

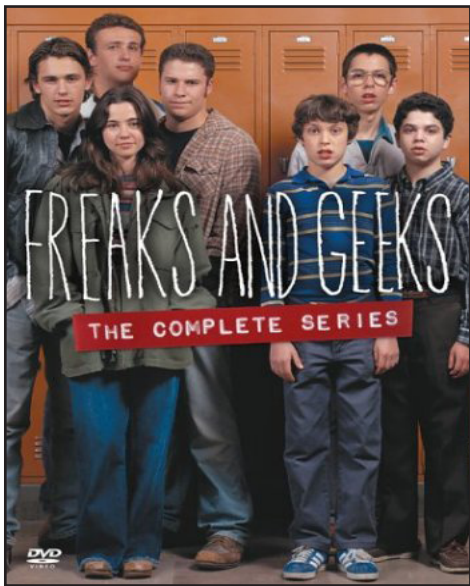
AROUNDTOWN

Freaks and Geeks' humor dated

Seventh in a series

W Uzma Ahmad
News/Wire Editor

Airing 1999-2000, *Freaks and Geeks* is a single season, 18-episode television series that depicts life in Chippewa, MI—a fictional



suburb in Detroit. Centered on teenagers attending William McKinley High School in the early 1980s, this comic show chronicles all the typical high school trials and tribulations: drugs, drinking, disconnection from parents, acceptance and bullying.

The season opens as Lindsay Weir (Linda Cardellini), the school's number one "mathlete" transforms from a proper girl to a rebellious tomboy as she begins to hang out with the cool, slacking "freaks." At the same time, Lindsay's

Sainthood proves divine

W Hillary Lindwall
Managing Editor

Tegan and Sara Quin's latest album, *Sainthood*, the pair's sixth studio release, dropped Oct. 27, much to the delight of their modest following.

Sainthood is an album full of mystery and playfulness at the same time. The first track on the album, "Arrow," begins with an almost harsh guitar and synthesizer sound, making the song seem a little eerie from the get-go. The song seems to be full of holes, which keeps the listener wondering when they will be filled. This happens about a minute into the tune, finally satisfying the listener's craving.

None of the songs on *Sainthood* are complicated. They consist only of the voices of one or both of the sisters, guitar, percussion and a synthesizer line here or there. That is part of the reason why their music is so easy to digest. Along with the crystalline production, Death Cab for Cutie's Chris Walla, the spare instrumentation offers nothing to muddle the sound or the lyrics.

The twins compose infectiously catchy tunes and their minimalist lyrics do not overwhelm the music, allowing the hooks to stick in one's head, inducing repeated listens.

As identical twins, Tegan and Sara's harmonies are symbiotic and often flow together as one, the effect of which is that upon hearing the tune, the listener concentrates on the overall sound rather than parts of the whole. That gives the album an organic flow that engages the audience.

If there is one knock on the duo, it is that virtually all of their albums are dominated by songs that feature lyrics about love—found or lost—and *Sainthood* is no exception. Getting back at an ex-lover seems to be a favorite theme.

younger brother, Sam (John Francis Daley)—a prime target for upper-class bullies—is beginning high school along with his friends, the "geeks."

The "freaks" are punk-rock loving troublemakers. They smoke cigarettes under the bleachers and behind the school and throw big parties where everyone comes together to drink and do drugs. Daniel Desario (James Franco) is the dreamy and rebellious bad boy. Nick Andopolis (Jason Segel) is the music-loving drummer who later goes on to date Lindsay. Other "freaks" include Ken Miller (Seth Rogen) and Kim Kelly (Busy Philipps).

The "geeks" include Neal Schweiber (Samm Levine), Bill Haverchuck (Martin Starr), Millie Kentner (Sarah Hagan)—Lindsay's nerdy and highly religious former best friend—and others. With their oversized glasses and high-hitched pants, the "geeks" struggle to survive through dodgeball games during gym and confrontations with bullies.

As the season progresses, the story unfolds as characters increasingly become stereotypes of their respective groups. Lindsay, under the influence of the "freaks," ditches school, tries marijuana for the first time and has awkward meetings with the school's guidance counselor. The rest of the burnouts are surrounded by comical situations with teachers, issues with relationships and trouble with their studies.

