

ENTERTAINMENT

Technique • Friday, December 1, 2000

Al, Joe, Dick, and W.

The Two Bits Man gives a final analysis of this year's presidential election debacle. Page 21

Another Atwood classic

The Blind Assassin again shows that novelist Margaret Atwood is a woman who knows how to write. Page 25

M. Night Shyamalan's effort not entirely 'Unbreakable'



By Frank Masi / TOUCHSTONE PICTURES

David Dunn (Bruce Willis) appears to be some kind of superhero after miraculously surviving a train wreck; Elijah Price (Samuel L. Jackson) is more than mildly curious.

By Andrew Pilsch
*Hate it when I'm missing bylines*MPAA Rating: PG-13
Starring: Bruce Willis, Samuel L. Jackson, Robin Wright Penn
Director: M. Night Shyamalan
Distributor: Touchstone
Running Time: 106 minutes
Grade: ★★

Unbreakable, the new film by talented filmmaker M. Night Shyamalan, is not as good as the brilliantly captivating *The Sixth Sense*, which is unfortunate. It's safe to say that this film is one of the most anticipated since the release of a certain summer blockbuster (*Sense* was one of the ten highest grossing films of last year and deservedly so) and it sorely disappoints.

In *Unbreakable*, Shyamalan employs many of the elements—great acting, engrossing premise, fascinating camera work, even a cute young kid—but this offering lacks the cohesive and en-

thrilling story that marked *The Sixth Sense* as one of the best films of last year and a box office smash. It would also seem that Shyamalan is attempting to please too many people instead of crafting an intellectual and shocking

Shyamalan employs many of the same elements, but lacks the cohesive story of *The Sixth Sense*.

story as his previous outing did.

The setup is this: a former football player turned security guard named David Dunn (Bruce Willis) survives an otherwise fatal train wreck, and is told by Elijah Price (Samuel L. Jackson, brilliant as always)—who may just be the biggest comic book

nerd ever—that he is in fact a kind of superhero.

Based on this story, it would seem that Shyamalan is tackling comic books in the same fashion that he handled ghost stories—applying a modern realistic tone to a fantastic genre. The problem, like many “origin of” comic book issues (read *Uncanny X-men #1* to see what I mean), is that this story is rather dull.

Where this summer's *X-Men* covered similar ground but kept the action moving, Shyamalan chose to explore the implications of being born to protect others. While this might prove to be fertile subject matter for a novel, it is not what good cinema is all about. Frankly, there isn't enough story here to go around.

This movie will be compared to *The Sixth Sense*, as it should be (and as I am doing), and found lacking. However, if it weren't for his having stunned the world with *Sense*, Shyamalan's current

See *Unbreakable*, page 23

Crazy couples in DT's 'Slightly Married'

By G. K. Swamy and Kit FitzSimons
It's a surprise article!

Married—well sort of. The new DramaTech show *Slightly Married* is actually three one-act plays featuring odd couples with even odder problems. Each play has a unique style, but the combined effect is quite distinct—sometimes slapstick, sometimes tongue-in-cheek, occasionally rather dark—but very humorous all the while.

Bridal Terrorism, directed by Amy McPherson, has a premise as strange as its title indicates. What happens when the term “shotgun wedding” is taken all too literally, and when a man is forced to marry at gun-point? The play centers around a marriage—not one of tradition, but one of acceleration.

Everything is faster these days, from food to phones, and this marriage is no exception. The young hero, Lionel Stark (Brandon Yarbrough), is swept off his seat by a beautiful woman (Julie Dowling) before finding himself in the midst of his own wedding, complete with a hilarious, if dysfunctional, set of in-laws and a British-only-when-he-wants-to-be judge.

The scene that follows is a panorama of action and humor, as the family tries to make it through the ceremony before Lionel's feet get colder than they already are. In terms of this goal, no one side of the stage can truly be said to outdo the other.

The Problem is directed by Siddharth Manay, and poses quite a whopper. The featured

couple, played by Christopher Hunt and Valerie Peek, air their marital woes onstage, yet seem flippant when discussing these horrible dilemmas.

