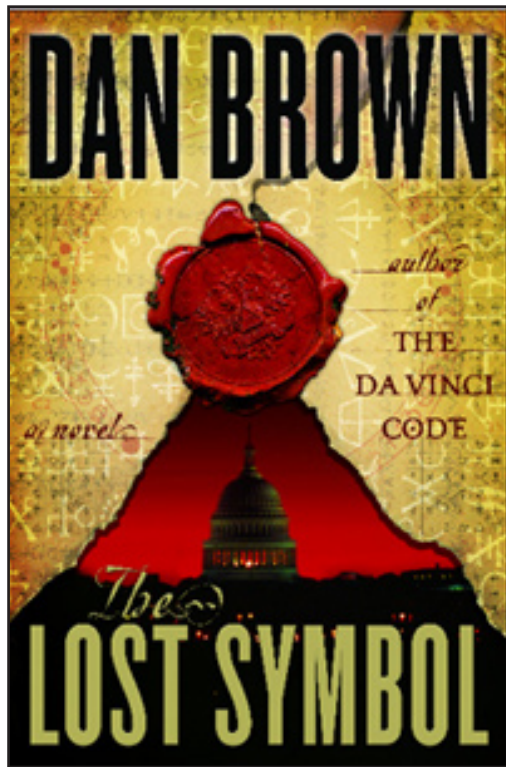


AROUNDTOWN

Brown produces another page-turner

W Rexly Penafiora II
Editor in Chief

Dan Brown's third installation in the Robert Langdon series, *The Lost Symbol*, brings



all of the suspense, action and wonder of *The Da Vinci Code* and *Angels and Demons*. Brown's

new novel features unforgettable characters, darker secrets and also introduces a new branch of science.

In this novel, Brown's new target for secrecy is a group that has always been accused of having secret rituals and treasures: the Freemasons.

The story begins with Langdon en route to Washington D.C. after he has been summoned by his mentor, Peter Solomon, who is also one of the highest-ranking Masons. Once he arrives in Washington, a man named Malak'h contacts Langdon and says that he has captured Solomon and will not release him until Langdon helps him unlock the greatest secret of the Freemasons.

As always, Langdon has an attractive companion, and this time it is Solomon's sister, Katherine, who is a scientist in the field known as the Noetic Sciences. The science is based on the study of the mind and its effect on divinity. Langdon and Katherine's journey takes them throughout Washington D.C. and through some of the capital's famous buildings such as the Capitol, the Library of Congress and the Washington Monument in order to find the Freemasons' ultimate secret.

Like the other novels in the trilogy, Brown's encyclopedic knowledge of facts about certain works of art or buildings appears constantly throughout the story; however, the surprising and exciting difference between this novel and the others is its proximity to America. Instead of setting the

story in another country, Brown decided to keep the story in the country and more specifically in the capital. This provides die-hard fans of the series with a much better visual setting since most Americans have visited the capital. It also gives readers a little bit of history of the capital and what lies throughout the city. While the sheer number of factoids amazed this reviewer, the characters stunned the reviewer even more.

The secondary characters in the story eclipse Langdon because of their unique personalities. Each character has some unique trait that separates him/her from everyone else, yet all of them blend perfectly to help strengthen the plot.

One of the most notable characters in the group is CIA agent Inoue Sato. Her personality is the strongest in the story. She has no care for other factors and focuses on the mission. This trait makes her a very tough character, and she is one of the most feared characters in the story.

Even though the characters and little facts provide good support for the plot, the group to be targeted for its secrecy did little to provide intrigue.

The Masons have lived in America for countless years and long have been accused of having rituals and secrets. It seems odd that Brown could not find an unknown group

or cult that most people did not recognize and introduce it in his novel. It almost seems as if Brown decided to take the easy route and just build up more mystery for a well-known group that already has an immense amount of accusations and mystery attributed to it.

Another problem with the story is its length. The book is still a page-turner with the end of each chapter seeming to end in suspense, but the plot drags at certain points of the story. For example, there are a few chapters that switch back and forth between Katherine and Langdon before they meet, and it seems to drag on for Katherine's story instead of giving an equal amount of plot between the two characters.