Spoiler alert: readers who plan to rent the DVD series should skip the next two paragraphs.

As the season came to an end, each character—whether "freak" or "geek"—seems to be moving on to a new phase in his or her life. Nick, who began as a disco-hating punk rocker, starts to broaden his interests and indulge himself in disco dancing competitions. Kim, who rarely ventures outside Chippewa, decides

For example, in "Northshore," the pair angrily addresses an ex: "Don't stay / Don't plan / Don't heal / Don't mend / Don't take / Don't send / Don't love me, don't love me, don't love me." This subject matter, to which everyone can relate, along with the upbeat, bouncy tune and chorus makes the song one of the best on the album, along with "Hell," "The Ocean" and "Northshore."

While many of the songs on *Sainthood* begin with a simple guitar line, the melodies of each song are so different and memorable that the album never becomes monotonous.

Furthermore, even though the Quins are siblings and their voices are similar, the listener can tell the difference between songwriting styles. Even though one cannot be certain which sister wrote which song just by listening to *Sainthood*, it is obvious that some songs were written by Tegan while others were written by Sara. The differences are subtle at points, but they are prevalent.

Additionally, the listener stays engaged by Tegan and Sara through their lyrical choices. Although love is the overarching theme, the metaphors used to describe romance range from arrows to alligators to a red belt, a technique that undercuts the potential monotony of the singular topic.

Overall, *Sainthood* is a success. It is an album that gets better every time it is played, with new meanings discovered and new background melodies and choruses noticed, all of which bear repeated examination and keep the listener on his/her toes.

Tegan and Sara



Sainthood

to journey outside of the world she knows. Daniel, realizing his rotting potential, searches for outlets to prove his worth. The geeks—who are surprised when Daniel accepts their invitation to a game of Dungeons & Dragons—are baffled by what they hope is an emergence from geekdom.

The season closes as Lindsay—despite rigorous encouragement by her parents and counselors—secretly rejects the acceptance to an intellectually elite summer program at the University of Michigan. As the final scene fades out, she is seen getting off the bus to the summer camp and instead joining her burnout friends to follow a tour of a famous band that she comes to cherish.

Although *Freaks and Geeks* was nominated numerous times for writing, acting and directing awards and even went on to receive an Emmy for Outstanding Casting, I failed to connect with the series, a fact that might have more to do with me than with the quality of the series.

Perhaps, if I had been a teenager in the early 1980s or if my personal experience were more freaky or geeky, I would have related more to the characters and/or would have appreciated the humor. I just did not find the series that funny.

Furthermore, the Emmy nominations aside, the acting performances of the cast are merely adequate. Franco, Rogen and Segel in particular have gone on to star in blockbuster comedies such as *Pineapple Express*, *Knocked Up*, *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* and *I Love You*,

Novel channels Austen

W Adriana Zalloni
World Editor

Marilyn Brant's debut novel, *According to Jane* (Kensington Books, 255 pages) is an uplifting and erudite tale of one woman's struggle to find love and happiness while channeling Victorian author Jane Austen.

The story begins in protagonist Ellie Barnett's sophomore English class, when Ellie hears a "tsk" of displeasure directed towards Sam Blaine, the cute bad boy who has been giving Ellie a hard time since kindergarten. Confused, Ellie questions the origin of the voice, which responds, "I am Jane Austen." From that moment on, Jane makes herself at home inside Ellie's head.

Jane's first and most frequent piece of advice is to stay away from Blaine, whom Jane dubs as Ellie's "Mr. Wickham," the antagonist of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. This proves impossible, however, as their paths continue to cross as life brings them together and tears them apart.

Brant employs an unusual narrative method that interrupts the plot after Ellie's sophomore year but returns to that period at the points at which Ellie and Sam meet in their adulthood.

Their relationship unfolds in a series of flashbacks as Ellie continues to mature with the help of Jane's witty comments and wise advice. She dates a series of men, but never seems to find the perfect one. Each is a stock character: one who is in a relationship, one who is not committed, one who fears marriage, one who cares too much, one who turns out to be gay and one who will continue to break her heart.

The flashback format is effective in maintaining suspense, as the plot would be spoiled if the reader knew what occurred in Ellie's senior year that sparked the fire between Sam and her.