The husband is mildly interested to find out that his wife is pregnant; the kicker is that she is almost full term when he makes his discovery. This leads to further discussion that reveals a tale of adultery, lies, and more adultery, throughout which the couple remains overly polite to each other. Each feels that even

The charm of *Foolz* is that it doesn't take itself seriously, and neither should you.

though they may be sleeping around, it is no reason to make the other feel less loved. The caustic interplay between the couple provides the viewer with a dark sense of enjoyment in witnessing their attempts to solve the “problem.”

The third feature is the commedia del'arte production *Foolz*. Performed in the tradition of the improvisational art form of 16th-17th century Italy, *Foolz* features masked characters performing all sorts of tomfoolery onstage. Wes Schrader has led an impressive effort in bringing the creativity of this art to DramaTech.

In true commedia fashion, the performers and director

Schrader have built the story themselves in their rehearsals. Working with stock characters, their brainstorming has produced a riotous mix of scheming servants, rich old misers, haughty divas, and (of course) a young couple in love.

Flavio (Adam Johnson) has returned after having disappearing for four years to woo his true love Flavia (Jennifer Fulton). Of course, numerous problems pop up to thwart their union, yet they hold on through thick, thin, and the ubiquitous balcony scene. Various stock characters talk to, steal from, gamble with, and laugh at one another to create a swirling web of chaos that is miraculously resolved in the end.

Foolz embraces the stereotypical characters and plot devices that such situation comedies are known for and makes fun of them (and itself, of course). The charm of this show is that it doesn't take itself seriously, and neither should you. Just sit back, relax, and enjoy the silliness.

DramaTech's first performance next semester will be William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. Auditions will be held at the start of the next semester on January 8 and 9, 2001, at 7:30 p.m. in the DramaTech Theatre. They are open to all, and no prior experience is necessary. For information, call (404) 894-3481.

Slightly Married plays on December 7, 8 and 9 at 8:00 p.m. in the DramaTech Theatre. Admission is \$4. To reserve tickets, call the reservation line at (404) 894-2745.

Big Mouth sounds off

By Alan Back
My cat just sprang a leak

There must be something in the water they drink in New Orleans. That's about the only explanation that can account for the goofy things that keep springing up down there. Think about it: Louis Armstrong. Mardi Gras. The Hurricane. A four-year-old kid who asked for—and got—a big green trash can for Christmas, then promptly drove his whole family crazy by pounding on it all day long.

That four-year-old was Fred LeBlanc, now the self-described “unofficial frontman” and drummer of Cowboy Mouth. Even when the band takes time off, he can still make plenty of noise and give people a little peek at what's been rattling around in his head these days.

Getting the crowd moving is child's play for him and his partners. Nobody is

immune from the insanity, not even the head of Blackbird Records, their current label and a subsidiary of Atlantic. The executive learned this truth the hard way during a 1999 show at the Roxy.

“He was the only person in the place sitting down!” LeBlanc recalled. “We were playing a song, and we stopped it and said, ‘You know, dude, we don't care if we're signed to your record label or not, and we're glad you're here, but you are not going to sit down at a Cowboy Mouth show!’ And we got the whole audience to scream along with us.”

Stunts like this are par for the course when the full band goes on, as anyone who's seen them can readily attest. The man puts plenty of mileage on his kit at these shows, routinely breaking drumheads and reducing pair after pair of sticks

