

AROUNDTOWN

This alien race sparks suspense on the big screen

w Hira Malik
Staff Writer

Race to Witch Mountain, directed by Andy Fickman, is a film filled with humor, emotions, relationships, obstacles and a mission. It is a movie filled with love for one's planet, a planet that is not planet Earth.

Race to Witch Mountain tells a tale of two sibling aliens, Seth (Alexander Ludwig) and Sara (AnnaSophia Robb), and their mission to save their planet. Their planet is deteriorating, and there is only two ways to save it. Through alien research, it is found that Earth would be a suitable planet for aliens. One way the aliens realize will keep their kind from going extinct is invading Earth where all the aliens could then live, and the other is finding a mechanical device on Earth that Seth and Sara plan to find and take back home so that it can save their planet peacefully. They crash their spaceship into Earth and encounter a Las Vegas cab driver, Jack Bruno (Dwayne Johnson, AKA The Rock). At first, Seth is reluctant to trust a human; however, throughout the film, the relationship between the two only becomes stronger.

Seth and Sara's mission is not simple, for the American government, without telling the American citizens, only wishes to capture the two and experiment on them after the

government tracks a flying object that flies into the Earth over Las Vegas, NV. Bruno protects the two aliens, initially believing that they are two young children.

Fickman did an outstanding job directing this film. He made the film entertaining for an audience of all ages.

Although the film is unrealistic at some points, one needs to consider that the film is about aliens. How realistic can it get?

Action drives the film, because Fickman and screenwriters Matt Lopez and Mark Bombback employ action that is fast and furious, but not *Fast and Furious*. The conflict between the government agents and the aliens and their earthly guardian really adds to the film's intensity level. When Henry Burke (Ciaran Hinds) and his government pals circle Bruno and the children outside of a restaurant, the viewer is on the edge of his/her seat.

Fickman's technique of juxtaposing the power of the aliens with the government agents' lack thereof provides an almost allegorical element to the film. When Seth uses his powers to open a door which

is locked from the outside or when Sara uses her power to cause destruction, the difference between the humans and the aliens in the film underscores the anti-government subtext.

Cinematographer Greg Gardinar's brilliant camera work enhances the film's suspense. When Bruno's cab is crashing between the two government officials cars, the audience can see the damage done to the car during the crash as well as after the crash.

Gardinar's use of unusual angles is also effective during the action scenes were Seth and Sara are running away from the enemy alien who wishes to destroy Earth. When they are hiding, Gardinar's camera views the world from the perspective of Seth and Sara, which further elicits the audience's sympathy for the young protagonists.

What would an action movie be without stuff that blows up? Art director

John R. Jensen, Fickman and the special effects team make the explosions look so real, simultaneously beautiful and horrific. During one blast, an enormous amount of ground

comes up from its normal elevation point when the explosion occurs, a fact impressed saliently upon the audience when it all falls back to the earth in slow motion, yet another testament to Gardinar's cinematic genius.

While Lopez and Bombback tell a good story, dialogue is not their strong suit. Many lines throughout the film could have used more work to them less dry. The only reason why the dialogue is effective in the least is because of the talent of those delivering the writers' weak lines. Ludwig, Robb and Johnson do an admirable job of providing nuance that makes the sometimes insipid dialogue. While the film does feature some effective comic relief, once again, this is due more to Johnson's delivery than to the actual words he speaks.

One of most intriguing elements of the film is its score. Composer Trevor Rabin masterfully matched the music to the action in the scenes, enhancing suspense, pathos, humor, etc.

This reviewer's issues aside, *Race to Witch Mountain* provide spark, laughter and action, making the film a joyful ride with aliens.