This criticism aside, the book is still a must-read. Brown knows where to add suspense and that suspense builds up with each page until the climax of the plot. It shows that Brown has not lost his touch when writing great stories and one can only hope that there will be another Robert Langdon novel to come in the near future.

The Lost Symbol
★★★★☆
Dan Brown

Cuisine offers traditional atmosphere

W Uzma Ahmad
News/Wire Editor

Walking into Lincoln Square's newly opened Mediterranean Cuisine and Grill (MCG), this patron immediately felt comfortable and welcomed. The atmosphere was modern and chic with its vibrant yellow and orange colors and dimly lit lighting. Yet, Arabic and Middle Eastern souvenirs, artifacts, paintings and carpets decorating the walls added a very traditional touch. Lively Arabic music in the background supplemented to the authentic Middle Eastern vibe.

The menu arrived promptly. There was a wide variety of regular and vegetarian appetizers. Hummus—made with mashed chickpeas, olive oil and spices—came in small (\$1) and large (\$6) sizes. Although the hummus was very aesthetically appealing, it lacked seasoning and was only adequate in taste.

Cheese pies (\$4) were a much more promising appetizer. These mini phillo dough pies stuffed with cheese were crisp, delicious and light combined to make the perfect appetizer.

In addition, the restaurant offers a wide selection of fresh salads ranging \$4-\$7. The feta salad (\$7)—consisting of romaine lettuce, feta cheese, tomatoes, green peppers, onions, black olives and other vegetables—was refreshing and came in an ample portion.

Entrees at MCG consist mostly of skewers of kabob, shish kabob, lamb, chicken kabob and other meats (\$12-\$14). Curry chicken (\$12), Mediterranean steak (\$18), lamb chops (\$20) and shawarma (\$12) are also available.

The chicken kabob (\$12) was exquisite and well-cooked. Less impressive was the lamb

kabob (\$14), which was too thick, pasty, dry and generally unpleasant. The kabob (\$12) was seasoned very well yet was excessively chewy.

Entrees also include seafood dishes such as shrimp kabob (\$20) and catfish (\$16). The higher price of the shrimp was well worth its mouthwatering taste. The shrimp were succulent, soft, juicy and extremely well prepared. This exquisite dish was easily the most delicious on the menu.

All entrees were also served with rice, pita and soup. The rice was thinner than usual Arab rice, but it was still satisfying. The pita was merely average. The soups offered are lentil and vegetable. The lentil soup was a little bland, yet tasted delicious because of the lemon that was added. The vegetable soup was tangy and savory.

Turkish coffee (\$2.50) and Persian tea (\$2) were delightful ways to end the satisfying meal. The beverages were strong, yet the authentic flavors were extremely rejuvenating.

Although some specific dishes lacked appeal, their presentations were aesthetically appealing, and most were above adequate. Timely service and a smooth, relaxing atmosphere added to create a great dining experience for this reviewer

MCG is located at 4609 N. Lincoln in Chicago, less than three blocks south of the Western Ave. Brown Line "El" stop. For more information call (773) 293-4491.



Mediterranean Cuisine and Grill
delights reviewer.
Photo by Uzma Ahmad

Mediterranean Cuisine and Grill
★★★★☆
4609 N. Lincoln Ave.

W Hira Malik
Around Town Editor

Each year, around Halloween time, a new horror film is released. This year's shocker is *Paranormal Activity*, but the only horror this reviewer experienced was the realization that she wasted 90 minutes and \$10 she would never get back again.

Amateurishly written and sloppily directed by Oren Peli, the story centers on the lives of a young couple, Katie (Katie Featherston) and her husband Micah (Micah Sloat). According to Katie, ever since her childhood, strange incidents have been happening around her. The hauntings, however, increase immensely in their home. Micah decides to use a video camera to record what happens in their bedroom while they sleep, and indeed, strange incidents do occur during the night.