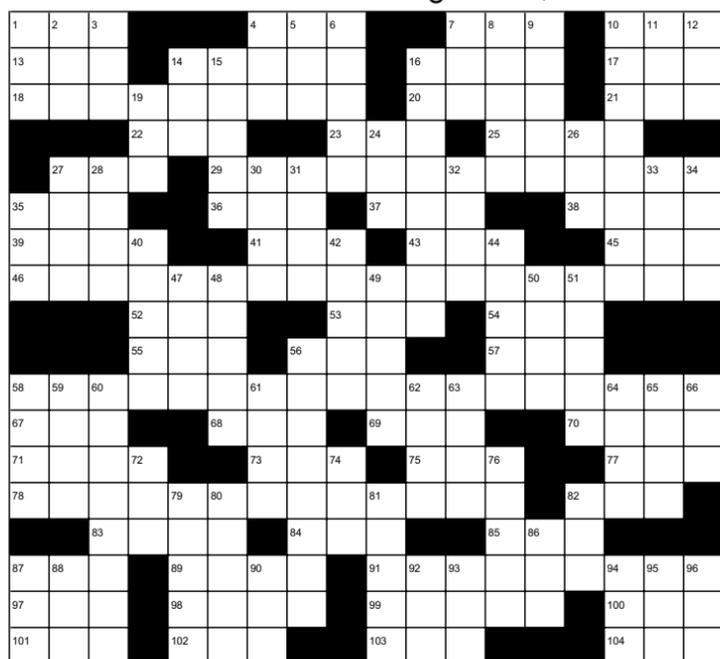
See *LeBlanc*, page 25



Courtesy of Fred LeBlanc / WWW.COWBOYMOUTH.COM

Cowboy Mouth's Fred LeBlanc is trading his much-abused drums for an acoustic guitar in a series of solo shows, including a visit to Smith's Olde Bar on December 7.

Crossword No Partridge Jokes, Please!



By Kit FitzSimons
Yule laugh! Yule cry!

ACROSS

- 1. With 4 ACROSS, to make 23
- 4. See 1 ACROSS
- 7. "Wait a _____!"
- 10. Miracle-_____
- 13. Take to court
- 14. English county

- 16. Non-American peninsula
- 17. Ogre
- 18. Answer to 46 ACROSS (3 wds)
- 20. Mimicry expert
- 21. Believer suffix
- 22. Belief suffix
- 23. "Bring that back" on a TI-83
- 25. Ocean Spray prefix
- 27. _____Man
- 29. Riddle's start (3 wds)

- 35. 69 ACROSS concern
- 36. Bro's sibling
- 37. Suffix for Legoman?
- 38. Give off
- 39. Famous cookie man
- 41. Antis
- 43. Depot (abbr)
- 45. "Bark!"
- 46. "How do you know ____" (4 wds)
- 52. Bump _____ log (2 wds)
- 53. Batman foe _____ Al Ghul
- 54. Far-faring flying (abbr)
- 55. Canadian prov.
- 56. Be sick
- 57. Overly-focused sickness? (abbr)
- 58. Riddle's middle (4 wds)
- 67. Drone or queen
- 68. And the rest (abbr)
- 69. Heston's grp.
- 70. Fiddler's location?
- 71. Boyfriend
- 73. Neither partner
- 75. Taxing org.
- 77. A French word!
- 78. Riddle's end (2 wds)
- 82. "Big Blue"
- 83. Woman's magazine
- 84. Coffee alternative
- 85. _____ Online
- 87. (Just a) bit
- 89. Last name in jeans
- 91. Riddle's answer (2 wds)
- 97. Aladdin's pal
- 98. Caesar's off day?
- 99. Wash

- 100. Blvd.
 - 101. Nine-month abbr.?
 - 102. Is in France!
 - 103. "_____ ideas?"
 - 104. Ripkin of baseball
- DOWN**
- 1. Fireplace leftover
 - 2. Pair
 - 3. Sandra _____
 - 4. _____ Kosh...
 - 5. Keanu, in "The Matrix"
 - 6. Give out, as force
 - 7. Syrup's 'Before' picture
 - 8. VCR button
 - 9. Spy writer John le _____
 - 10. Sinking into insanity (2 wds)
 - 11. Where to make tracks? (abbr)
 - 12. 100 ACROSS follower
 - 14. Dawn goddess
 - 15. 18-wheelers
 - 16. Ties sandbags on
 - 19. Drunken cartoon sound
 - 24. Pre-psi letter
 - 26. Enzyme suffix
 - 27. Big cat or car
 - 28. Soon
 - 30. Over in France?
 - 31. Dilbert intern
 - 32. Plasm prefix
 - 33. Leprechaun land
 - 34. Tigger's "Buh-bye!" (abbr)
 - 35. Fuel
 - 40. Type of pigeon
 - 42. Little extra line on a typed M