Race to Witch Mountain



Directed by Andy Fickman

H.A.W.X. succeeds to raise gaming standards to new heights

w Rexly Penaflorida
Managing Editor

For countless years, the *Tom Clancy* video game series has given gamers unforgettable excitement. From leading a squadron in *Ghost Recon* to sneaking into enemy territory in *Splinter Cell* to commanding an army in *Endwar*, gamers have not been disappointed. This year, the series has taken a different approach on their newest release. Instead of creating another first-

control their planes. Another negative aspect of the game is its lack of realism. It should be said that this game focuses more on combat rather than flight simulation, so players should not be surprised if they find themselves making tight turns at high speeds which cannot be done in the real world.

While there are some negatives to the game, many positive things that can be said about *H.A.W.X.* The design of each level is second-to-none. Each level is a location that is set in the real world. From the burning building of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, to the all-too-familiar sights of Chicago, each level is detailed from satellite images taken by Geoeye Incorporated, one of the world's best commercial satellite imaging companies. Another great feature of the game is the action simply known as **Assistance On** and **Assistance Off**. In Assistance On, the camera is placed behind the plane and the player is limited

to a number of moves, which means that it will take a long time for the player to get behind an enemy plane if the enemy is behind him/her. In Assistance Off, the camera pulls back at an angle so that the player has a larger view of the area around the plane. Along with a better camera view, Assistance Off allows the player to make more dramatic moves with the planes such as turning 180 degrees while still moving in a forward direction. Switching to Assistance Off might at first be a little bit difficult since the camera angle is not the best and players have to use their depth perception skills in order to steer their planes safely, but after a while, playing in Assistance Off becomes a walk in the park.

The game also has a level up system, meaning that the player accumulates points per mission, and those points are added up. When enough points are reached, the player moves up a rank. There are 40 ranks in the game, which

culminate in the highest rank, General of the Air Force. Reaching each level has rewards including unlocking planes and new weapon packages for each plane.

Overall, the game is great. There are some minor glitches and bugs to work out, but there is no doubt that this game can be easily played. Plus, the chances of people replaying the game are very high. There are enough rewards in the game to keep players interested in the game for a long time. Whether the player is an amateur or a top gun, *Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.* is bound to make gamers feel as though they can fly.



H.A.W.X.



Multiple Systems

Pintxos provides patrons with authentic Spanish cuisine

w Zoe Ljubic
Editor in Chief

Pintxos Tortilleria and Pintxos Bar, a new, lively, weekend-only *tapas* hot spot that opened in February of this year, offers patrons a taste of authentic Spanish cuisine.

Located directly above Café Iberico in Chicago's River North, this second-floor secret features a comfortable Spanish ambiance with green and yellow painted walls, a large dining space and bar area. Pintxos' table arrangements near the large showcased windows, Spanish music and aroma blend together to evoke a typical Spanish setting that does not come close to the dimly lit downstairs Café Iberico.

Café Iberico owner Jose Lagoa told this reviewer that he launched this *tapas* spot to highlight the Basque spin on *tapas*. *Pintxos* are described as small slices of bread upon which a dish on a stick is put. Typical in Spain's Basque region, ingredients found on the bread include fish, stuffed peppers and *torillas*. Pintxos' patrons will come to realize this was one restaurant worth visiting.

Pintxos offers patrons a variety of choices including its famous *tortilla Espanolas*, (Spanish tortillas), \$5.96-8.95, *muslos de pollos a las ajillos* (drumsticks or wings in a garlic sauce), \$3.95-9.95, *ensaladas* (salads), \$4.50-5.50 and a variety of *pinxtos*, \$1.50-1.95.

The dishes debut sporadically throughout the

meal. The idea is to eat the *pinxtos* in the order they come out, just like *tapas*.

The small *tortilla Espanola* (\$5.95) includes a large pancake-like filled dough with potatoes, spinach, eggs and olive oil. The dough, offered in three different sizes, is filled with flavor that savors upon entry into the mouth. The warm and moist texture of the spinach satisfied this reviewer. Be sure to order small portions, these are served to fill large parties.

Muslos de pollo al ajillo includes a garlic pan filled with roasted drumsticks with a side of diced potatoes and red peppers. Once again, this dish is offered in three different sizes and contains about five drumsticks dipped into olive oil filled with potatoes and peppers. The potatoes and peppers blended well to compensate for the overload of olive oil.

