for €3,000 or €5,000. The films go to state television. Broadcasters do, though, appreciate what we do. At the moment we're doing a film about a guy who delivers tea in Mumbai—a project that, I hasten to say, predates "Slumdog Millionaire."

Q: So how do you manage?

We have to take advantage of orchestras playing the composers as part of their repertory, and allowing us to film rehearsals. There's a lot of Haydn being played this year, and Handel and Puccini. So I can go to the Orchestra of the 18th Century, and say "you're playing all this Haydn this year. Can I film it?"

What was the budget for Beethoven?

About £330,000. Some of the ads in the breaks in our films cost that much. We only raised about two-thirds of that. When the BBC did a film about Beethoven some years ago, they did three parts. It cost a lot because they were all reconstructions. I don't do reconstructions. Particularly for Mozart. You can't out-Amadeus "Amadeus," so why try? Also it has to be scripted before you've done all the traveling and met all the people, so there's no discovery.

Olmos still in command after 'Galactica' finale

By Michelle Kung

AFTER FOUR SEASONS of attacks, betrayals, ethical struggles and a key character's resurrection, the warship of "Battlestar Galactica" is reaching its destiny—and its fans and cast will have to figure out what to do next. Edward James Olmos, who plays the pivotal, gruff Admiral William Adama, has already planned his next move.

Though the 62-year-old actor has completed his on-screen duties, he's hard at work editing "The Plan," a TV movie he's directed. It's one of two "Battlestar"-themed projects set to air this fall and early next year on the U.S. Sci Fi network, which runs the series.

SCI FI Channel

Mr. Olmos has been living with his character since the reimagined series premiered as a miniseries in 2003. "It's all very tragic," he says. "I've been crying a lot. Feeling self-conscious. And saying thank you."

The series seems to provoke big emotions. From its unpromising origins as a reboot of the short-lived 1970s TV show, it grew to tackle issues of genocide, religion and terrorism as its ragtag group of human survivors sought Earth—which many believed to be part of a mystical prophecy—in a post-apocalyptic world. Critics put it on their year-end best-of lists, sales of series DVDs topped $100 million, and cultists made the show a staple of sci-fi and fantasy conventions.

The series has even made it to the United Nations: Last week, a "joint summit" between cast members and producers, U.N. representatives and more than 100 high-school students discussed how the show's plotlines reflected modern conflicts over human rights and civilizations' values. One example: a character's use of waterboarding in the first season.

Mr. Olmos has ample reason to stay in the "Battlestar" embrace. The Latino actor played Lieutenant Martin Castillo on TV's "Miami Vice" for five years and successfully made the transition to film. He won an Oscar nomination for playing a steadfast teacher in 1988's "Stand and Deliver" and had key roles in "Blade Runner" and the prison-gang drama "American Me," which he also directed. But he remained largely under the radar until the cult explosion of "Battlestar."

Mr. Olmos relishes how race is never made a factor on Battlestar: "It's simply not what the series is about. There's only one race, the human race, battling the cylons, which are essentially human technology," he says. "It's like me battling my own self."

"Eddie has a serious side," says executive producer and writer Ronald D. Moore, who rebooted the old series. He recalls a discussion with the actor in regards to the finale. "I was never tempted to make the ending very nihilistic and kill everyone, but Eddie wanted to."

For Mr. Moore, "'Battlestar' is over; that chapter has now closed." He delivered the final cut of the finale a mere five days before air date.

As for Mr. Olmos, his focus is on "The Plan." "I only direct projects where I have tremendous passion for the story," says Mr. Olmos. The film revisits earlier events from the perspective of deadly cybernetic machines known as the cylons. "I just finished my cut," he adds. "I didn't get any break between the two projects, but am still feeling the void of being the only one left on board. I'm literally the last one standing."

Turning Point

Formula 1 hopes adjustments can help it through stormy times

By William R. Snyder
Special to The Wall Street Journal

THE HIGH-PITCHED whine of Formula 1 engines was suspiciously absent from the Circuit de Catalunya on the outskirts of Barcelona earlier this month during a testing session for the coming Grand Prix season. A thick blanket of fog covered the course, and the racing teams waited idly for it to clear, making last-second tweaks before testing resumed. Mother Nature doesn't often concern herself with metaphors, but this scene was eerily apt.

The sport has endured some rough weather in recent years. First came the retirement of its biggest star, Michael Schumacher, and uncertainty over whether a marquee name would replace him. Then there was Spygate—a 2007 scandal in which the McLaren team was alleged to have taken confidential data from Ferrari and was eventually fined by the sport's ruling body, the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile. Then came a 2008 tabloid scandal involving F1 racing's top official, FIA President Max Mosley. Now, a global recession threatens sponsorship income and is causing team owners to rethink their commitment to the sport.

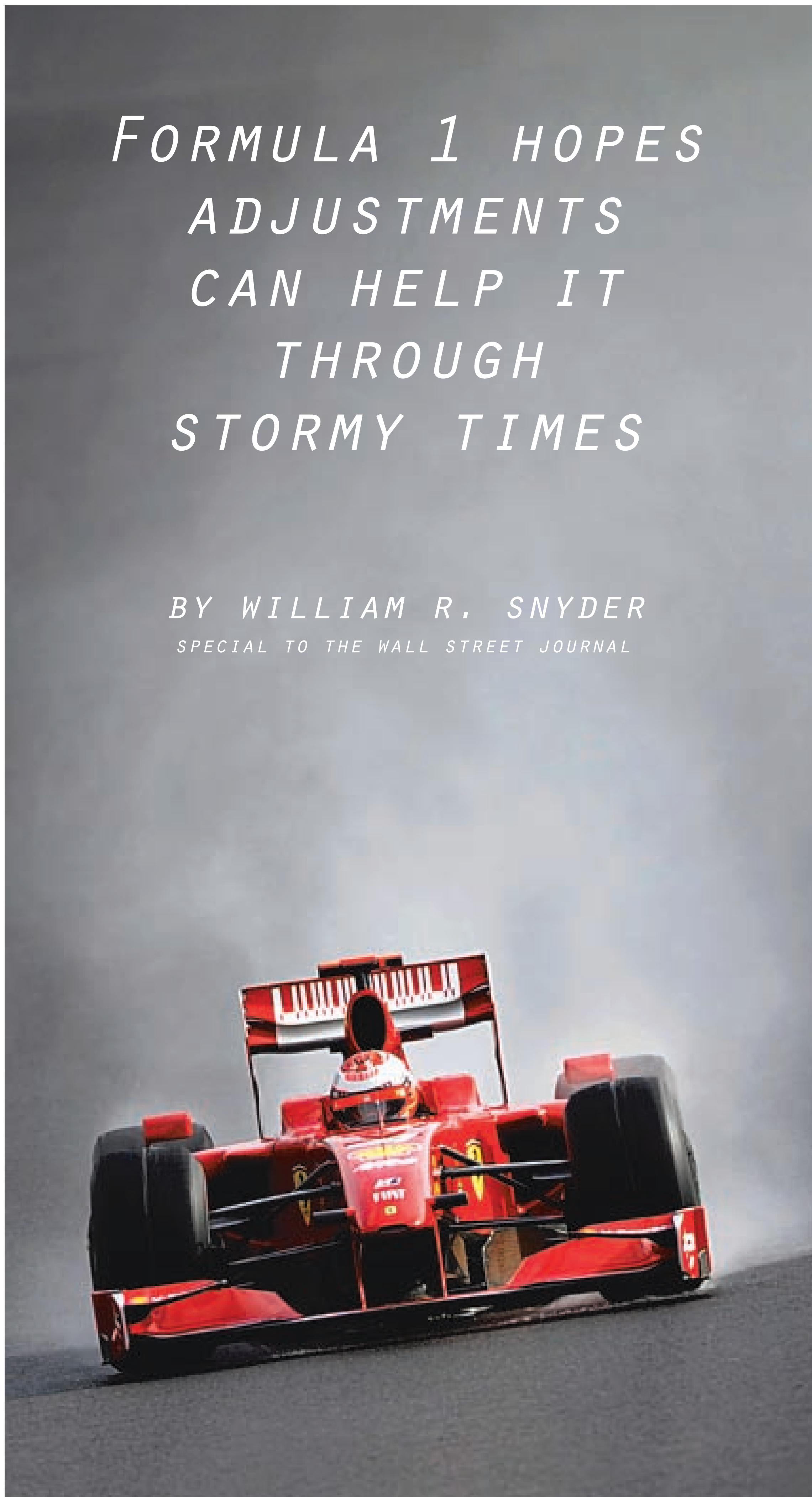
As drivers approach the starting line this weekend at the 2009 season's first race, the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne, Formula 1 officials are hoping technological advances and a series of rules tweaks will help boost the sport. But experts both inside and outside the sport are wondering which way F1 will turn.

F1 racing survived the retirement after the 2006 season of Mr. Schumacher, whose dominance of the sport in the early part of this decade was Tiger Woods-ian. The sport has found new stars in young, photogenic drivers Lewis Hamilton and Fernando Alonso. It successfully weathered Spygate, after FIA meted out a $100 million fine to the McLaren racing team. It also has avoided long-term public-relations damage from the Mosley affair. Last season, competition among drivers and innovation in car and engine design seemed to be on the rise.