- 44. Lit up, as a face
- 47. Diary-writing Frank
- 48. Espresso type
- 49. Hairdresser's
- 50. Make like a cat's back
- 51. Big Bird's teddy bear
- 56. "_____ trustworthy..." (3 wds)
- 58. Swedish pop group
- 59. Golf bag sights
- 60. Made leftovers, maybe (2 wds)
- 61. Sicilian volcano
- 62. "How it first was" (abbr)
- 63. Zero, as a balance
- 64. Mummy's home!
- 65. 'Quake' alternative
- 67. "Many times" to Yeats
- 72. Website abbr.
- 74. Hwy.
- 76. Horde, hide away
- 79. Kukla, Fran, and _____
- 80. I-have-nots?
- 81. "____ de Amigo!"
- 82. _____de-France
- 86. Grand _____Opry
- 87. Demi-_____
- 88. Honest _____
- 90. Vietnam _____ Memorial
- 92. McKellan of "X-Men"
- 93. Pig pen
- 94. Tic-_____
- 95. Eggs
- 96. That's a moray!

Answers on page 25. The editor's random comments are below, as usual.

Unbreakable

from page 19

feature would be praised much as *Wings of Desire* was—as a fascinating meditation on the nature of humanity, in other words, painfully boring. As it is, *Unbreakable* is a step back in both technique and storytelling. If these films had been made in reverse order, everyone would be claiming Shyamalan was a genius.

This film is technically disappointing as well. Instead of the dark, colorless environments used to tell his ghost story, Shyamalan here employs a washed out color scheme, full of grays, blues, and greens. This

would look good in some art house film where the plot concerns two people talking, but, this is a comic book! If it's not full of women and men in spandex suits, it should at least be shot in the vibrant colors of the comics.

Shyamalan also composes a number of his shots through windows, between seats, and via reflected in mirrors. He is attempting to insert the audience directly into the action, as if we were watching it unfold on the street, before our eyes, yet this detracts from Shyamalan's comic book, as that medium tends

to employ direct, concise methods to show the story.

Unbreakable is not a modern, realistic comic book, but one of those water-colored, abstract, art books you purchased when you mistook it for something good. The structure and appearance of this film would suggest Shyamalan did not read many comics as a child.

This movie resembles a painter's attempt to create a superhero comic. In the store, you recognize the artistic value of it, but purchase the new issue of "Batman" instead. That would be my advice to you in regard to this film. Recognize it as the work of a great filmmaker but see something else.

This week on the GT Cable Network

By Rebekah Bardwell
GTCN Correspondant

This week on Flava 101, we'll bring you your favorite videos from Shaggy, Mya, Master P. and Cuban Link. Flava 101 always gives you the freshest hip-hop and R&B videos.

Phat Videos knows that college students sometimes lack cash, so Kara is helping you out this week with your holiday shopping. She takes you inside one of the hottest places to shop, Wal-

Mart on Cobb Parkway. Kara tours the electronics, jewelry, and sporting goods departments, and she finds out what's on everyone's holiday wish list.

Flava 101 comes on Mondays at 3:00 and 7:00 p.m. and Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. Phat Videos come on Mondays at 3:30 and 7:30 p.m. and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. on Channel 21. For more information, check the first floor of the student center, Monday, December 4, or go to www.gtcn.gatech.edu.

LeBlanc from page 19

to splinters. With the group currently in the middle of a seven-week break, though, he's hit the road to do a handful of solo shows and change the mood a bit.

"The acoustic thing is kind of the same, except a lot of the intensity is switched to my acoustic guitar. I concentrate a little more on the songs, but it's not the 'sensitive singer/songwriter' thing. Not like, 'I gave my love a cherry.'"

"Sensitive" is one word that will never be used to describe LeBlanc's two self-released solo albums, ... *Playing the Game of My Life* (1998) and last month's *Double Dammit*. This latter disc is a re-release of his 1995 EP *Dammit*, with two of the original songs removed and several previously unreleased tracks added.