From the beginning of the novel, the reader is captivated by Ellie's personality, revealed in the brutally honest conversations she has with Jane. While sometimes Ellie seems to resent the advice, it does help her get out of some serious

Man, so they clearly have developed acting skills not in evidence in *Freaks and Geeks*.

With five different directors and eight writers, the series lacks continuity, and the dialogue often seems forced and full of *non sequiturs*.

However, compared to current school-related shows such as ABC Family's *The Secret Life of an American Teenager* and the CW's *Gossip Girl*, *Freaks and Geeks* is superior at depicting the reality of high school life. Unlike those other shows (and modern updates of 1990s programs such as the CW's *90210*) in which drinking and sex are exaggerated to flashy, perverse and glorified degrees, *Freaks and Geeks* presents a more accurate portrayal of the feel and look of teenage life. Furthermore, the actors on this show actually look like teens—with their wacky hair, big glasses, regular clothes, zits and youthful faces—not adults trying to appear younger, ala the aforementioned CW sleazefests.

Although the show found much positive response from both viewers and critics, its allure proved to be short-lived, as it was cancelled after just one season.

Criticism notwithstanding, watching this cult classic proves to be a perfect way to reminisce about both the 1990s and those good old high school days.

Freaks and Geeks

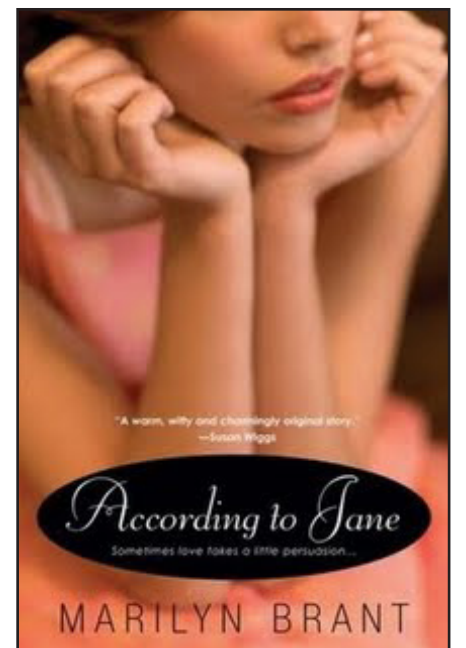


DVD

situations.

However, Ellie does eventually fall victim to a monotonous, repetitive life, always seeming to fall for the wrong guy, frustrating the reader as (s)he reads the novel. Brant could have avoided a lull in the story by making her failures at love less frequent, but nonetheless, her cheery tone keeps the reader interested.

Brant cleverly weaves in allusions to some of Jane's more famous novels, such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*, making it easy for Austen fans to enjoy the quirky comments.



Through it all, Ellie must learn about love and herself in order to find true happiness.

Brant crafts *According to Jane* in a manner that leaves the reader laughing out loud and wishing Ellie the very best for the future.

According to Jane



Marilyn Brant

WestWord

Zemeckis produces Christmas delight

W Sofiya Pershteyn
Staff Writer

At first glance, it may seem that an animated version of the Charles Dickens classic *A Christmas Carol* produced by Disney would be filled with watered-down characters, kid-friendly lines and even cheery songs.

However, as directed by Robert Zemeckis (*Back to the Future*, *Polar Express*, *Forrest Gump*), this version of Charles Dickens' classic tale actually stays true to the original story, which is a work of biting social criticism.

The story begins with the death of Ebenezer Scrooge's business partner, Jacob Marley (both played by Jim Carrey). With the exception of his contact with his loyal clerk Bob Cratchit (*The Dark Knight's* Gary Oldman) and kind hearted nephew, Fred (*Mamma Mia's* Colin Firth), Scrooge spends seven years in virtual social isolation, rudely insulting anyone who dares to bother his peace.

On Christmas Eve of the seventh year, Scrooge is visited by Marley's spirit. Tied down with chains, Marley warns Scrooge that if he does not change his harsh outlook on life, he would end up a restless spirit as well and informs Scrooge about the three ghosts that will visit him after Marley's departure.