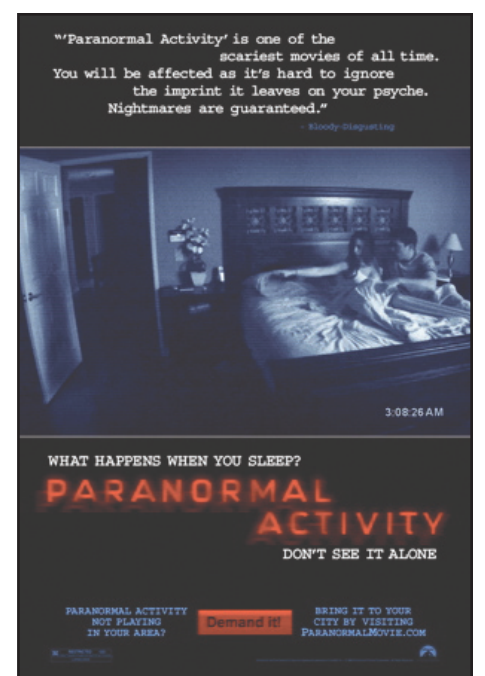
The couple hires a psychic (Mark Fredrichs) who refers them to a demonologist (Amber Armstrong), for ghosts are his area of expertise, not demons. Micah even tries to take matters into his own hands, and puts powder in the doorway of their bedroom to see if he can catch footprints from the mysterious entity. The result is there are footprints that only lead into their bedroom, and not out. Micah also attempts to talk to the demon, against Katie's will, and brings in a Ouija board. During this days-long process to solve the problem, the "paranormal activity" increases largely, and even the psychic runs away from their home in fear; the spirit is too strong and does not wish for him to be there.

Although this reviewer is normally a big fan of horror films, *Paranormal Activity* falls short of expectations because, in short, it fails to horrify. Some of the scenes that were intended to be scary just made the audience laugh. For example, during the middle of the night, Katie wakes up and just turns around and stares at her husband for a very long time. It is possible that the scene was intended to show that Katie is possessed during that time; however, the idea was not clear and was merely comical.

Outside of some Peli-penned soundtrack songs, there is no score *per se* in this film. The only "music" one hears in this film is the special

effects, orchestrated by David Barbee. For example, while the spirit or demon is moving around, thumping is heard—not exactly Danny Elfman.

Nor does Dale Robinette's cinematography enhance the proceedings. Apparently attempting to imitate (or pay homage to) 1999's *The Blair Witch Project*—a legitimately terrifying film—Robinette establishes a conceit that the film is being shot Micah's camera while sitting atop a tripod or while Micah is holding the camera and recording Katie and their home. When Micah is



holding the camera, it is very shaky and this and the grainy quality of the video camera's digital display gave this reviewer a headache.

I would mention that the film is rated R for disturbing scenes, so parental accompaniment is needed for those 16 and under. However, that point is moot because this reviewer suggests that people of all ages avoid *Paranormal Activity* at all costs.

Paranormal Activity
★★☆☆☆
Directed by Oren Peli

WestWord

Among Thieves steals gaming spotlight

W Rexly Penaflorida II
Editor in Chief

When Playstation 3 was first introduced, one of the very first games developed for the new system was *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*. It is the story of a treasure hunter named Nathan Drake who is on a quest to find the remains of his ancestor, Sir Francis Drake, and to also find his treasures. The game became a smash hit and players finished the game with a hunger for more of Drake and his adventures.

This month, the long-anticipated sequel, *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*, was released, bringing players back to the world of Nathan Drake as he encounters new environments, new enemies and new treasures.

The story is set a year after the first game. Drake is contacted by an old colleague, who tells him about the journeys of Marco Polo, and the two characters begin a quest to find a map that shows where Marco Polo's treasure is hidden. However, instead of finding treasure, they find the remains of his crew in the jungles of Borneo. It is there that the real adventure begins. Drake discovers a dagger left by a crewmember and finds out that the dagger is actually a key to Shambhala, or Shangri-La, a place that is considered Paradise. Drake travels the world, from Turkey to Tibet in search of Paradise.