Then the economic crisis hit. One of the global icons for the economic collapse has been the automobile, with car companies asking governments for loan guarantees and bailouts. Suddenly the lavish budgets of Formula 1 teams stood out like a banker's bonus. Auto makers, sponsors and racing officials are now trying to rein in some of the opulence for which the sport is known.

Finance companies, long a reliable source of sponsorship for Formula 1 teams, are also suffering. Royal Bank of Scotland announced it would end its sponsorship of the Williams team when the current contract ends in 2010. The Renault team's chief sponsor, ING, is also letting its contract expire at the end of this season.

One top racing sponsor, BMW, recently posted a €962 million fourth-quarter loss. While the auto maker's Formula 1 budget is separate from the loss, its team is under pressure to keep expenses down. "It is clear that all departments within BMW are affected by the current global economic crisis, including the Formula 1 team," says BMW Motorsport Director Mario Theissen. "We have made significant contributions in recent years. Since 2005 we have reduced our spending by 40%."



John Howett, president of Panasonic Toyota Racing, believes his team is in a stable financial position, but has concerns about the overall business. "The key issue is whether Formula 1 continues to deliver the value and return on investment that Toyota expects," he says.

Formula 1 had already planned drastic technological changes for the 2009 season, hoping both to improve safety and boost competition. These included a new aerodynamic car design, the return of slick tires (which allow for faster speeds), limiting the number of engines a team could use during the season, and the introduction of a new energy-saving hybrid drive. Drivers have also been banned from in-season testing of their cars, which puts more emphasis on simulation work in the factory before bringing new parts to the racetrack.

The aerodynamics changes, which include altering the design of the front and rear wings, and the reintroduction of slick tires, are both meant to reduce downforce, which will improve performance. Extending the life of engines is meant to reduce costs but could result in slower engine performance.

The balance between safety and competition is a delicate one. Team owners are anxious to protect their investments, while fans demand excitement.

"Formula 1 has to be careful not to become a parade of expensive cars," says Keith Collantine, publisher of the Web site F1 Fanatic.

Some of the teams are also apprehensive about how the changes will affect the sport. "If it remains the pinnacle of motorsport and a genuine technological challenge, then I can see a long and bright future for the team," says Toyota's Mr. Howett. "If the sport is dumbed down too much, or too many standard components are forced into the system, Formula 1 could become just another racing series."

Of all the changes, the Kinetic Energy Recovery System, or KERS, has the greatest potential for impact on racing conditions. Comparable to the hybrid systems in some eco-friendly passenger-car models, it is intended to store energy gathered by braking in turns to be released on straight stretches for a boost in acceleration. Each team can decide whether to use it.

The FIA's intent was to encourage more passing with the added thrust while also promoting a "green" image, but roughly half of the 10 teams

competing this year, including Toyota, Red Bull and Williams, are doubtful about its capabilities.

"We will not use KERS in the first races and we will only introduce it when it is completely reliable and brings a performance advantage," says Alastair Moffitt, a spokesman for Toyota Motorsport. "At the moment we do not believe it brings a performance advantage over the course of a race weekend."

BMW is one of the few teams excited about the new technology. "KERS is very important, not only for BMW but also for Formula 1," Mr. Theissen says. "It's a technology which is of high relevance for the development of future road cars."

McLaren's second driver, Heikki Kovalainen, said at a press conference after testing sessions in Jerez, Spain, that he hoped to have his car fitted with KERS for the Australian Grand Prix. McLaren confirmed this week that it will use KERS.

But just as F1 teams were considering the technology changes, money became an issue as economic conditions worsened over the last several months. Honda, under budget pressure, sold its Honda Racing F1 team to Ross Brawn, the former team principal, on March 6.

Then, on March 17, Mr. Mosley and the FIA shocked the racing world by announcing a series of cost-cutting measures for the 2010 season. In a sport defined by excess—from multimillion-dollar team budgets to VIP luxury boxes—Mr. Mosley proposed capping each team's annual budget at $42 million. Most teams closely guard their books, but racing experts say average Formula 1 budgets range from $150 million to $300 million, so the proposal was seen as a drastic one. (The FIA made the cap voluntary, but teams that agree to the restrictions will have total freedom in car design.)

"These rules will encourage clever engineering," Mr. Mosley said in a statement. "Success will come to the teams with the best ideas, not only the teams with the most money."

The cost-cutting might appeal to cash-strapped team sponsors and owners, but is it what racing fans want? "Formula 1 fans love the technology," Mr. Collantine says. "Without the budget to fund the research, the end product will suffer. The sport's strength is in attracting big-name manufacturers with the resources for development."

Supporters of the measures say they will keep the business viable in tough economic times. "The cost-saving measures will enable more independent teams to enter Formula 1 in the years to come," Mr. Theissen says. "The overall costs in Formula 1 have gone up constantly during the last 10 years. But this is over now."

One of the biggest challenges of the cost restrictions will be drivers' salaries. Currently the top drivers are paid $10 million-$20 million per season, a sizeable percentage of the new budgets. The FIA proposed cutting the salaries and rewarding the drivers with dividends from team revenue.

Formula 1 drivers this season (from top left to right): Lewis Hamilton, Heikki Kovalainen, Kimi Raikkonen, Felipe Massa, Robert Kubica, Nick Heidfeld, Fernando Alonso, Nelsinho Piquet, Jarno Trulli, Timo Glock, Sebastien Buemi, Sebastien Bourdais, Mark Webber, Sebastian Vettel, Nico Rosberg, Kazuki Nakajima, Jenson Button, Rubens Barrichello, Adrian Sutil, Giancarlo Fisichella.

AFP (2); Getty Images

Mr. Mosley also proposed a change to the points system awarded to drivers, starting this year. Under current rules, drivers are awarded 10 points for a first-place finish in a race, 8 points for second, 6 for third and so on descending to 1 point for 8th place. Mr. Mosley argued that this hampered competition because a driver could be crowned world champion without ever winning a race. His change would instead rank drivers by their number of wins. But the circuit's elite drivers, including Spain's Fernando Alonso, panned the plan. "I don't understand the need to change the rules of the sport constantly," Mr. Alonso said on his Web site. "I think this kind of decision can only confuse the fans."

F1 officials decided last week to postpone the ranking-system change; it will now take effect in the 2010 season.

Racing executives are also counting on boosting the sport's popularity in new markets as a way to blunt the effects of the world-wide recession. Team principals and Mr. Mosley hope that expanding races to places like China and the Middle East will broaden the fan base. This year the season ends on a new circuit in Abu Dhabi.

"I believe Formula 1 is in a strong position because of its global reach," Mr. Howett says. "If a sport is focused on a very narrow geographical area, it will be very vulnerable in this climate."

Nearly everybody expects attendance to be down at new and old racetracks this year. This weekend's Aussie Grand Prix will be a barometer. BMW announced that it would not be taking its guests in Melbourne to the paddock, the VIP section at each race where the sport's moneyed elites mingle. Officials say total ticket sales in Melbourne are strong, but the track has offered steep discounts and package deals. Sales of VIP tickets, which cost several thousand dollars each, are down. Ticket sales are down 20% for next weekend's Malaysian Grand Prix.

"All circuits are reporting a decline in ticket sales," Mr. Collantine says. Some tracks, he adds, are even painting empty seats different colors to create the illusion on television that they're occupied.

Back on the track outside Barcelona, the fog had finally lifted and testing resumed. But only 20 cars were prepping for the season, short of the maximum 24. Mr. Collantine thinks the shortage of teams is the best indicator of the challenges to the racing circuit. "As long as there are empty spots on the starting grid," he says, "Formula 1 has a problem."

Track changes

Formula 1 has announced several technical changes for this season aimed at reducing development costs, improving competitive racing and promoting a green agenda.

Here, a look at some of the key changes:

Aerodynamics

Even to the casual fan, F1 racecars will look different this year. On 2009 car models, the front wings are lower and wider and the rear wings are taller and narrower. The new design will increase a car's speed in a straight stretch but reduce it while cornering.

Slick tires

Since 1998, Formula 1 tires have had four large grooves on the tread, meant to slow cars in turns and corners. This year the return of slick tires is intended to improve speeds by as much as a half-second per lap.

Hybrid cars

The "Kinetic Energy Recovery System" is meant to showcase F1's commitment to innovation and environmentally friendly technology. KERS works like a normal hybrid system, storing energy from braking for later use. Engineers have been able to substantially reduce the weight and the size of the system to fit in the small racecar frames, which could eventually affect production in street cars.

Engine longevity

Teams are limited to eight engines per car this year, and face penalties if they use more. The intention is both economical and environmental, as Formula 1 looks to trim some of its excess production.

—William R. Snyder

Taking it to another dimension: Can 3-D movies save Hollywood?

By Lauren A.E. Schuker

WHEN "Monsters vs. aliens," a DreamWorks Animation movie about an extraterrestrial attack, hits theaters this weekend, it will set off another invasion: a new wave of big-budget 3-D films.

James Cameron, Robert Zemeckis and Steven Spielberg are all working on 3-D movies. Walt Disney's next Pixar feature, "Up," was recently selected to open the Cannes Film Festival—the first 3-D movie to do so. And starting with "Monsters vs. Aliens," DreamWorks Animation, known for hits such as "Shrek" and "Kung Fu Panda," will release every movie it makes in 3-D.