The first ghost, the Ghost of Christmas Past (Carrey again), appears as a bright candle in front of Scrooge. He takes Scrooge through his childhood Christmases as a lonely boy, a satisfied adolescent, a disappointed and finally as a bitter, greedy, isolated old man who chooses money over caring for his wife.

The second ghost, the Ghost of Christmas

Present (you guessed it, Carrey), appears as a jolly giant. He takes Scrooge to see the poor but happy family of his clerk and that of his nephew. Scrooge feels compassion for the Cratchits' poverty and feels attached to Bob's crippled yet joyful son, Tiny Tim (Ryan Ochoa). In his nephew's house, Scrooge observes as Fred's friends make fun of him, but is surprised to hear his generous nephew make a toast in his good health. As the Ghost of Christmas Present ages before Scrooge's eyes, he warns Scrooge that if nothing is changed, the fate of Tiny Tim looks grim. As the ghost's final moments draw near, two disfigured, human-like creatures, Greed and Want, spring from underneath his robe and mimic Scrooge's past uncaring comments about humanity, which Dickens based on the beliefs of the British aristocracy during the 19th Century.

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, the final ghost, appears to Scrooge as a Grim-Reaper-like shadow. It shows Scrooge his death and the uncaring attitudes of all his neighbors about his demise. The ghost then chases the repentant Scrooge through the city until he finds his own grave. As he starts to feel himself being pulled into his tomb, he wakes and realizes that he is back at home on Christmas morning.

The changed Scrooge orders a giant turkey for Tiny Tim's family, goes to his nephew's party and finally lets himself experience happiness. The movie's happy ending leaves the audience with an uplifted and optimistic mood.

The movie can be experienced in both 3D and conventional formats.

Although animated, the minute details, such as old Scrooge's facial imperfections and slight eye movements, make each character appear almost as real actors. Motion capture technology makes each character seem authentic and life-like. The action scenes, such as when Scrooge is flying over London, take the viewer for a ride as well.

Although the Dickensian language might confuse some theatergoers, the script's faithful adherence to Dickens' novel allows the characters to be easily relatable and believable, despite the fact that the movie is animated and the dialogue is sometimes



stilted.

Cinematographer Robert Presley's unusual camera angles from the top, bottom or side of the room amplify the action sequences and make the characters appear more realistic.

Carrey's acting can be hit-or-miss, but in this film, he is remarkable as he is able to play multiple roles seamlessly, employing different voices to express the varying emotions of all the characters that he plays. Old pros Firth and Oldman hold their own beside Carrey's scenery-chewing performance.

From the mature dialogue to some scary images of death, this version of *A Christmas Carol* gives the audience the authentic story. While some scenes, such as when Grim Reaper's hand appears from the wall to grab Scrooge, may be frightening for children, this movie is recommended for the whole family to watch together. At this particular showing, the audience was mixed, consisting of kids with their parents, teenagers, and even the elderly couples, all of whom seemed to enjoy the movie.

Overall, Zemeckis' determination to stay true to the original story and not to shy away even from the sometimes gruesome details, as well as its dazzling visual effects, makes Disney's *A Christmas Carol* stand out from all other past remakes.



Play offers unique experience

W Hillary Lindwall
Managing Editor

From the moment this reviewer walked down the steps into the basement of Lake Forest's Gorton Center, it was evident that Citadel Theater's *Murder in Green Meadows* was going to be a different kind of play.

Having opened on Nov. 6 in the Grotto, the theater space in the Gorton Center, the play by Douglas Post is performed on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. as well as Sundays at 2 p.m.

The Citadel Theatre Company's stage is not what playgoers expect. Rather than a raised stage with auditorium-type seating, the stage at the Grotto is level with the audience, who are seated on padded folding chairs.

The Grotto is such an intimate venue that if one of the roughly 55 audience members extended a toe, (s)he would come in contact with the stage.

The story begins one morning in the new home of Thomas (Andrew J. Pond) and Joan (Jessica Lauren Fisher) Deveraux when their new neighbors, Jeff (Michael Jay Bullaro) and Carolyn (Susan Steinmeyer) Symons, stop by to welcome them.

Thomas, a successful architect and local contractor, actually designed Green Meadows, the subdivision in which both couples reside.