Pintxos features custom platters that include various combinations of the 30 ingredients.

This reviewer ordered the *pinxtos de carne con patatas y pimientos* (\$7.15). This dish includes meat *pinxtos*, lamb, beef, pork and veal, served with potatoes and peppers. Patrons have the option to mix or match the *pinxtos*. This reviewer chose the shrimp instead of the pork. Meat lovers cannot go wrong with this choice. The meats are served on a stick dipped in a special sauce: the perfect touch. After dipping the meats in the sauces, patrons can then dig into the potatoes and peppers.

Pintxos offers patrons a variety of dishes to satisfy each preference. Salads range from

seafood to vegetable and provide patrons with the choice of 30 different *pinxtos*. Each dish comes in *tapas*-sized portions, enough to order a few and share with your party.

After the grand feast, one can order a luscious dessert. Like the rest of the menu, the desserts come in *tapas*-size portions (\$1.50) that include *flan*, custards, crepes and bread puddings. The chocolate bread pudding is served warm with a scoop of vanilla ice cream and raspberry on top. This mini portion hits the spot after a satisfying meal.

Although the wait staff provided excellent service, they were rather intrusive, often hanging around the table, a habit that makes the diner feel as though (s)he is being rushed to make room for another wave of diners. However, the friendly environment and wonderful experience compensated for its shortcomings. The meal will easily satisfy patrons. For those who are looking to try authentic Spanish cuisine, Pintxos is the place to go.

Pintxos Tortilleria and Pintxos Bar, located at 737 LaSalle St. (mere yards from the Rock 'n' Roll McDonald's) is well worth checking out as a pre-prom dining location.

Pintxos Tortilleria



737 LaSalle St., Chicago

person shooter or strategy game, video game producer Ubisoft now ascends to the skies to bring gamers *H.A.W.X.* The game puts players in the cockpit of some of the world's fastest fighter planes and puts gamers in an aerial battle against numerous planes.

The game follows the story of a combat pilot who is part of the U.S. Air Force's High Altitude Experimental Team or also known as H.A.W.X. After one mission, the Air Force disbands the unit. Afterwards, a private military corporation known as Artemis Global Security hires the team for missions. As the game progresses, the player finds out that Artemis draws up a contract with a terrorist organization and the H.A.W.X. team returns for the Air Force to battle Artemis and its massive army of fighter planes.

At first glance, the presentation of the game seems unoriginal. For those who have played Namco's *Ace Combat* series, the game should look familiar in terms of what is presented on the game's heads-up display and how players

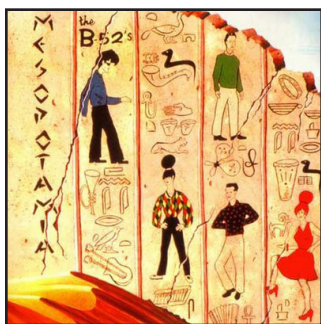
Mesopotamia presents unknown side of popular band

Second in a series

W Hillary Lindwall
News/Wire Editor

In 1982, the B-52's were preparing to write and release their third full-length album, *Mesopotamia*. However, the recording sessions for the record were cut short, forcing *Mesopotamia* to be released as a six-song EP. This EP has rightfully earned the title of Cult Classic due to its underground sound and interesting concept.

The sound of *Mesopotamia* is a lot different than the sound of the B-52's earlier albums, which sounded more like a live performance than a recorded studio album. *Mesopotamia* was the first album in which the B-52's used voice overdubs, layers



of percussion and other instruments that are not usually heard in their music, leaving "Rock Lobster" in the dust. Their usual eclectic sound has been left behind in this album, making it an interesting anomaly in their catalog.

Mesopotamia appears at first to be an album that is felt rather than heard. For example, the first track on the EP, "Loveland," is more sound than a catchy tune. This is not necessarily a bad thing, however. This almost trippy sound is a nice break from expected B-52's music.