Jeffrey Katzenberg, chief executive of DreamWorks Animation, is betting heavily on the technology, which he bills as a much-needed boost for Hollywood. Even with an upswing in the past few months, movie admissions have declined more than 9% over the past decade, and were down by almost 5% last year, according to box-office tracker Media By Numbers.

"The theater owners have not done anything to change the theatrical experience in many years," says Mr. Katzenberg, who likens the latest 3-D technology to past quantum leaps in the industry such as the first talkies or the introduction of Technicolor. "This is going to bring moviegoers back to the theaters," he says. He hopes that the technology, which will raise ticket prices by $2 to $5 in the U.S., and about €2 in Europe, will transform the box office into "a growth business for the first time in many years."

Hollywood pushed 3-D in the 1950s and again in the 1970s and 1980s, but those efforts left moviegoers with little more than a headache. While the 3-D technology on display in films like "Monsters vs. Aliens" is more sophisticated, it remains to be seen whether people will still be drawn to it after its novelty has worn off. Many theater owners say they wonder if it makes sense to raise ticket prices more in a downturn. And the technology, which relies on actually going into theaters, may have little effect on home-video sales, which have boosted studio profits for years but fell about 9% in 2008, according to Adams Media Research.

Unlike the 3-D movies of past decades, where two separate projectors displayed images (one for each eye) and had to remain synchronized for the duration of the film, the latest 3-D systems use a single digital projector. They quickly alternate between images seen by the right and left eyes, which the brain marries into a three-dimensional picture. The process still requires glasses to pick up separate left and right eye images, but not the clunky red and green kinds popularized in the 1970s and 1980s with 3-D films. Today's 3-D eyewear looks more like sunglasses.

Paramount Pictures

Above, Ginormica (Reese Witherspoon) is introduced to The Missing Link (Will Arnett) in 'Monsters vs. Aliens'; below, scenes from 'Up' (left) and 'Coraline'; facing page, a scene from 'Chicken Little.'

The first films made with the latest generation of 3-D technology began to trickle out over the last few years, beginning with "Chicken Little" in 2005 and increasing in 2007 and 2008, with "Beowulf," "Fly Me to the Moon," "Journey to the Center of the Earth" and "Bolt." Some of those titles, like "Beowulf" and "Bolt," left critics lukewarm and underperformed at the box office. ("Beowulf" had an estimated budget of $150 million and didn't break $100 million at the U.S. box office.) More recently, Focus Features' "Coraline," an animated tale about a young girl who enters an alternative universe, has grossed $70 million at the box office in the U.S. since it opened there last month (it will open across Europe in May), in large part because of the popularity of 3-D showings of the film. "Coraline" had a budget of between $60 and $70 million.

Back in 2005, there were only a little over 100 3-D screens across North America equipped to show movies in 3-D. Now there are more than 2,000 3-D equipped screens, and "Monsters vs. Aliens" will play on virtually all of them. Still, Mr. Katzenberg had initially hoped for about twice as many screens. There are a total of about 43,000 movie screens in North America.

Outside the U.S., there are roughly 1,600 screens enabled to show 3-D movies, almost as many as there are in North America and far more than many industry insiders expected. In a call with analysts at the end of February, Mr. Katzenberg said that DreamWorks' distributor was projecting that "Monsters vs. Aliens" would be able to play on between 70% and 80% of the 3-D screens available in the international market.

At least some moviegoers need to be won over by 3-D. David Lacy of Irvine, Calif., says he won't go out of his way to see "Monsters vs. Aliens" in 3-D if the tickets cost more. The 28-year-old graduate student focusing in Shakespeare studies saw "Beowulf" in 3-D and was disappointed by the experience. "[3-D] doesn't help a weak plot," he says. "If they regularly started doing all movies in 3-D, I would never go."

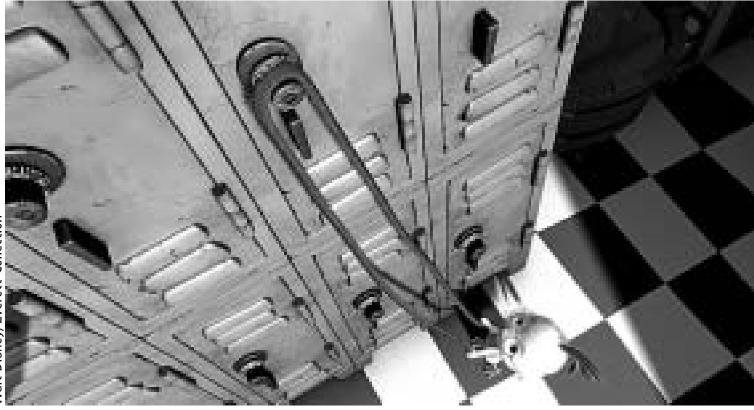
"Monsters vs. Aliens" is a broad send-up of sci-fi flicks from the 1950s, such as "The Blob," "The Fly," and "Attack of the 50 Foot Woman." When a UFO lands in America, the president (Stephen Colbert provides the voice) calls on a group of monsters to save Earth from the alien attack. The 3-D effects heighten the movie's visual jokes, making characters like Ginormica, a 15-meter tall California girl (Reese Witherspoon), and the 105-meter Insectosaurus, appear to tower over the roughly 1.82-meter president.

The movie could set a benchmark for a host of other big-budget 3-D films. Mr. Zemeckis's "A Christmas Carol," an animated remake of the Charles Dickens tale about Scrooge starring Jim Carrey, is planned for release in November. Mr. Cameron is at work on "Avatar," a $200 million 3-D film set for December in which a war veteran named Jake travels to another planet. Mr. Spielberg's "The Adventures of Tintin: Secret of the Unicorn," based on the pop-

Studio heads and top directors are betting big on the technology. Will audiences pay more to see it?

Walt Disney/Everett Collection

Focus Features



Walt Disney/Everett Collection

ular Belgian comic strip about a reporter and his dog, is due out in 2011. The box-office performance of "Monsters vs. Aliens" will be "vital to the long-term potential of 3-D," says media analyst Richard Greenfield of Pali Research.

All told, Hollywood plans to release as many as 45 3-D films over the next two and a half to three years, according to RealD, the leading provider of 3-D equipment. Theaters in the U.S. typically charge about a $2 to $4 premium on top of normal ticket prices to see a film in 3D, but that figure could climb higher for future 3-D films like "Avatar." In February, Mr. Katzenberg told analysts that the company anticipated a "meaningful up-charge" of $5 on 3-D tickets for "Monsters," but most theater chains in the U.S. are charging less than that, an average of $3.18, according to a report by Mr. Greenfield. An industry report from Piper Jaffray, an investment bank, estimates higher ticket prices from 3-D films could help raise the box office by nearly 23% in 2011 over 2008 returns.

"When you enhance the experience, people are willing to pay for it," says Dick Cook, chairman of Walt Disney Studios, which plans to churn out more than a dozen 3-D films over the next several years.

Mr. Katzenberg has retrofitted DreamWorks' campus-like studio with 3-D equipment developed especially for the company by its own 3-D experts and engineers. That group includes "Monsters vs. Aliens" Stereoscopic Supervisor Phil McNally, who worked on "Chicken Little" and is known within the industry as "Captain 3D." DreamWorks Animation plans to invest an additional $15 million in each 3-D film it makes—a sizable bet for company that usually makes only two films a year.

Theater owners have been slow to embrace the technology. Financing woes have slowed the roll out of 3-D systems—they can be outfitted only on digital projectors, which carry a price tag of up to $75,000. Last year, Hollywood studios crafted a $1 billion financing package to help theater owners cover the costs of digital projectors (the exhibitors must bear the costs of 3-D systems on their own), but turmoil in the credit markets has stalled the deal.

Without more screens, the dozens of 3-D films coming out over the next few years could find themselves with limited venues at which to play, resulting in missed revenue for companies like DreamWorks.

Fred Van Noy, chief operating officer of Carmike Cinemas, one of the major theater chains in the U.S., wasn't initially sold on the 3-D rollout. But with so many directors getting behind 3-D, he says he is now convinced his company can profit off the technology and has installed 3-D systems on nearly 500 of his roughly 2,287 screens. "Now there is so much product coming down the pipeline, we will recoup our investment way before we have to worry about this thing possibly reverting to fad status," he says. For exhibitors like Mr. Van Noy, 3-D represents a way to lure back consumers lost to the Web.

The first time Hollywood turned to 3-D, studios were trying to face down another small-screen threat. As TVs crept into American homes in the 1950s, movie attendance dropped in half within a matter of years. Dozens of films, including "House of Wax," were released in 3-D between 1952-55. But the technology quickly went out of fashion. Just three years after the opening of "Bwana Devil," the first major color film release in 3-D, theater owners had basically abandoned 3-D in favor of a wide screen format called CinemaScope.

Leonard Maltin, a film critic and historian based in Los Angeles, says that the studios' expectations about 3-D currently "are an absolute replica of the pronouncements and interviews that came out in 1953."

While the costly digital upgrades required to show 3-D films have become roadblocks in Hollywood's race toward 3-D, they're also what makes the technology so much improved over the 3-D audiences saw in the 1950s and again in 1980s, with films like "Jaws 3-D."

RealD, the leading 3-D system, was first used with Walt Disney's 2005 hit "Chicken Little," and is being used for "Monster vs. Aliens." RealD is being developed for use in the home. The company also provides 3-D equipment and technology to NASA and the U.S. military, which uses it for reconnaissance.

