

# AROUNDTOWN

## This is Spinal Tap taps into rock humor

Eighth in a series

by **Hillary Lindwall**  
Managing Editor

In the early 1980s, the music scene was at the advent of the heavy metal "hair bands" era, and MTV was in its infancy and still playing music videos 24/7.

Director Rob Reiner and co-writers Christopher Guest, Michael McKean and Harry Shearer (the brain trust that would later produce the folk music send-up *A Mighty Wind*) took note of the hype and channeled into a hilarious, parodic "mockumentary" called *This is Spinal Tap*.

The film involves documentarian Marty DeBergi's chronicle of the *Return of Spinal Tap*, a British rock band that has been off the American radar for several years. They expect their latest tour to bring them more success than ever, but this is not the case, resulting in several hilarious turns of events.

The members of Spinal Tap include David St. Hubbins (McKean), Nigel Tufnel (Guest) and Derek Smalls (Shearer), along with a variety of sidemen, including a series of unfortunate drummers. As the documentary progresses, the audience really gets a feel for the dynamic among band members and how they relate to each other while on tour. Although there is much drama during the film, it is all quite comical.

For example, while deciding on a bold, new direction for a show, Tufnel draws a picture of Stonehenge on a napkin at a diner and tells the band manager, Ian Faith (Tony Hendra), to have someone make a set from his drawing. However, rather than marking the drawing 18

feet, he places two quotation marks after the height. Hilarity ensues at the next concert as the tiny structure—smaller than the druid dwarves dancing onstage—is lowered.

Much of the humor of the film comes from the fact that the film pokes fun at actual rock bands or occurrences that have happened in music history.

For example, when St. Hubbins' girlfriend (played by Vicki Blue, who bears a striking resemblance to the late Linda McCartney) joins the band on their tour, Tufnel leaves Spinal Tap. This is supposed to represent the split of the Beatles when Linda and Yoko Ono came between Paul McCartney and John Lennon.

Another Beatles homage is the alternate cover of the band's album *Smell the Glove*, the original deemed too racy for department stores. The cover, which is all black (as the dimwitted Tufnel says, "How much more black could this cover be. None. None more black."), is an obvious parody of the Beatles' *White Album*.

Still another page from history is lampooned by the mysterious deaths of all of Spinal Tap's drummers, including one who died, like legendary guitarist Jimi Hendrix, by choking on vomit. The kicker is that it was someone's else's regurgitation.

Some of the funniest scenes in the film involve scenarios that one imagines actually occur backstage, such as becoming lost on the way to the stage, complaining about a deli platter and Tufnel's showing DeBergi his extensive collection of guitars, some of which never have been played.

Other aspects of the film are more subtle. In typical 1980s rock-and-roll style, Shearer's

Smalls plays a double-neck guitar during one of their shows. However, rather than the traditional bass and guitar double-neck, both fretboards are of the four-string bass variety. Guest turns another rock cliché on its ear when during as solo, Tufnel plays electric guitar not with a violin bow but with the actual violin. When the band's Boston gig is cancelled for lack of ticket sales, Faith consoles the band by pointing out "at least it is not a college town."

Even the documentary style is a parody. Reiner represents famous director Martin Scorsese, whose documentary of The Band, titled *The Last Waltz*, was the inspiration for the film, even down to the USS Coral Sea cap that Reiner and Scorsese wear throughout each film.

Multiple cameo appearances amuse as well, with Dana Carvey and Billy Crystal appearing as mimes, Fran Drescher stealing the show as Tap's record label representative, and *Late Show with David Letterman* second banana Paul Schafer as Artie Fufkin, the incompetent promoter.

Reiner did a masterful job directing the film to look like a true documentary, helped in part by the fact that actors adlibbed almost all the lines, a technique Guest continues to use in his own films (*Waiting for Guffman*, *Best in Show*, *For Your Consideration*) as well as the aforementioned collaboration). All of the scenes seemed unscripted and the actors did a good job of assuming the role of rock star.

While this reviewer found the film to be very enjoyable, it would be difficult to say that all teenagers of today would find *This is Spinal*



*Tap* funny. Although most scenes would make anyone laugh, many of today's teens would not understand many of the allusions in the film. One would have to be knowledgeable in the field of rock history (or have a parent sitting nearby to explain) to get all the inside jokes.

This reservation aside, *This is Spinal Tap* is a funny movie that could be enjoyed by anyone who likes music and is familiar with the history of musical styles. After all, as the tagline says, *This is Spinal Tap* "does for rock-and-roll what *The Sound of Music* did for hills."