If I were limited to saying on thing about the game, it would be that everything about it

is perfect.

The first thing one notices is the presentation of the game. The environment of each level is extremely detailed. For example, when Drake wades through the water, the water creates realistic ripples whenever he moves. When he walks through snow, his pants gradually turn white depending on how deep the snow is and how long he has been walking. There is a constant flow between cut scenes and game play, meaning there are no parts of the game that feature the dreaded word "loading."

The characters also add to the environment. Each character, whether (s)he is a new character or from the previous game, is unique. Drake is the most notable since he is not a superhero with powers. Rather, he is just an ordinary man with a thirst for adventure and a sense of humor that makes the player feel less tense when playing through tough levels. He has the agility of Lara Croft from the Tomb Raider video game series and the toughness of Indiana Jones.

The plot of the story is unlike any other game. Most people know the legend of Shangri-La, but the game puts the story in a whole new perspective by adding more mystery and puzzles. For example, in order to open the door to Shambhala, the player must turn a series of cylinders to match a pattern. Another puzzle

is using mirrors to reflect light at a keyhole to open a door. All of the puzzles add to the intense



Photo courtesy www.wikipedia.com

game play that is nothing like any gamer has experienced.

The game is very fast paced, with enemies and obstacles at every corner. Standing still during the game is impossible because there is always a need to move forward or it is game over. A great example of this is when Drake is attacking an enemy convoy. He jumps from truck to truck in order to escape death. There is rarely a time when the player has to put the controller down. Each level brings new challenges that keep gamers on edge.

This reviewer cannot stress enough that this game is a must-have. This game is a testament to how powerful the Playstation 3 is in terms of graphics. It also shows just how far video games have come. Since the game is exclusive to the Playstation 3, it could be a very good reason for purchasing the console. *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves* is by the far the greatest game on the Playstation 3, and possibly, the best game of the year.

Uncharted 2: Among Thieves



PS3

Most terrifying horror films of all time

Exorcist and *Halloween* top list of scarefests

W Hillary Lindwall
Managing Editor

Halloween is upon us, making us clamor for scare tactics. *West Word* has compiled a list of the top five scariest movies of all time to leave us quaking in our boots.

5. *The Shining* (1980)

Set in a deserted hotel, *The Shining* embodies some of the most common fears among people. Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) takes a job as an off-season hotel manager in Colorado with his family for the winter. The family is isolated, with the exception of a few hotel workers. What makes this movie scary is the idea of complete isolation. The family is completely alone in the hotel. Also, most would be fearful of a father turning against his family. This is one of legendary director Stanley Kubrick's best films.

4. *Psycho* (1960)

Directed by Alfred Hitchcock, *Psycho* is most definitely a classic film. When a young woman named Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) flees her hometown after stealing a large amount of money from her boss, she stops at the Bates Motel for the night. Here, she stumbles upon Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins), who runs the motel. This is where the horror begins. This movie makes the list because it delves into the mind of a maniac. The plot and the music are both unsettling. The music of the film especially contributes to the mood. *Psycho* will definitely make anyone think twice before stopping at a roadside motel on a road trip.

3. *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991)

The Silence of the Lambs is essentially a story within a story. Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster), who is studying to become a Federal Investigation Bureau (FBI) agent, is sent to speak with institutionalized criminal Dr.

Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins). While speaking with him, she discovers that he has information concerning the identity of a gruesome serial killer known as Buffalo Bill (Ted Levine). The film is extremely unsettling and keeps the viewer guessing as to who Buffalo Bill is and why he continually commits murder. Jonathan Demme's film will definitely make young women more cautious and aware of their surroundings.

2. *Halloween* (1978)

On Halloween night, escaped mental patient Michael Myers (Tony Moran) returns to his hometown and commits a series of murders. The victims, all of which were babysitting at the times of the attacks, are all friends of Laurie Strode (Jamie Lee Curtis), who is also terrorized by Myers. In addition to the scary thought of being attacked while babysitting, the music really adds to this film. *Halloween* invokes fear because all of the victims seemed helpless, which is not a very comforting feeling. This film has definitely earned its place among the scariest movies of all time. Goremeister John Carpenter has made some seriously scary movies, but this one beats them all.