To make "Monsters vs. Aliens," the producers also employed a technology called InTru 3D. Using proprietary in-house tools, DreamWorks allowed its filmmakers to use a device resembling a physical camera that, instead of looking out onto a real soundstage, is able to view an animated, computerized set.

Despite advances in the technology, Jerry Pierce, who consults on digital issues for General Electric Co.'s Universal Pictures and is also the chairman of the Inter-Society Digital Cinema Forum, sees one limitation: the glasses. He says, "Who wants to wear those on a date?"

WSJ.com

Deep impact
See a clip from 'Monsters vs. Aliens,' and read about past movie technologies and their fates, at **WSJ.com/Lifestyle**

Universal Pictures

Julia Roberts and Clive Owen in 'Duplicity.'

Complexity defeats 'Duplicity'

Film
JOE MORGENSTERN

TO GIVE "DUPLICITY" its due—and plenty is deserved—Tony Gilroy's romantic caper goes against the Hollywood grain by smartening itself up instead of dumbing itself down. Julia Roberts and Clive Owen play ex-spooks turned corporate spies; she, as Claire Stenwick, is a veteran of the CIA, while he, as Ray Koval, comes from MI6. Part of the fun is watching these glamorous rivals in industrial espionage play each other—or are they being played?—during an all-out war between two multinational giants.

Another part is charting the evolution of their romance, which is fraught with chance—or chanceless—meetings and apparent double-crosses. At any point in the convoluted tale, the question for Claire and Ray, and for us, is where reality lies. Yet another question intrudes: why does figuring out the puzzle come to feel a lot like work? Because "Duplicity" is betrayed by a surfeit of intricacy. Its ironic complexities tease the brain without pleasing the heart.

I say this with a heavyish heart and an awareness of contradiction: I'm always complaining that so many studio productions target undiscriminating kids to the exclusion of intelligent adult audiences. Mr. Gilroy's film, which was shot by the ever-resourceful Robert Elswit, gives grown-ups all the trappings of a sophisticated thriller, and some of the excitement of an action adventure, plus a view of corporate America that would seem perfectly synched to our sour times. The two titans of competing industries, played by Tom Wilkinson and Paul Giamatti, are Machiavellian in their maneuverings, Draconian in their demands and Draculian in their lust for blood, wealth and power. (An eerie slo-mo dream sequence—though who's the dreamer?—shows them, on an airport tarmac, battling each other like slimmer sumo wrestlers.)

Mr. Gilroy's previous feature, "Michael Clayton," also offered a bleak view of the business world—a ruthless law firm defending an agrochemical company with blood on its hands—but the drama was enhanced by complex performances: Tom Wilkinson as the firm's star litigator, Tilda Swinton as the company's in-house counsel and, especially, George Clooney as the law firm's fixer, reclaiming his soul from a scrap heap of discarded principles. This time the tone is comic, the performances are shallow, though showy, and the style is intentionally artificial. On several different occasions, for example, Claire and Ray meet and have the same ritualized conversation, except not quite. Each time their lines are slightly different, each departure from the previous ritual changes our understanding of what these two wily lovers are about.

If that sounds abstract, it certainly is—again, intentionally. Tony Gilroy's game is to challenge us while entertaining us. His script is whip-smart: imagine "Mr. & Mrs. Smith" with a high IQ. His dialogue has a surface sheen; if the lines don't measure up to Preston Sturges, they're bright and tangy in a modern mode. Still, the climax is a disappointment, and the movie lacks the essential ingredient of emotional resonance. Clive Owen strives for intensity—his technique of choice in many close-ups is a fixed gaze—at the expense of variety; his performance is attractive, but not particularly interesting. Julia Roberts, who appeared with her co-star in Mike Nichols's adaptation of the stage play "Closer," looks lovely and does her work skillfully, but with a wry detachment that borders on dispassion. It's as if she's recalling, in her own close-ups, the simpler pleasures of earlier comedies that gave her not only good material to play, but lively leading men to play it with.

'Race to Witch Mountain'

When well-loved entertainments like Disney's 1975 "Escape to Witch Mountain" are remade, the perpetrators often call their new versions re-imaginings. "Race to Witch Mountain" might better be called a de-imagining. It's an update of a period piece that needed refreshing—by no stretch of anyone's imagination was the original a masterpiece—but the updates are like those you install to keep your computer's operating system current. Everything's a familiar plug-in from contemporary pop culture, every new development is brisk, bloodless and banal.

In the original, two mysterious children with special powers gradually came to understand, along with the audience, that they were visitors from another planet. In the new one, gradualism has been replaced by the all-too-modern freneticism of pounding chases and overblown special effects. The kids, played by AnnaSophia Robb and Alexander Ludwig, are clearly aliens from the start; the only question is how long it will take them to escape their unfathomably dunderheaded government pursuers led by a scowling Ciarán Hinds. (As you may recall from ancient times, the original bad guys were Aristotle Bolt, a misanthropic millionaire played broadly but effectively by Ray Milland, and his lackey Deranian, played quite creepily by Donald Pleasence.)

Instead of Eddie Albert as the amiable rustic who befriends the endangered kids, we now have Dwayne Johnson as a Las Vegas cabbie with a checkered past. Mr. Johnson is always an appealing presence as well as an imposing one, and he's got a gift for comedy that's been waiting to be sharpened and refined. It's still waiting. So is his considerable magnetism, since there's not a molecule of chemistry between him and a scientist played by Carla Gugino. This is filmmaking by the numbers meant to succeed by the numbers.

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Opening this week in Europe

- **Bride Wars** Czech Republic
- **Confessions of a Shopaholic** Bulgaria
- **Defiance** Norway
- **Frost/Nixon** France
- **Gran Torino** Estonia, Finland
- **He's Just Not That Into You** Portugal
- **Last Chance Harvey** Turkey
- **Marley and Me** Italy, Norway
- **Rachel Getting Married** Germany
- **Religulous** Germany, U.K.
- **The Duchess** Spain
- **The Reader** Hungary, Netherlands
- **Two Lovers** Czech Republic

Source: IMDB

WSJ.com subscribers can read reviews of these films and others at WSJ.com/FilmReview

Stories from 'Open That Bottle Night'

ON SATURDAY NIGHT, Feb. 28, in Charleston, S.C., James McCoy ate meatloaf—with 1994 Opus One, a fine California red that his oldest son gave him years ago. In Chicago, on the same night, Ernie Malik also ate meatloaf—with 1982 Château Lynch-Bages from Bordeaux. And in Euless, Texas, Greg Forshay finally enjoyed his 2004 Two Hands Shiraz from Australia—with meatloaf.

It was Open That Bottle Night 10, the world-wide celebration of friends, family and memories during which all of us finally drink that

Tastings

DOROTHY J. GAITER
AND JOHN BRECHER

wine that is otherwise simply too special to open. It was observed from Antarctica (2005 Nicolas Potel Volnay) to Maui, Hawaii (1978 Lafite Rothschild in magnum), in groups big and small. It was celebrated with a wine called Kistücsök Vörösünk in Budapest, Malbec in Caracas and Pommard in Turkey Ford, Okla. And it was celebrated with 1988 Cristal Rosé Champagne in the Cayman Islands because George and Barbara Sponseller of Oakland County, Mich., took the bottle with them on vacation so they wouldn't miss the event. They had been saving the Champagne since 1995.

The world is a different place now than it was for OTBN 1 through 9, and the celebrations were different, too, as the meal of choice—meatloaf—attests. OTBN 10 was more restrained, with many wines that were less showy and more special for their memories than their pedigree, price or scores from critics. The food was generally also less dramatic. Longtime OTBN celebrants Mark and Ben Segal of Southampton, Pa., who usually prepare elaborate meals, "made the theme this year 'back to basics,' so Ben cooked risotto with peas," Mark wrote, as they listened to their "specially prepared iPod OTBN playlist." Dan and Trowby Brockman of Barrington, Ill., "created a frugal but elegant dinner of cheese soufflé and a green salad."

A few years ago, lamb was the most popular main course. This year, there was a lot of chicken—though not just any chicken, of course. Diane, David and Ashley Schick of Clearwater, Fla., had macadamia nut and goat cheese chicken with a 1997 Taittinger Comtes de Champagne Rosé ("we had been 'saving it'").

OTBN always exposes the general mood of the moment, and this year was certainly no exception. As we read letters from thousands of people, we were struck how shell-shocked many people appeared—not angry, not resigned, just subdued. For instance, many OTBN wines every year come from long-ago vacations to distant lands. In the past, celebrants have reveled in every detail of those expeditions and enjoyed reliving them. This year, there was more of a just-the-facts explanation of the travels, as though reliving the vacation itself was too painful because such a great trip might never happen again. There was also, of course, traditional American sense of humor in the face of adversity.

Alamy

"On OTBN we took the opportunity to also celebrate a good friend's birthday. He is also my stock broker," wrote Tony Link of Midland, Ga. "Needless to say, celebrating OTBN, his birthday and a very sorry investment climate, we opened not one special bottle, but four. Great night. Still didn't help the market, though."