Instead of going into a big studio with a different group of players, he made the original recordings at home and played all the instruments himself. Unusual, perhaps, but he explained that he needed to get everything down before it got away from him.

"A lot of those demos were recorded while I was writing the songs. Some of them were from a very fresh inspiration, you know? And when I'm home, I don't have a chance to do anything fancy; I just use this cassette four-track."

What he caught on that rig covers the entire range of Cowboy Mouth's 10-year history, including material that later ended up in the band's repertoire and songs he wrote in the time following his departure from Dash Rip Rock in 1989. He explained that his two albums were a way for him to explore new avenues in songwriting without having to mount a full side project, as bandmates John Thomas Griffith and Paul Sanchez have done.

"When you're on the road as much as Cowboy Mouth, there are certain aspects that you don't get to

pursue, you know? We're all creative people, and we have to exercise that. When we perform, not everybody's going to be completely satisfied with their role in that dynamic. You have to branch out and try new things."

LeBlanc trades the stage-shaking musical madness of the full band for a more introspective approach when he works alone. The death of a brother, a crazy night during Mardi Gras, a rough European tour, sitting by the bayou and watching the water roll past—it's all fair game for him. He said that the songs have evolved into the musical equivalent of the journal he keeps on the road and posts on his website (<http://www.fredleblanc.com>), bits of reflection and self-encouragement

"I like to think I'm fortunate enough to know what I have, to be thankful for it."

Fred LeBlanc,
on his role in Cowboy Mouth

that come to him from time to time.

Hearing a song like "Little Boys Who Tell" in the middle of this lot, then, is a real screwball. Probably the most disturbing tune on either album, it paints an eerie picture of what happens when a man of the cloth takes advantage of kids entrusted to his care. It also happens to be the only song that doesn't have an explanation in the liner notes—but not, LeBlanc stated, because the events he sings about were part of his childhood.

"People ask me if that's a personal story," he commented. "It's a personal story in that the person it happened to me was someone very close. I've been presented with situations like that, where people get away with things they shouldn't.

Most of the time, my whole thing is trying to be positive, change your life for the better. As a creative person, though, you know that life's not all positive. It's not something you need to dwell on, but it's something you have to deal with."

LeBlanc never plans to write anything unnerving or sunny, but instead does his best to give his muse free rein. "When a song presents itself to me as an idea or inspiration, I just try to let it come. I never know what I'm going to get; it could be 'Easy,' it could be 'Jenny Says' [two Cowboy Mouth singles]."

Or it could be a completely different enterprise: the odd bit of production work for Sanchez and Deadeye Dick in the mid-1990s, say, or manning the boards for Dash Rip Rock's 1998 album. Though the side projects keep him out of (or in) trouble while the band takes a break, he knows what takes priority.

"Cowboy Mouth is something special that we're all a part of. That's our bread and butter; the thing that has given us the opportunity to do solo work... I like to think I'm fortunate enough to know what I have, to be thankful for it," LeBlanc said.

What about the future? "Life has a way of surprising the hell out of people when they least expect it. I just keep giving it fuel for the fire... If it wasn't for the weird, unexpected things, life would be pretty damn dull, and I'm all about keeping things exciting."

Whether he happens to be beating the tar out of his drums or being only slightly gentler with a six-string, anything goes when he gets out on stage. Keep a crash helmet handy—you never know when you (or he) might need it.

Fred LeBlanc will be performing at Smith's Olde Bar on December 7, with John Thomas Griffith opening. Call (404) 875-1522 for more details, or visit either <http://www.cowboymouth.com> or <http://www.fredleblanc.com>.

'Assassin' an instant classic

By Casey Fiesler
Wish I had time to read like her

Title: *The Blind Assassin*
Author: Margaret Atwood
Publisher: Doubleday
Released: 2000

Most authors never see their works achieve widespread study in their lifetimes. The majority of the books that we now consider classics were spawned from geniuses now dead for decades. However, Margaret Atwood, the Canadian author of the critically acclaimed and studied book *The Handmaid's Tale*, proves one of the exceptions to this rule. The recent addition of *The Blind Assassin* to her repertoire has added yet another dimension to her increasing credibility as an author.