1. *The Exorcist* (1973)

Without a doubt, William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* is the scariest movie of all time. Actress Chris MacNeil (Ellen Burstyn) enlists the help of two priests when her daughter, Regan (Linda Blair), becomes possessed by the devil. What makes this movie so scary is the fact that the devil cannot be seen. When Regan's body is possessed, there is nothing she can do. In addition to the fear inspired by this helplessness, the idea that the body can actually become possessed is extremely unsettling. Throughout the film, the acts that Regan's body commits are almost unbearable to watch, especially the scene in which her head turns 360 degrees. This film makes the viewer feel as if (s)he is never safe because one could become possessed at any time.

Swift works crowd during concert

W Zoe Ljubic
Editor in Chief

The current darling of the country music scene (if not Kayne West), Taylor Swift concluded her *Fearless* tour on Oct. 10 at the Allstate Arena as 18,500+ enthusiastic fans filled the venue.

Opening with "You Belong With Me," the high-school romance narrative with starry-eyed lyrics, Swift set a raucous tone for the evening, one that delighted the sold-out crowd. Swift emerged amid a circular high rise, dressed as a marching band member, singing the song while dancing cheerleaders performed a routine below her. Cheesy? Yeah, but the crowd loved it. The teenage love drama's lyrics were perfectly articulated by the state-of-the-art sound system and augmented by the acting and dancing on stage.

The highlights of the evening were the sudden set and outfit changes to fit the mood of the upcoming song. Along with "You Belong With Me," Swift's hit "Our Song" was performed with a huge cast of dancers to help express the meaning of the lyrics.

Swift's new hit "You're Not Sorry" got a revised arrangement that allowed it to transcend the studio version. The song was interwoven with Justin Timberlake's "What Goes Around" to provide an intriguing counterpoint.

While Swift left the stage for a costume change before "Fearless," celebrities offering their definitions of word appeared via video. The vignette, which featured Tim McGraw, Miley Cyrus and Raven Symone, caused this reviewer to ponder on the true meaning of the song.

Swift's interactive and enthusiastic attitude throughout the entire concert encouraged the audience to sing along with her on each song. Near the midpoint of the show, Swift relocated to the back of the arena, positioning herself in the back so that fans who sat far away from the stage were able to see her more closely. There, she performed "Hey Stephen" and "Fifteen." The crowd pulled out cell phones and swayed to the beat of the song. It was at this moment that this reviewer's eyes were glued to the projection screen as she watched Swift gently play her guitar and move through the crowd.

Swift definitely knows how to work a crowd, not only winning her audience with her intimate lyrics and clear, country-tinged voice, but with an acute sense of her milieu. Swift's first debut single "Tim McGraw" was dedicated to each Chicagoan who is a Swift fan, many of whom sang along to the well-known tune. During "Picture to Burn," Swift walked out in a #6 Jay Cutler Chicago Bears jersey, to the excited screams of the throng. Throughout the show, she frequently reiterated how much she loved Chicago, much to the delight of her Windy City admirers.

Swift sang a total of 16 songs in the two-hour set. The show became very interactive with the audience near the end, with Swift inviting audience members to sing along with "The Way I Loved You" and to use their cell phones for illumination during "White Horse," a request to which the crowd gleefully complied as thousands of adoring Swift fans whipped out their devices and swayed to the music.

Unlike many concerts in which ballads are an excuse to head to the restroom or the concession stand, Swift's softer melodies proved to be the true crowd-pleasers as the venue felt quiet as the fans listened and sang along.

The climax of the show and best performance of the night was "Should've Said No," one of the better songs from *Fearless*. Swift finished the song drenched by an artificial waterfall, plaintively singing to her ex-boyfriend about his mistake, leaving the stage to the ecstatic applause of the audience.