A friendship between the couples is quickly formed. However later in the play, it is discovered that Joan has had a few issues in infidelity in the past and that Thomas may have murdered her previous lover. Their tense marital situation does not improve when Thomas later discovers that his wife and his new neighbor, Jeff, have been having an affair for about six months.

After this is uncovered, Thomas, whose character seems truly insane, tells his wife that she must kill Jeff as a show of loyalty. Several twists and turns later, a murder is committed and it is set to look like an accident.

Murder in Green Meadows has only four cast members which, combined with the small stage and the proximity of the audience, makes the viewing experience intimate to the point of claustrophobia.

As the characters in the play become more twisted, this reviewer felt that the play was

actually more unsettling than entertaining.

Additionally, although the audience was forewarned in the program, there were several earsplitting gunshots that took place on the stage. Because the audience was essentially seated onstage, this reviewer is surprised that she can still hear anything at all.

Although most plays are two acts long, *Murder in Green Meadows'* pair of vignettes seemed to drag interminably. A contributing factor may have been the back pain experienced by this reviewer from having to sit in a metal folding chair for two hours, but the main reason is that there is hardly any action.

It is ironic that the play is set in a home because had this reviewer known that she would watch dull scenes such as a one-ended, pointless phone conversation, she could have stayed in her own domicile rather than shlepping out to Lake Forest. Many such scenes and sequences could have (and should have) been cut.

Also, although most of the actors portrayed their characters well, Pond stumbled over his lines more than once. This detracted from the viewing experience, breaking down the fourth wall and inducing this reviewer to remember that she was at a play rather than taking a glimpse into someone else's life.

Additionally, the troupe did not seem to have much chemistry. If the two women were to switch roles, this might help, because Steinmeyer, who plays a mother, might be better-suited to play a seductive murderer than Fisher, who have turn seems more suited to play a mother.

Overall, *Murder in Green Meadows* should be viewed as a unique experience rather than a satisfying theatrical production. The unique venue rescues the otherwise subpar production, keeping the audience members invested long after their attention otherwise would have waned.

In short, *Murder in Green Meadows* is not the best play ever performed, but how often does an audience member get to sit about a foot away from the action of a play?



LM offers chic dining experience

W Hira Malik
Around Town Editor

Arriving at Lincoln Square's newly opened LM restaurant, this patron was immediately drawn in with the intimate lighting and beautiful décor.

The waiter welcomed this reviewer warmly and promptly brought the menu, which featured a moderate variety of appetizers ranging \$10-\$20 and from which the tuna tartare (\$13) was chosen.

A choice of multigrain and white bread with butter preceded the appetizer; however, the



French cuisine delights reviewer.
Photo by Hira Malik

bread was difficult to consume, for its crust was too hard.

The tuna tartare's taste belies the beauty of its French description. Wrapped in a crispy outer shell, the tuna is moist and its presentation was exquisite, but it is very fishy. Its scent is oppressively strong, and because of that, it is not that appetizing. Along with a strong scent, it has an extremely peppery aftertaste.

The rest of the starters are more palatable. The restaurant offers yellow split pea soup (\$8) as well as lobster bisque (\$9), which is delicious.

The soup has a nice, thick consistency that kept this patron wanting more after the soup was finished. The lobster has a thick crust; however, after the first bite, the lobster melts in one's mouth.

LM also features two types of salads ranging (\$6-\$8). The baby spinach salad (\$8) consists of pear and spiced walnuts, accented by red wine vinaigrette. The mixed greens salad (\$6) is a vegetarian's delight. This salad consists of shaved cucumber, grape tomatoes as well as balsamic vinaigrette dressing.

LM provides an extensive variety of entrée choices, ranging \$20-\$27. The entrées' presentation entices, with delectable sauces drizzled over the meal as well as different vegetables to augment the dish.

The pan roasted poussin (\$22) was extremely delectable. The chicken was very well cooked, very soft and broke off the bone with ease. It had a savory taste, complemented by the bed of mushrooms on which the chicken rested.

Most entrées come with a type of vegetable as well; the pan roasted poussin was augmented with French gnocchi.

Desserts range \$8-\$11. The tarte tatin was the special of the day and this reviewer's choice. A simple apple tart, the dish was mouth watering nonetheless.