All of this is not to say people weren't eager to party. Daniel Dolan and Andrea McGinty of Rancho Mirage, Calif., threw an OTBN bash for 150. "So many friends and family said, 'I'm so happy you're doing this because no one else is having parties and everyone is so excited to have a party." The result: "A totally happy night—no doom and gloom." Joy Zerivitz of Altamonte Springs, Fla., understood the need for a break, so she stretched out the drama. Her husband, Don, wrote:

My wife made five home videos of her doing various things, like talking about the kids while cleaning wine glasses, talking about the issues of her women's tennis league while holding a glass of wine, etc. Each video was sent by email with the subject as "O," the next one "T," then "B"... It was driving people nuts trying to figure out what this was all about. Then she sent the final one exclaiming OTBN! I have to tell you that our friends were so pumped up. We had 15 people and quite the range of wines. It was a fantastic evening. We had awards for Best Wine, Worst Wine and Best Story. The wines ranged from absolutely wonderful to dead. The stories ranged from bragging to lying.

The Zerivitzes and their friends opened many wines, including two bottles of Opus One and a Joseph Phelps Insignia, but the most talked-about wine of the night was Lancers, the simple Portuguese rosé so many of us grew up with. This was not an aberration. Never have so many bottles of the old, comforting, remember-the-good-old-days classics like Lancers and Mateus been opened on OTBN, not to mention at least one bottle of that old friend Liebfraumilch. Deborah Gould Stover of Harrisburg, Pa., wrote:

We enjoyed cheeses and fruit and I brought out a bottle of Liebfraumilch (P.J. Valckenberg). When my dad, Joe Gould, died in 2005, I found the old bottle in his wine closet. It made me smile because I purchased the bottle while visiting Germany in 1972 and gave it to my father. I wondered why he saved it, but I think I know that he simply wanted to. We were not expecting much. Tom carefully opened the cork and only part of it collapsed downward, so we poured. It made our evening. The aroma was fine—Sherry and nutty—and we held our glasses high to enjoy the liquid amber, laughing about how our first wine experiences in the 1970s were all about Liebfraumilch, Riunite and Lancers, to name a few. We toasted my father for saving that bottle and giving us the moment.

Of course, quite a few genuinely spectacular wines were opened, from a 1976 German Beerenauslese in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., to a 1998 Penfolds Grange in West Point, Miss. More wines from old, classic American wineries were opened than ever before—especially Zinfandels from Rafanelli and Cabernets from Beaulieu. E.J. Nordby and his wife, Olive, of Madison, Wis., opened a 1973 Sterling Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon. They are both in their 90s, he wrote, and "were pleasantly surprised at its 36-year staying power." Michael Martini, from the Martini family of winemakers in Napa, and his wife, Jacque, invited friends over and pulled from their remarkable cellar a wine from the birth year of all six participants, including a 1949 Martini Barbera (for him) and a 1955 Martini Cabernet Sauvignon (for her). "Every wine was drinkable, some more than others," Mrs. Martini said. "Amazing, also, it seems like most enjoyed the wine from their year the best."

Ultimately, of course, it's all about the memories. At many OTBN parties, the participants took turns telling the stories behind the wine they brought. No one summed up that special part of the night more succinctly than Kathy and Bill Newlands of Winnetka, Ill., who listed some of the wines and the stories from their 36 guests:

Dom Pérignon both 2000 and 1982 (engagement wine and wedding wine).

Stag's Leap Wine Cellars Fay 2000 (first trip to Napa—the best of the trip).

Opus One 2001 (engagement wine).

Domaine Zind Humbrecht Pinot d'Alsace 2006 (urban legend says that Obama drinks this when he dines out at Topolobampo here in Chicago).

Vincent Arroyo Petite Sirah 2002 (favorite winery on first wine country bike tour).

Talenti Brunello Riserva Vigna del Paretaio 2001 (Italy trip and Viagra story—let's leave it there).

Some celebrants made it a family affair. At Brad and Aimee Ledwith's party in Morgan Hill, Calif., there were six adults and six children (with a sitter) who ranged in age from 4 weeks to 4 years. "We had a great time," Mr. Ledwith wrote. For an hour and a half, the adults were able to enjoy their wines in front of a fire in their living room "and we never heard a peep from the children."

People ask us every year what to do if they don't have a special old bottle on hand. Our response is to pick up a bottle of wine that means something to you, a wine that will bring back memories. Jim Thacker of Dayton, Ohio, did just that:

I had a bottle picked out, a 1995 Felsina Chianti Classico Riserva, but when walking through the market wine section on Friday they were putting out bottles of F. lli Caprari Reggiano Lambrusco, dolce frizzante. I had not tasted a Lambrusco since the early 1970s. It was that wine that started me on this long, wonderful journey. I was still living at home while finishing college and was just out of the Marine Corps. I brought a bottle home for dinner one night and my mother and dad both liked it and that led to several cases more over the next few months. Eventually it became too sweet and the "drying out" process took over and we moved on to better wines. I had to smile when I saw the Lambrusco, so it came home with me. February 28 was 20 years to the day that my mother died from breast cancer, so we opened the bottle of Lambrusco, poured a couple of glasses, offered a toast and recalled some wonderful and happy memories. I think that bottle of Lambrusco will be the last for us for another 20 years, but it was still fun. There can be a lot of great memories in even a bad bottle of wine.

The real point of OTBN, of course, is to open memorable wines for no reason at all, all year long, not just on one special night. OTBN reminded Marta Kikena, of Washington, D.C., how very special a bottle of wine can be:

I recently returned to western Ukraine, my homeland, after 16 years of not seeing my family. I was excited to see everyone, but in particular my paternal grandparents, who raised me until I left when I was seven. One evening we were talking around the kitchen table after yet another delicious meal by my grandmother. To my surprise, they told me that when I was born, my grandfather had bought the best and most expensive bottle of champagne available in the Soviet Union at that time—in fact, he had to get it all the way from Moscow—to be opened when I turned 18. It's called "Golden" and was guaranteed to only get better with age. Since I returned when I was 24, it should have been even better than six years earlier. So we opened it. It took three strainings to get the pulpy haze out, there were no bubbles and the champagne had in effect turned into a flat wine. We joked that just like the Soviet Union, it was promised to last forever but turned into something totally different instead. Nevertheless, it was the best champagne I have ever had.

The message of OTBN, especially in these times, is a simple one: What are you waiting for? Wine, like life itself, should be enjoyed.

—Melanie Grayce West contributed to this article.

Arbitrage

Alain Figaret business shirt

City	Local currency	€
Paris	€79	€79
London	£79	€85
Brussels	€89	€89
Rome	€89	€89
Hong Kong	HK$1,080	€103
New York	$156	€115
Frankfurt	€128	€128

Note: Herringbone white, no cufflinks; prices, including taxes, as provided by retailers in each city, averaged and converted into euros.

Fishing for a punch recipe

COCKTAILS COME AND go. Rare is the drink that, though its popularity has ebbed and flowed, has been steadily served since 1732.

Fish House Punch is the official refreshment of the oldest club in America, the Schuylkill Fishing Company, also known as the State in Schuylkill. The club was founded by an early group of Philadelphia worthies dedicated to angling. Along the Schuylkill River they built a large club cottage known both as the castle and as the Fish House. Though the castles have been replaced, or disassembled and moved over the years in pursuit of fishable streams, the citizens (as club members are called) still gather there to make themselves feasts of barbecued pork, grilled steaks, planked shad, and perch "thrown" in skillets, all of it washed down with the clubhouse's namesake punch.

How's Your Drink?

ERIC FELTEN

Dylan Cross for The Wall Street Journal

The first mention of Fish House Punch—though not yet by that name—may be in the notes of William Black, the secretary of an embassy of Virginia Commissioners who visited Philadelphia in 1744. He recounted being met by local poobahs on the bank of the Schuylkill, where they were greeted "very kindly and welcomed ... into their Province with a Bowl of fine Lemon Punch big enough to have Swimmed half a dozen of young Geese."

The giant bowl of punch would prove to be a theme. In 1812, Capt. Charles Ross presented the club with a 34-liter bowl that is said to be used not only to brew punch but for a ritual of "baptism" by which the oldest male child of each member is christened into prospective citizenship.

"Recipes for Fish House Punch abound, nearly all of them spurious," William Grimes wrote in his 1993 book "Straight Up or On the Rocks: A Cultural History of American Drink." It wasn't the first time the many counterfeits had been noted. In 1896, the Philadelphia Times claimed to have acquired the true recipe, a corrective to the imitations then proliferating: "The spurious copies generally contain champagne and other liquids foreign to the primal compound." And indeed plenty have been the Fish House Punch recipes that have urged the addition of fizzy wine, fizzy water, green tea, strong orange pekoe tea, pineapple, bourbon or any number of imposter ingredients. Whiskey, it is worth noting, is right out: From the club's earliest days, according to the Philadelphia Times, it "was looked upon as the drink of a groom and not of a gentleman."

But a decade later, the New York Times maintained that the "exact ingredients, and their proportions," were still a club secret "handed down from generation to generation." In that 1905 article, the Times asserted that "the recipe for the blending never has been revealed, although so-called Fish House punch has been served for years at dinners in different parts of the country."