*This is Spinal Tap*



Rob Reiner

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# WestWord

## Jones produces unique holiday comedy

**W Morgan Quilici**  
Copy Editor

At first glance, *Everybody's Fine* (Miramax), the new film directed by Kirk Jones, seems like just another stereotypical holiday comedy. However, to this reviewer's pleasant surprise the movie fell more along the lines of a heartfelt family drama due to the unique and surprising storyline.

Frank Goode (Robert De Niro), a retired widower, attempts to reunite his family after they have grown apart while leading very different lives. As Frank is making his final preparations for the gathering, the children all call and give him mysterious, cryptic reasons as to why they cannot attend.

Frank decides to take matters into his own hands and travel around the country to visit with each of his children. This does not turn out so well.

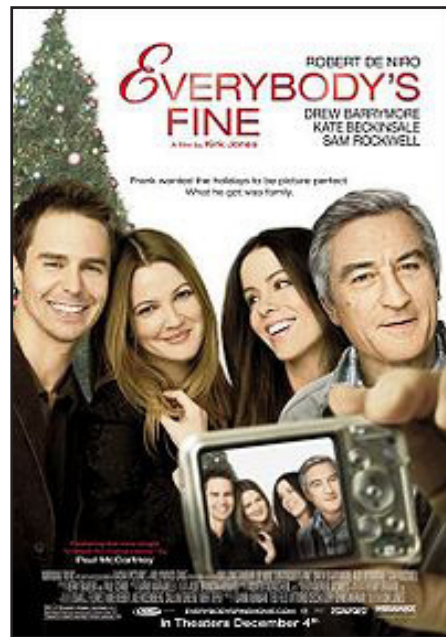
First, he buys a train ticket and heads to Chicago to surprise his daughter Amy (Kate Beckinsale). When Amy, who is in advertising, hints at the fact that she is too busy to entertain her father, Frank leaves and heads to Denver to see his son.

After a quick visit with his father, Frank's son Robert (Sam Rockwell), a musician, who happens to be going out of town himself says goodbye to his father.

Frank then heads to Las Vegas where his

dancer daughter Rosie (Drew Barrymore) lives. Again, after a short visit Frank decides to go back home, this time by plane.

Throughout the film the children all converse



on the phone about topics that are unknown to both the audience and their father, including secrets about Frank's other son David. This mystery is part of the reason why *Everybody's Fine* is so intriguing.

To avoid a spoiler alert, let us just say that a traumatic event occurs, followed by the divulging of information to the father that was previously held from him. This ends up bringing the family closer together, and by the end of the film, Frank finally has the gathering that he always wanted.

Two of the most impressive aspects of the film were Andrew Mondshein's editing and Henry Branham's cinematography. This reviewer was shocked that a holiday movie could embody so many different techniques. In the beginning of the film, when Frank is mowing the lawn, the director's use of high and low angles, along with different framing shots, gives the movie a very original and impressive opening. The director often used framing, including through windows. This added additional uniqueness to the opening.

Additionally, the director adds one-of-a-kind techniques to the film that make it exceptional. Frank's job is to put the polyvinyl-chloride coating on telephone wire. Throughout the film, the director includes telephone wires as a metaphor in certain scenes. For example, while Frank's children are conversing on the phone, dialogue is only heard, and scenic images of telephone wires appear.

De Niro's performance is truly unique. It is hear-felt and moving and unlike any of De

Niro's previous performances. De Niro truly embodies the character of Frank and gives a performance that is definitely one to see. At the end of the movie there is a very emotional scene between De Niro and his children. De Niro made this reviewer believe he *was* Frank through his complete commitment to the character.

The actors who play Frank's children also give good performances. They all portray the secretive aspect of their characters well. Even from their facial expressions the audience can see that something is not adding up. However, none of the other actors lose themselves in the roles as does DeNiro, particularly the female principals whom this reviewer never forgot were Barrymore and Beckinsale playing Rosie and Amy. Rockwell's performance as Robert was more believable because he was honest and genuine with his acting.

Overall, *Everybody's Fine* is a film that could bring any family closer together. The film combines a great storyline with stellar editing, direction, cinematography and acting together to produce one great film.



## Savory Indonesian cuisine offers variety

**W Suhail Ansari**  
Viewpoints Editor

Walking into Rogers Park's new Indonesian spot, Angin Mamiri, the easy-going, cozy atmosphere is evident. Whether it be the affordable menu or unique dishes, this restaurant



Unique sauces delight reviewer.  
Photo by Suhail Ansari

is sure to please West students who want to welcome a change of cuisine near Lincolnwood Town Center.

The cuisine's origin might seem difficult to pin down to many patrons, but this reviewer found that the ingredients used closely resembled a mix of Indian and Thai cuisine, not surprising considering Indonesia's geography.