This novel follows the lives of two sisters, the youngest of whom's death is introduced immediately: "Ten days after the war ended, my sister Laura drove a car off a bridge." Narrated by the surviving sister, Iris, the story twists into a nonlinear story-within-a-story-within-a-story. Iris's tale jumps between her current life as an elderly woman and her childhood and the events leading up to her sister's death.

In addition, the narrative periodically switches to a novel written by Laura that was posthumously published. Laura's novel, *The Blind Assassin*, made her a celebrity after her death due to its taboo content (at least by 1930's standards). It follows

the story of two lovers—a high society girl and a man running from the law. Their tale introduces another internal story, as the man entertains his lover with a science fiction story.

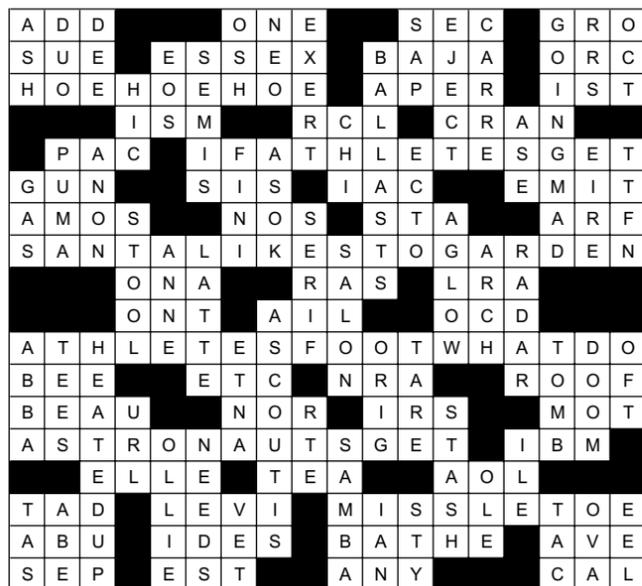
Sounds complicated, right? It is. However, each aspect of this novel is equally fascinating. The two sisters are well born and live a life of no complication until the Great Depression, when Iris enters a loveless marriage to save her father's business, and the implications affect Laura's life. The parallels between the lives of the two lovers in Laura's novel and the lives of the high-society sisters keep the reader continually guessing about what is real and what is fiction.

The Blind Assassin has the plot and eloquence to make it another modern classic.

In addition to the originality of this spiderweb of a story, Atwood's writing style, the same that was so critically acclaimed in

The Handmaid's Tale and *Cat's Eye*, contains a lush flair—her words practically envelop the reader. She has the most masterful use of figurative language that I have encountered in contemporary fiction., utilizing similes and metaphors without ever seeming contrived. Her often dark comparisons continually shock the reader into understanding.

Though this novel takes a commitment to read (the complexity of the plot makes it hard to stop reading for too long—you'll forget too much), it's well worth it. *The Blind Assassin* has both the plot and the eloquence to make it another modern classic.



the office is so festive tonight! (this time festive does not mean tacky, becca.) anyway, we have colored christmas lights hanging from the ceiling, and bruce springsteen singing. and my week is done! homework last monday, airplane due today, another quiz today. (today is wednesday.) ah, the life of an aerospace engineer. yeah, we design, like, airplanes and stuff. mine was funny looking. NOT like a sausage at all. though I don't know if I'd be willing to fly in it... peach bowl! genay just mentioned the peach bowl. I'm gonna go to the peach bowl. daniel is going to let me SHOOT the peach bowl. right daniel? because he loves me. unfortunately he's also a tease. oh well, you can't win them all. my question of the day is whether it is possible to be addicted to a person, and if so, how do you break the addiction? is there a 12-step program? I want someone to be addicted to me. that'd be cool for a little while. merry christmas! whee.

We beat U[sic]GA. I cannot express how happy I was about it. I have never screamed so loud.