Overall, while LM's chef needs to order from a different bakery and work on toning down the tuna tartare, dining at LM was an experience to repeat.

LM is located on 4539 N. Lincoln Ave in Chicago. For more information, call (773) 942-7585.



AROUNDTOWN

New FIFA 10 fall deserves yellow card

By Rexly Penaflorida II
Editor in Chief

With the World Cup only a few months away, soccer fans cannot help but be excited for the upcoming spectacle. Fortunately, EA Sports has released *FIFA 10* to feed the hunger of the fans. The game takes soccer to a whole new level with better controls, a new mode and even the chance to have the player's face in game.

If there is one thing that should be improved on in every sports game, it is the controls. *FIFA 10* is no exception. While most of the controls are the same as its previous titles, there are some improvements. For example, holding down the L2 button and moving the right analog stick in different directions can allow the player to perform tricks with the ball. This comes in handy when a player is trying to get around a defender in order to score a goal. Plus, it also gives a little flair to the game when it is seen on replay. Another great improvement on the controls is the play commands that can be given during the game. Pressing up and down on the directional buttons brings up a display that shows different plays that the team can use. It is like an audible, except it involves a huge movement in order for the play to work. Pressing left and right will determine how much the player wants their team to be offensive or defensive. However, I do not see a big change from a balanced play to an ultra offensive play. Even though the play controls might need a little bit of work, the controls for celebrations might be the cherry on the cake. Whenever the player scores a goal, (s)he has the

opportunity to press a button that displays the player running around with the player's hands above their head, sliding onto the ground or performing a back flip. Other celebrations are possible as well, but they can only be unlocked as the player progresses in the game.



Playing an exhibition match or managing a team can become really boring. Luckily, Be A Pro mode throws in a little variety. This mode is similar to the *Madden* franchise's version of Superstar Mode. However, there are a lot

of differences between the two games. For example, from what I have seen, there really is not a lot of progression for the player in *FIFA 10* in terms of speed, agility or others traits that make the player better on the field. Temporary boosters for such traits can be purchased from the EA Store that is in the game, but there is no permanent progress in traits. Also, an unnecessary feature is the fact that most of the pro's different clothing and shoes are locked and can only be unlocked through the player completing a set of challenges. There are many challenges in the game, but attempting each one almost seems like fitting a square peg in a round hole. The progression of the pro is based on the number of stars that they have. One star means that they are virtually unknown while five stars signify the player's reputation among the greatest players ever. While five stars seem like a small amount for progression it actually seems like an eternity. I have only earned two and a half stars but I have been given the title of fan favorite and my pro has been playing in the "first team" or major team of the club. The game is fun for a while on Be A Pro mode, but after the first season, it gets boring and there is no reason to continue unless the player wants more stars.

The least-flawed part of the game is the graphics. Each stadium is unique and it looks exactly like its real life counterpart. While it may look the same in each stadium, the field is always great to look at. Just the immense size of the field in high definition can stun the player. The broadcast camera allows the player to view the game as if it was on television and

unsurprisingly, it looks almost the same as televised soccer games. The newest feature on the graphics category is the Gameface. With this mode, players can have their own faces on their pro in the game. From personal experience, This reviewer can tell you that the process is somewhat lengthy. First, the player has to go on the EA Sports website and import a picture of the front of their face and the side of their face. Next, the program will render a digitized version of the players and that can take about 10-15 minutes. This reviewer's face took 22 minutes to complete, but that could be blamed on Internet connectivity. After that, the player then has to put final touches on the player such as skin tone and eye color. It is very accurate, however in my case, it looks out of proportion. It could be because the body of the player is built while the head looks like a hot air balloon. It does not mean that the blame should be on the game, but rather on the player and their face dimensions.

Overall, the game is fun to play and the chance of replay the game over and over again is very high, but there is a point where it just becomes boring. There are no unexpected events that happen that forces the player to change their gaming strategy. A team member could receive a red card and be forced out of the game, but it really makes no difference, especially when the player is winning by one goal. From playing its predecessors, *FIFA 10* clearly was a big step in the franchise. Unfortunately, the game does not stay true to most of the hype that surrounded it.



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