From there, however, the album progresses to being heard rather than felt. The remainder of the EP is full of songs that have tunes and are full of kitschy but fun lyrics.

"Deep Sleep," the next song on the album, is not one that is very expected. This track hardly has any lyrics, just music. However, for the adventurous listener, this song's instrumentation could be

explored. The song has a very mysterious tone, mostly because of the detectable piano, percussion and bass guitar trio that starts the track. This eerie quality is a very welcome change from the expected sound of the B-52's.

The listener then moves on to the title track, "Mesopotamia." The song is very quiet at first, and then dramatically crescendos into an almost middle eastern-sounding beat. The tune is rather catchy. Keeping with their trademark, band member Fred Schneider contributes his talk-singing style and is the most obvious vocalist in the track. "Mesopotamia" is the catchiest song on the album and is also the track with the best lyrics and concept.

"Cake" is the next song on the EP. The title alone interests the listener and makes it seem as if the song will be happy and sweet. However, in typical B-52's fashion, the song is neither happy nor sad. The key of the song seems rather dark, but the upbeat lyrics and percussion cancel this out. There is a section of the song in which female band members Cindy Wilson and Kate Pierson speak about making cake. This section

made this reviewer really want a piece of cake, but that may not have been the purpose of this spoken part of the song. Overall, however, the song was catchy and worthy of the Cult Classic title.

The remainder of songs on the EP, "Throw That Beat in the Garbage Can" and "Nip it in the Bud," are much of the same song style—a heavy beat with a synthesizer line and interesting vocals. Even though each song has basically the same style, the B-52's were able to make each song sound dramatically different.

The overall concept of ancient history is a very intriguing one for an EP, and the songs that were created are a departure from the band's usual sound, but it works, making *Mesopotamia* a true Cult Classic.



Art wins the hearts of theatergoers by exploring the friendship among three best friends

W Uzma Ahmad
Editorials Editor

Currently playing at the Steppenwolf Theatre, *Art* offers audiences insight on the intricate bonds of male friendship. Originally written by playwright Yasmina Reza, the play is directed by Rick Snyder, who employs intelligent humor to express the conflicts between three best friends.

The play begins when Marc (Francis Guinan) announces to the audience that his best friend, Serge (John Procaccino), has just purchased a painting for \$200,000. We quickly visit Serge's house to discover that although it was painted by a renowned artist, the painting is but a white canvas with white diagonal lines. Marc, who

finds the purchase both shocking and hilarious, informs the third mutual best friend, Yvan (Joe Dempsey), of what he believes is a poor decision on Serge's part. However, when Yvan comes over to view the painting himself, he finds it rather soothing.

The play continues with the interaction of the three men, discussing the painting, revealing the each friend's differing perspective on the artwork. Soon enough though, the conversation switches to explore the working of the three men's long-standing friendship. Exploiting the perceptions of each man and their reasoning behind their bonds, the play soon leads up to a final heated yet witty discussion on their deeply rooted and complicated friendship. In the end, after all the confrontations, the audience finds that the bonds of friendship are far greater than

the canvas that caused the situation to arise in the first place.

Art takes place entirely in the apartments of the three men. Thus, the stage setup is simple and easily switched. The background of each apartment is similar, with just a few reshuffling of walls. Each apartment is plain, white and simple, with one different painting resting in the back. The different painting in the apartment of each friend seems to compliment their unique personality.

Robert Christen's lighting sets the calm yet inquisitive mood and the original music and sound by Kevin O'Donnell completes the picture.

Each actor's performance was brilliant and powerful. Each friend had a couple of monologues through which the performer was

able to describe his personality perfectly. In fact, the audience could really feel as if they knew this individual on a personal basis.

Art beautifully captures the human struggle to discover who we are, how we choose with whom we surround ourselves and why are we so. This witty, intelligent and often hilarious play explores the power of art to engage the imagination and the enduring bonds of friendship in its hourlong examination of the lives of three friends.



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