The menu of appetizers offers few choices, but the prices entice the diner to choose them all. The *Martabak Telor* (\$3.25) was this reviewer's choice. It is a crispy shell filled with seasoned meat and scrambled eggs, served with sweet and sour sauce on the side. The presentation is beautiful, with the sweet and sour sauce is served in a tiny, decorated dish with a tiny spoon.

The waitress was more than willing to help the patrons choose their appetizers and thoroughly explained the types and size of portions, most of which are enough for two people.

This review sampled two entrées, one the

specialty of the restaurant, and of Indonesian cuisine, *Chicken Sate Ayam* (\$8.25). This was explained by the waitress as skewered chicken pieces roasted over hot coals, served with either a sweet and chili sauce or with a peanut sauce. To entice the diner into trying new things, the waitress was more than happy to provide the peanut sauce on the side, which was a nice touch. The chicken was very fresh and tender.

The *Mie Goreng* (\$6.25) was the second entrée, thin yellow noodles fried with onion, chili, tomatoes, egg and vegetables. This dish features large portions that filled two people during this visit—a great value. Instead of the usual fried noodles available at any generic Chinese restaurant, this dish is not overly oily or salty, with a perfect balance of vegetables and starches.

This reviewer was sated after the delectable appetizer and entrées; therefore, dessert wasn't ordered; but that doesn't mean there is a lack of options. Two of the most interesting include *Cendol* (\$3.50), which is made from green pea flour flavored with Pandan leaves, and a traditional banana pudding (\$3.50), sure to please patrons.

The restaurant decor was simple, yet authentic, with the waitress dressed in Indonesian garb, adding to the welcoming atmosphere.

Although the fare is attractive and reasonably priced, not many other customers were present during this reviewer's visit after school on a Thursday night. One hopes that Angin Mamiri doesn't fall victim to the slow economy because this local gem is too good to lose!

Angin Mamiri is located on 2739 W. Touhy Ave. in Chicago, near Lincolnwood Town Center. It is open 10 a.m.-9:30 p.m. daily. For more information, call (773) 262-6646.



Angin Mamiri

2739 W. Touhy Ave

**W Kathryn Booker**  
Staff Writer

The Arctic Monkeys, a four-member indie rock band from Sheffield, England, continued their second North American tour at the Riviera Theater on Dec. 6 before thousands of spirited fans, who screamed their approval with each song.

After a cringe-worthy opening set by the aptly Screaming Females, a New Jersey-based pop-punk band, the audience became even more eager to welcome the Arctic Monkeys on stage.

The Riviera Theater was the perfect venue for the concert. The audience can choose to relax comfortably in the upstairs seats or crowd around stage with energetic fans amid moshing and crowd-surfing.

This reviewer chose (perhaps unwisely) to stand closer to the stage, but was soon pushed back before the second Arctic Monkeys' song. Perhaps due to her inexperience with more intimate rock venues, this reviewer found that the maniacal behavior of fans distracted from the exceptional music.

Arriving amid an enormous cloud of fog, The Arctic Monkeys opened with the song "Dance Little Liar" from their newest album *Humbug*. When singer-guitarist Alex Turner appeared from the thick fog, the audience immediately pushed toward the stage. The first crowd-pleaser got the enthusiastic audience of nearly 2,500 fans dancing along.

The set list ranged from upbeat songs such as "I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor," "The View from the Afternoon" and "Brainstorm," which had the audience jumping and thrashing, to more sentimental songs like "Cornerstone" and "I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire."

The band encouraged fans to sing along with well-known indie chart-toppers, and the audience responded with shouting lyrics, crowd-surfing and jumping in tune to the music.

Turner's versatility was demonstrated through his melodic harmonies of emotional songs and energized singing of crowd-pleasers. Combined with Matt Helders on drums, Jamie Cook on

guitar and Nick O'Malley and Andy Nicholson on bass, the band's style is comparable to that of their musical influences The Beatles and U2.

The band's performance was amplified by effective staging including strobe lights that flashed rhythmically to the beat of the songs and



a fog machine that at times hid the band from the crowd's view.

The special effects were perfectly timed to the band's songs, and as the crowd bobbed up and down, the lights created a more energetic atmosphere.

This reviewer enjoyed the dazzling special effects, yet wished she could see the band more often rather than the manic fans jumping on people's shoulders.

Overall, the only downside to the night was the stuffy, barely breathable air circulating around stage and the hazardous crowd-surfing and mosh pits from over-energetic fans. This reviewer had to be on the lookout for fans being thrown into the air and the thrashing of people after a particularly upbeat song.

However, these negatives were greatly overwhelmed by the band's ideal combination of lively and sentimental songs, as well as the pleasant music of expressive lyrics and the band's continual energy.

The Arctic Monkeys' American tour will hopefully lead the British band on the road to international stardom.



Arctic Monkeys

Riviera Theater