The spread of the drink had been made possible by the 1862 publication of "How to Mix Drinks, or The Bon-Vivant's Companion," written by the celebrated New York bartender Jerry Thomas. This first true bartender's manual included a recipe for "Philadelphia Fish House Punch"—a third of a pint of lemon juice, three-quarters of a pound of sugar, 2½ pints of water, half a pint of Cognac, and a quarter pint each of rum and peach-flavored brandy. There would be reason to be dubious that Thomas had the recipe right—after all, how would a bartender whose résumé included stints in New York, California and St. Louis come to know the secret recipe of a rarefied private club in Philadelphia? But Fish House Punch is one of the only recipes in "How to Mix Drinks" that is specifically credited to a source other than Thomas himself. It came from F.S. Cozzens, a New York wine merchant and author of comic stories. A member of New York's Century Association, he ran in social circles that may well have provided him access to the Fish House's secrets.

The recipe the Philadelphia Times printed in 1896 was not that different: Instead of two parts brandy to one part rum, the newspaper's version specified the proportions in reverse. The amount of peach-flavored brandy was ratcheted back to a mere "dash." The sugar was also reined in: "The older members state that many years ago there was used in the compound two and a half pounds of sugar," the paper reported, but "frequent attacks of gout warned them that too much saccharine matter was disabling their underpinnings, and consequently the proportion of sugar was lessened."

Take that recipe and up the "dash" of peach brandy to a "wine glass"—that is, 120 milliliters—and you have the consensus recipe. Charles H. Baker Jr., whose 1939 "Gentleman's Companion" is the most elegantly florid of cocktail guides, claimed to have just such a recipe from Philadelphia relations who were citizens of the State in Schuylkill. Baker warned against "so-called 'Fish House Punch' receipts that include Benedictine, curaçao, bourbon, and God knows what else," asserting that "there is but one receipt, unwavering, invariable. This is it."

But is it? Around 1873 Dr. William Camac was the "governor" of the State in Schuylkill, and he put the official Fish House Punch recipe down on paper. It has the lemon juice, the sugar, the two parts rum to one part brandy. But missing is any mention whatsoever of peach brandy. Which would mean the legendary Fish House Punch is nothing more than the most basic sort of punch one could compound. "It's a simple, even banal punch," writes Mr. Grimes, "and how it developed such a mystique remains unclear."

The mystique, of course, could simply have been a reflection of the prestige and secrecy of the club. And there is reason to credit the plain old punch recipe—the preparation of all the other consumables at the "castle" is done with the utmost simplicity. The club's rules specify, for example, that in grilling steaks, no "high seasoning" is to be used.

I prefer the punch with the peach liqueur, and with that liqueur in a quantity closer to that originally suggested by Cozzens, which saves the drink from the banality that Mr. Grimes bemoaned. I think that even those of us not planning to cast a line this spring could use a good tubful of Fish House Punch these days. "It is said of this punch," wrote the Lincoln (Neb.) Evening News in 1903, "that if one will drink enough of it he will reach a condition of optimism where he builds yachts and buys real estate by the block."

Fish House Punch

2 parts dark Jamaica rum

1 part cognac

½ part peach-flavored brandy

1 part fresh lemon juice

1 to 1½ part (to taste) simple syrup

2 parts (more or less, to taste) water

Stir with ice and serve in a punch cup. If you make it in bulk, do so in a sizable punchbowl with a large block of ice. You may decorate the punch with thin slices of lemon.

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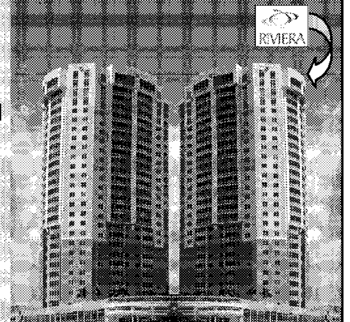

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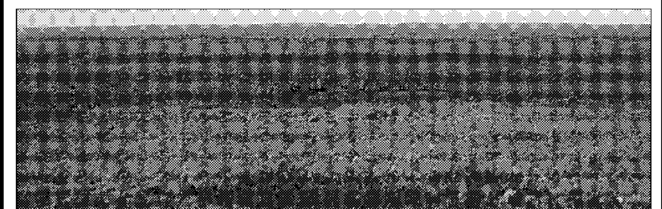

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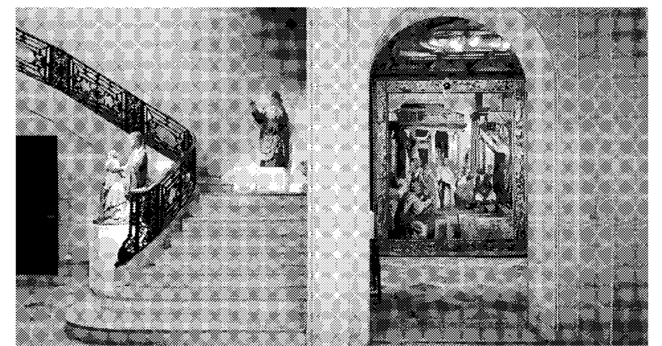

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Watching a star chef whip up something new

By Raymond Sokolov

Las Vegas

THE WORLD'S MOST decorated chef is drinking a Diet Coke. Joël Robuchon is in Sin City to create the new spring menu for the jewel-box of a restaurant in the MGM Grand that bears his name. We are there to watch him invent a new dish—and to see how a 60-seat establishment that charges $500 for a tasting of black-truffle dishes is making out in a desert Babylon stunned by the current financial crisis.

Mr. Robuchon enters the immaculate kitchen, followed by a small entourage of underchefs. He inspects a small circular tin of Osetra caviar and then pulls apart an Alaskan king crab the size of a puppy. "Where is the coral?" he asks, precipitating nervous activity and whispers. Coral, the red, deeply flavorful female crab's egg mass he needs for the sauce, is found in another big crab. The kitchen has assembled cooked meat from king, Dungeness and blue crabs, which Mr. Robuchon tastes in different mixtures, pulling out samples with his fingers. In the end, he decides on a mélange of king and Dungeness. "For me it's all about the texture," he says.

So far, in the year of Madoff and mortgage foreclosure, Joël Robuchon, the Las Vegas restaurant, is doing fine, though Mr. Robuchon says business has slowed at his less grand (but still plenty opulent) Atelier de Joël Robuchon, at the Four Seasons Hotel in New York. On the chill weekday evening in mid-February when I had the multicourse, $385 winter menu in Las Vegas, more than half the tables were full. Mr. Robuchon says a well-heeled international clientèle is still supporting his other two cost-be-damned "gastronomic" restaurants, in Tokyo and Macao.

The same seems to be holding true elsewhere at the highest tiers of global chefdom. You can't get a reservation after 6:30 p.m. for two months at Thomas Keller's Per Se in Manhattan. Ferran Adrià filled his 2009 bookings at El Bulli, north of Barcelona, last November, as was the case in 2008.

At all his restaurants, Mr. Robuchon creates a new menu for each season. The spring menu in Las Vegas, available this week, is centered on shellfish. "Americans really love shellfish," he tells me, as if to congratulate me and 300 million other compatriots for our good taste. In the kitchen, he builds a dish layered with the crab mixture and strips of yellow-brown sea urchin, which he takes from a neat pile. The crustaceans are only the beginning: Minced, raw white cauliflower is also a major ingredient. It lurks within the crabmeat mix as a stealth carrier of a starch element that Mr. Robuchon believes makes this dish a no-grain, marine cousin of tabbouleh, the ancient Near Eastern salad based on bulghur wheat and mint. To carry the edible metaphor all the way, the chef adds mint to his creation.

The ability to use the whole galaxy of foods and food ideas as his palette has made Mr. Robuchon a worldly success at 63, with 25 Michelin stars world-wide, more than any other chef. Now, his only three-star Michelin restaurants are in Las Vegas and Tokyo. He closed his Parisian three-star and took a Garbo-esque retreat from the limelight a quarter-century ago, reopening in Paris in 2003 with his lunch-counter format Atelier.

He is wistful about a France he sees in spiritual decline, but as passionate as ever about the art of cooking and his role in it. The gastronomic writer Brillat-Savarin put the creation of new dishes at the top of human achievement, declaring, "The discovery of a new dish does more for human happiness than the discovery of a new star." Like a composer who can hear the whole orchestra in his head, Mr. Robuchon imagines a dish in full, then makes it real.

To enter the restaurant, you walk through the vastness of the MGM Grand, out of the hustle of the casino and into a serene and color-drenched retreat. Look through one door, and you see a vertical garden of ivy and other plants growing on a wall. Through another door, you catch a glimpse of the casino framed by a little bar with a cart of priceless cognacs; through a third door comes dinner.

First to arrive on the table was La Pomme, a chilled apple "tea," flavored with nutmeg and yuzu and "veiled" with a solid, edible net concocted from olive oil. From this chaste fruit cocktail, the meal, mostly from the winter menu, moved on to Le Caviar, a serious fugue in which a little pot of black eggs is attended by sliced scallop, avocado and cauliflower cream.

The innocent diner who orders the crab-and-cauliflower "tabbouleh" at the start of the spring menu will receive a small caviar tin, inside which only black Osetra eggs are visible. Then in goes the fork and the whole chamber symphony of crab, cauliflower and mint, the faux tabbouleh concealed under the caviar, emerges and merges on the tongue in the most unexpected and beautiful way. "I just had this idea in my head," Mr. Robuchon explains, without, of course, explaining anything.

Next came a double whammy: The egg yolk in an herb-flavored ravioli contrasts with a medley of black truffle shavings and orbs of baby spinach foam—two kinds of spherical shapes, one on a convex mount, the other in a concave container.