Although supporting acts Gloriana and former *American Idol* contestant Kellie Pickler held their own with the headliner, the night clearly belonged to Swift. Although a bit over-the-top in its production, the concert revealed Swift to be a consummate professional despite her young age, one who promises to delight audiences for years to come.

Taylor Swift



Allstate Arena



AROUNDTOWN

Big Star deserves gold star for #1 Record album

Sixth in a series

by **Hillary Lindwall**
Managing Editor

R.E.M. front man Michael Stipe once said famously that only 1,000 people bought Velvet Underground albums during the band's heyday, but every one of them formed a band. The same could be said of Big Star.

In the early 1970s, American music began



to transform from the psychedelic music of the 1960s into a more laid-back, generation-defining style of rock.

In 1971, former Box Tops lead singer Alex Chilton (immortalized in the Replacements song of the same name) and three friends formed Big Star in Memphis, TN. Although they garnered little commercial success, the band would become a major influence for countless numbers of more recent, platinum-selling musical groups including R.E.M. and the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

Big Star's first album, the ironically titled *#1 Record*, was recorded in 1971, but was not widely publicized by the band's record company, Stax Records. Although the album is not known very well outside the music community, its influence on modern pop culture has earned *#1 Record* the title of Cult Classic.

Readers might recognize the first song on the album, "In the Street," rerecorded by Cheap Trick and used as the theme song of *That 70's Show*. The original version of the song is very different from the more familiar theme song version. In addition to its country-flavored vibe,

there is a long musical interlude in which the band allows the listener to hear the talents of the rest of the band as opposed to focusing on

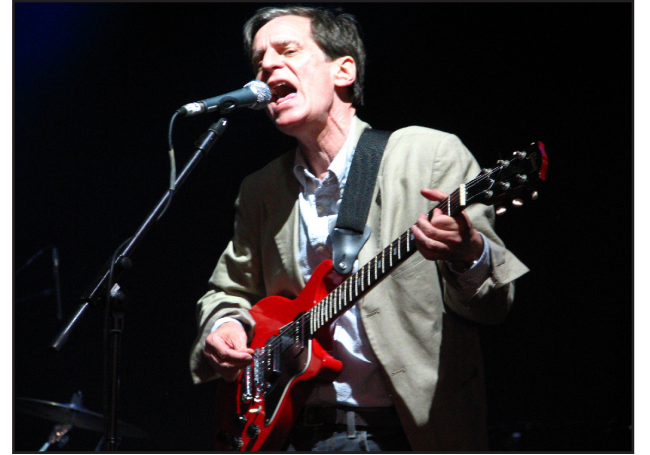
the band's trademark, Chilton's high-pitched tenor vocals. Also, like most of the songs on the album, the raw, jangly guitars and simple drumbeats make "In the Street" sound like a few friends hanging out and playing music in their garage.

Songwriters Chilton and fellow guitarist Chris Bell wear their influences (British Invasion bands such as The Beatles, The Hollies and The Kinks) on their sleeves. With that pedigree, it is not surprising that almost all the tunes boast soaring harmonies, chunky power chords, solid backbeat—provided by bassist Andy Hummel and drummer Jody Stephens—and very little flash or ornamentation.

The album does not sound as if the band cared if the listener liked what they produced. It sounds as if they made an album for themselves and put it out for anyone who would listen—their liking it was just a bonus.

Occasionally, the band deviates from its self-imposed, rock-'til-you-drop formula. One such song, titled "The India Song," includes higher-pitched melodies, jingle bells, light acoustic guitar and wooden recorder.

In addition, the band occasionally injected ballads such as "Thirteen," "Give Me Another Chance" and "Try Again." "Thirteen" was listed 396 on *Rolling Stone's* list of the 500



Alex Chilton performs in 2009.
Photo courtesy www.wikipedia.com

Greatest Songs of All Time.

Upon listening to *#1 Record*, aficionados of so-called "power pop" or "alternative" music easily will recognize how influential Big Star was in the development of modern music.

After listening to this true cult classic, the reviewer believes that it is high time that Big Star gets some recognition other than having a cover version of one of their songs become the theme of an iconic television show.



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