Then I got my favorite course, the frog leg fritter. This mythic rustic food is presented as a single gobbet of flesh with a matchstick of bone sticking up as a handle—letting you pop the thing, with its crisp, bird's-nest coating, into your mouth, but only after you've dredged it through teardrops of garlic cream and parsley purée. Decorative double red-wire helices flank the oblong plate—a sort of Dada anti-place setting meant to amuse and delight.

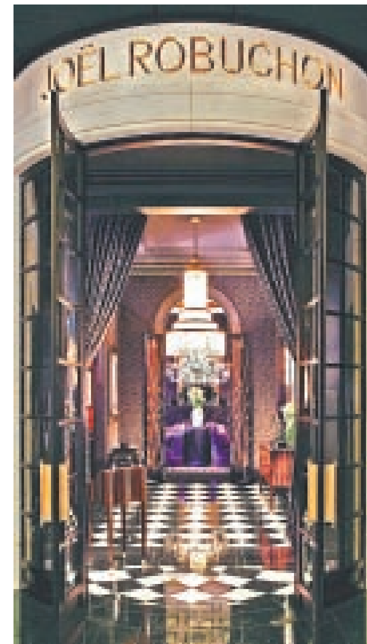
I was equally amused and delighted to see how Mr. Robuchon ennobled the lowly turnip with candied chestnuts in a foie gras broth. The flavors and textures married as if centuries of trial and error had made the combination commonplace. Ditto for the velvety soup of oats studded with toasted almond and red dots of chorizo juice—superior comfort food but pepped up, with crunchy almond bits hiding in the porridge. Very strange. Odd, too, and also magnificent was the "risotto" of soy shoots with lemon zest and chive.

Toward the end of the evening, the courses turned less fanciful. A piece of veal with a Napoleon of vegetables and a natural herb gel preceded an exemplary bass, served unadorned except for its crisp skin and a dark red pool of sauce derived from verjuice, the acidic liquid pressed from unripe grapes. To see these two dishes as less fanciful than those that had come before concedes how radical the earlier part of the meal was.

In a single dessert, a Fuji apple purée perfumed with lemon and a Fuji ice cream studded with candied cranberries surrounded handcrafted lemon marshmallow. Then, Mr. Robuchon, at his trickiest, offered a second extravaganza, a rococo assemblage called Le Coca.

As in cola. This tribute to Mr. Robuchon's beloved Coke consists of a ginger mousse, an ice made from vodka and Coke and something dark, a bubble of Coca-Cola gelée crowned with gold. It's a grandiose joke, but Mr. Robuchon goes a giant step further. Somehow he takes the world's most famous industrial flavor and transmogrifies it into a high culinary essence—still recognizably Coke, but also something way beyond.

Email me at eatingout@wsj.com.



Clockwise from left: Fuji apple confit, with yuzu ice cream and lemon marshmallow; entry to Joël Robuchon, the restaurant; the chef, in black, with executive chef Eric Bouchenoire; bottom, sautéed veal chop with vegetable taglierini.

Jeff Green for The Wall Street Journal

MGM Mirage (3)

❖ Taste

Houses of Worship / *By David Gibson*

Superstition vs. Religion

At a mass on Saturday in Luanda, Angola, Pope Benedict tried to warn of the dangers of belief in witchcraft. Though he never used that word, his implication was clear when he suggested that African Catholics should offer Christ to their fellow citizens because "so many of them are living in fear of spirits, of malign and threatening powers."

The statement reflects a real and tragic problem in many parts of Africa, even among people who identify as Christians. Many still consult shamans and use talismans or potions for everything from fertility problems to exorcisms. Others take it a horrifying step further: Children, especially those with a physical deformity or afflicted with a disease like AIDS, are often brutalized or killed in the belief that they are possessed by evil spirits. The elderly, especially women, are also common targets. Earlier this month, Amnesty International reported that more than 1,000 people were rounded up in Gambia in a government-sponsored witch-hunt, and in Tanzania at least 45 albinos have been murdered since 2007 because popular superstition holds that they are witches.

No wonder church leaders who praise the explosion of faith across Africa as the future of Christianity (the Christian population has gone from eight million in 1900 to 360 million today) also take pains to try to purge superstition and sorcery and, yes, witchcraft, from the continent. And they regularly fail, or offend. A decade ago Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong—roughly Benedict's polar opposite on the political spectrum—was forced to apologize for referring to African Christians as "just one step up from witchcraft." That was also not a quote—he actually said that African Christians have "moved out of animism into a very superstitious kind of Christianity" and have "yet to face the intellectual revolution of Copernicus and Einstein that we've had to face." But the message was clear.

Associated Press/L'Osservatore Romano

Pope Benedict XVI meets faithful during his visit to Luanda, Angola, March 21.

Yet in response to Pope Benedict and Bishop Spong, many would argue that religion itself is simply another form of superstition, albeit dressed up in Greek philosophy or Hebrew wisdom. And believers are hardly in a position to criticize their African brethren. Polls show at least half of Americans confess to being superstitious to one degree or another—one-third believe in astrology—and belief in various forms of the paranormal are on the rise.

But the problem is that one man's superstition is another man's religion, and vice versa. Many Protestants today still see Catholicism as being rife with superstition, most notably in the "hocus pocus" of the Eucharist (from the Latin words of consecration in the Mass, *hoc est enim corpus meum*, "This is my body"), while atheists and agnostics would see bien-pensant Protestants as worshiping an equally absurd form of the supernatural. It is all a matter of degree, one could argue.

And it's a good argument, given the superstitions that comingled with religion in the past and persist in the present, either in certain doctrines or in the ingrained rituals of certain followers.The distance between "prosperity theology"—the notion that following God's commands will make you rich—for example, and sacrificing animals to appease the gods is perhaps not as great as we'd like to think.

On the other hand, the history of religion could be viewed as the process, however halting and incomplete, of shedding magical thinking to reveal truth and meaning, which are the hallmarks of genuine belief as opposed to superstition.

Superstition encompasses many things, at many levels, from harmless good luck rituals to calling down evil spirits. Sorcery, for instance, is often defined as magic used to harm others, a negation of religion. Witchcraft is often characterized as magic that similarly attempts to use unverifiable "natural laws" in an effort to reveal the impersonal forces that threaten to capsize our lives. In 1948 the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, picking up on the latter phenomenon, attributed the appeal of magic to what he termed the "theory of the gap," that is, anxiety about the unknown.

But the difference between superstitions and religion is not only the difference between meaning and randomness, between faith and anxiety, but the difference between belief in a personal, benevolent God and fear of the pitiless Mother Nature.

Superstition offers the illusion of control by manipulating nature or revealing her occult intent. If the spells are recited properly, all should be well. It's a big "if," however. Religion gives the promise, rather than the illusion, of hope. God does not always respond as we would like; loved ones die, livelihoods are lost. Mystery is deepened, and hopefully, with faith, leads to peace rather than disillusionment. Accidental similarities between religion and magic should not lead anyone to confuse the difference in their content. Nor should the focus on witchcraft in places like Africa blind the rest of us to the lures of superstition that continue to cloud our own beliefs.

Mr. Gibson is the author of "The Rule of Benedict: Pope Benedict XVI and His Battle With the Modern World" (HarperOne, 2006).

Masterpiece / *By Rosemary Hill*

A Victorian Novel in Stone

London

The British Houses of Parliament stand beside the Thames, a symbol of London itself. Their silhouette, culminating in the great clock tower that houses Big Ben, is famous all over the world. Yet this is a building that came about by accident and whose precise authorship was for many years clouded by controversy. Its proper name is the Palace of Westminster, for it replaced the medieval palace where from the 13th century onward Parliament habitually met. Over the years the old building was expanded, altered, filled in and divided until it had sprawled into a higgledy-piggledy mess.

> The Houses of Parliament tell the story of Britain's past and its peculiar constitution.

Everyone agreed that it should be replaced, but no one could decide exactly how. Then, on the night of Oct. 16, 1834, fate intervened. Fire engulfed the old palace—and even while the ruins still smoldered, debate raged about how it should be rebuilt. This was a moment, on the brink of the Victorian era, when taste was on the turn. Classical architecture, long considered the only suitable style for a public building, was losing ground to the Gothic. For the generation who had grown up reading the romances of Walter Scott, the medieval style seemed to summon up a noble national past and to point toward a better future, free of the corruption associated with the dying days of Georgian England. So the new palace was Gothic.

Construction of the new Palace of Westminster began in 1837, the year of Queen Victoria's accession. The architect in charge was Charles Barry, who had won an open competition with some assistance from a young draftsman, A.W.N. Pugin. This great Victorian novel in stone tells the story of Britain's past and its peculiar constitution literally within the fabric of the building, in its richly colored glass and murals, and even in its floor plan. If you stand at the exact heart of the building, in the Central Lobby, you can see the architecture unfold around you as a diagram of government. In one direction, through the House of Lords, you see the sovereign's throne. Far away at the other end of the central axis, through the Commons, is the speaker's chair, representing the elected house. Monarch and people face each other in delicate counterbalance.

The richly decorated chamber of the Lords is itself a kind of gilded cage, reminding the sovereign of her limited authority, for the opulent throne is overlooked by statues of the barons who were the first to limit royal power by making King John sign Magna Carta. Here and there the ghost of the old palace haunts the new. The House of Commons, which had originally met in the medieval chapel, was rebuilt in the same form with benches down each side, like choir stalls. The space between them is slightly longer than two swords' lengths, in case debate should get out of hand.

The new Palace of Westminster was the biggest and most complex building of its time, artistically and technically. While its style looked back to the Middle Ages, its substance was a product of the steam age. Cast iron, concrete, the latest heating and ventilation methods were all deployed.

No one architect, designer or artist could have created all this alone. It was Barry who was responsible for its conception and most deserves the title of "architect." The ingenious plan is entirely his. But Barry was a classicist, a lover of symmetry skilled in Italianate design. To finish the building as a completely integrated whole with carving and gilding, stained glass, furniture and clocks, inkwells, umbrella stands and coat hooks, all in the Gothic style, was quite beyond him.

Corbis

For this he turned once again to Pugin. In the nine years since Pugin had worked as a draftsman on the original competition entry, when his drawings had undoubtedly helped Barry win, he had grown into a Gothic architect and designer of genius. He was precocious and prodigious. At the age of 24 Pugin had written the first architectural manifesto; then, before he was 30, he had built 22 churches, three cathedrals—including England's first since St. Paul's—several schools and a Cistercian monastery. Pugin invented the Victorian church as a building type and was just on the point of reinventing the modern family house.

Pugin was a hero to the rising generation of architects, who despised Barry and his now old-fashioned style of Gothic. So as it became generally known that Pugin was working at the Palace of Westminster, rumors grew that it was really Pugin's building and that Barry was taking credit for Pugin's work. This last part was true. While Pugin provided designs for tiles and metalwork, the royal throne, the glass and a great deal more, Barry made sure that the younger man's name was kept out of the press reports. But the more Barry tried to play down his assistant's role, the more scope his enemies had to play it up.

Pugin did not help himself. He hated bureaucracy, insisting that Barry attend all the committee meetings and be the front man. He was not much interested in public life—and this, combined with increasing ill-health, meant that he contributed to his own obscurity.

In 1852, when the building was finally opened, Pugin received no credit and, anyway, was too ill to attend. Just a few days after the ceremony, Barry traveled to Pugin's house in Kent to get one last design. As Barry stood over him, Pugin sketched out the designs for the great clock tower. It was to be his best-known work, but he never saw it. Weeks later he lapsed into insanity, and in eight months he was dead at the age of 40. His role at the Palace of Westminster remained the subject of national controversy for decades. The building was a collaboration—Barry's skeleton dressed in Pugin's flesh—yet it is from Pugin that our first and last impressions of it come.

In 1941 Barry and Pugin's House of Commons was destroyed by German bombing. When it was rebuilt, Winston Churchill chose to continue in the same Gothic style. He explained the decision by saying that "we shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us." What the Victorians had shaped, out of accident and controversy as well as art and ingenuity, continues to shape Britain today.

Ms. Hill is the author of "God's Architect: Pugin and the Building of Romantic Britain," which was published earlier this month by Yale University Press.

time off

Amsterdam
history
"400 Years New Amsterdam/New York" celebrates the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson founding the Dutch colony called New Netherlands in North America.
Rijksmuseum
March 31-June 1
☎ 31-20-6747-000
www.rijksmuseum.nl

Basel
art
"Visual Encounters—Africa, Oceania and Modern Art" presents works such as masks, sculptures and paintings, juxtaposing art from Africa or Oceania with works of classical modernism.
Fondation Beyeler
Until May 24
☎ 41-61-2069-700
www.beyeler.com

Berlin
history
"Calvinism: The Reformed in Germany and Europe" shows works of art, historic documents, scriptures, liturgical devices and quotidian art exploring the origins and spread of Calvinism in Germany and Europe.
Deutsches Historisches Museum
April 1-July 19
☎ 49-30-2030-4750
www.dhm.de

photography
"Hannes Kilian—Photographs" exhibits 320 black-and-white images by the German photographer Hannes Kilian (1909-1999), including photojournalism, sport and portrait photography.
Martin-Gropius-Bau
April 4-June 29
☎ 49-30-2548-90
www.berlinerfestspiele.de

Brussels
photography
"Portraits of Artists—80 Years of the Centre for Fine Arts in Pictures" is a selection of 100 portraits of influential artists.
Palais des Beaux Arts
Until Sept. 13
☎ 32-2-5078-444
www.bozar.be

Edinburgh
art
"The Conversation Piece: Scenes of Fashionable Life" features "conversation pieces," paintings of a family or a gathering of friends in informal activities.
The Royal Collection
Until Sept. 20
☎ 44-20-7766-7300
www.royalcollection.org.uk

Florence
science
"Galileo: Images of the Universe from Antiquity to the Telescope" exhibits scientific instruments, celestial atlases, drawings, sculptures, and illuminated manuscripts.
Palazzo Strozzi
Until Aug. 30
☎ 39-055-2645-155
www.palazzostrozzi.org

Frankfurt
art
"Caravaggio in the Netherlands" presents works of art by Caravaggio (1571-1610) and the Utrecht Caravaggists: Dirck van Baburen (1595-1624), Gerard van Honthorst (1592-1656) and Hendrick Terbrugghen (1588-1629).
Städel Museum
April 1-July 26
☎ 49-69-6050-980
www.staedelmuseum.de

Museum Tinguely, Donation Niki de Saint Phalle

'Le Cyclop-La Tête' (1970), by Jean Tinguely, in Oslo; below, Kandinsky's 'Improvisation 19' (1911), in Paris; top right, IKEA children's furniture 'Mammut' (1993), in Munich.

Ghent
design
"Henry van de Velde: Book design between art nouveau and new objectivity" explores design evolution through sketches, trials and multiple variations by Belgian artist Henry van de Velde (1863-1957).
Design Museum Ghent
Until June 1
☎ 32-9-2679-999
design.museum.gent.be

Glasgow
history
"Ancient Greeks: Athletes, Warriors and Heroes" explores the theme of competition in the Ancient Greek world with one of the largest collections of Greek artifacts on loan from the British Museum.
The Burrell Collection
Until May 4
☎ 44-1412-8725-50
www.glasgowmuseums.com

Hamburg
art
"Itô Jakuchû—Jade Flowers in Mysterious Gardens" displays a special type of Japanese woodcuts (ishizuri-e) by Itô Jakuchû (1716-1800), in which the motif appears in white against a black background.
Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe
Until June 28
☎ 49-40-4281-3427-32
www.mkg-hamburg.de

London
art
"Symbolism in Poland and Britain" shows works by Polish Symbolist artists alongside paintings by their British contemporaries.
Tate Britain
Until June 21
☎ 44-20-7887-8888
www.tate.org.uk

Luxembourg
art
"Between the Sacred and the Profane" showcases 17th-century Italian master paintings by Francesco Albani (1578-1660), Ludovico Carracci (1555-1619), Luca Giordano (1634-1705) and others.
Musée National d'Histoire et d'Art
Until May 17
☎ 352-47-9330-1
www.mnha.public.lu

Munich
design
"Democratic Design—IKEA" examines the Swedish furniture company IKEA through themes such as "the Beginnings," "The Billy System," "Sustainability and Ecology" and more.
Pinakothek der Moderne
April 3-July 12
☎ 49-89-2380-5360
www.pinakothek.de

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Oslo
art
"Jean Tinguely" presents the moving sculptures of the Swiss artist (1925-1991), including radio sculptures, kinetic reliefs, self-destructing mechanical sculptures that go up in smoke and more.
Henie-Onstadt Kunstsenter
April 2-Aug. 2
☎ 47-67-8048-80
www.hok.no

Oxford
art
"Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680): Artist-collector of the Baroque" shows old master drawings collected by Sir Peter Lely, one of the first artist-collectors and one of Britain's most successful artists of the 17th century.
Christ Church Picture Gallery
Until May 31
☎ 44-1865-2761-72
www.chch.ox.ac.uk

Paris
art
"Kandinsky" brings together about 100 paintings by Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) and updates the Kandinsky collection with additions such as watercolors and manuscripts of the "Russian" period (1914-1917).
Centre Pompidou
April 8-Aug. 10
☎ 33-1-4478-1233
www.centrepompidou.fr

art
"The Imaginative World of Ariosto" showcases the Renaissance artwork that inspired Italian court poet Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533), best known for his epic poem, "Roland Furieux" (Orlando Furioso).
Musée du Louvre
Until May 18
☎ 33-1-4020-5050
www.louvre.fr

Riga
art
"Marta Skulme—Sculpture" shows sculptures from the early 20th century by Latvia's first female sculptor, Marta Liepina-Skulme (1890-1962).
Latvian National Museum of Art
April 3-May 10
☎ 371-6732-5051
www.vmm.lv

Rotterdam
art
"God in Sculpture" presents bronze and stone sculptures from India, Nepal, Cambodia, China, Korea and Thailand, illustrating portrayals of God in Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism.
Kunsthal
Until June 14
☎ 31-10-4400-301
www.kunsthal.nl

Vienna
art
"Georges Adéagbo—The Colonization and the History of the Colonized" showcases the work of African artist Georges Adéagbo (born 1942).
MAK
April 1-Sept. 13
☎ 43-1-7113-6248
www.mak.at

Source: ArtBase Global Arts News Service, WSJE research.