PAGE FRIDAY

Vol. LXXXVIII N°6 | www.ubyssey.bc.ca | Friday, 22 September, 2006 | We love our new staff since 1918

Our man at the Toronto film Fest

Highlights include Sean Penn's lungs and Penelope Cruz's chest

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Science of love

Michel Gondry's new film is a mind-bender

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Starry night

A UBC researcher has identified the oldest stars in the universe

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On the rebound

T-Birds looking to get lucky in Saskatchewan

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Be thankful for what you've got

THE LAST KISS
Now Playing

by Melissa Tang
CULTURE WRITER

Part of being a university student is the newfound frugality. All of the luxuries that we used to enjoy at home like private showers and home-cooked meals disappear as soon as you move into residence. You constantly find yourself trying to find ways to have fun and survive the school year without spending a lot of money. Logically, I was thrilled when I got free passes to an advance screening of *The Last Kiss* with Zach Braff and Rachel Bilson. Most know Braff as the star of the hit TV series *Scrubs,* as well as from *Garden State,* which he also wrote and directed. Bilson, on the other hand, is famous for her work on *The OC*—which I have never really gotten into but am fully aware of its popularity. Therefore, I figured I would be getting a cute little romantic comedy starring two of today's most popular stars. Unfortunately, my excitement was short-lived and died out as the movie progressed.

> ALTHOUGH THE PLOT SEEMS INTERESTING, THE MOVIE AS A WHOLE DOES NOT EXECUTE IT VERY WELL.

The film is set in Wisconsin, and revolves around the lives of 29 year-old Michael (Braff) and his three friends Izzy (Michael Weston), Chris (Casey Affleck) and Kenny (Eric Christian Olsen). Michael and his girlfriend, Jenna (Jacinda Barrett) have been dating for three years and are now expecting their first child together, which makes Michael realise his fear of having his life planned out for him. When he meets Kim (Bilson) at a friend's wedding, it is that same fear that makes him willingly take down her number, instead of rejecting it like another person in a serious, committed relationship might. As he deals with his issues of commitment, his other friends are also dealing with problems of their own: Izzy can't seem to get over his ex-girlfriend, while Chris's newborn son is causing some tension between him and his wife. The movie follows the journey these four friends make as they start to realise that their lives are changing, as well as the trials and tribulations that come with aging.

Although the plot seems interesting, the movie as a whole does not execute it very well. *The Last Kiss* also marks Bilson's film debut, which is a pity as it will probably deter rather than attract future movie producers. She is no doubt a very good actress on *The OC,* but it seems she took her character from there and tried to put it to use in this film, where it does not work at all. For example, her constant giggling and use of the word "like" every few seconds was very distracting and did not go well with the more mature Michael.

Braff, on the other hand, shines as Michael, who I couldn't help noticing is very much like the other characters he's played previously— a somewhat awkward person who never seems to know what to do. I was also unable to stop myself from writing down several quotes from the movie, including "You gotta remember to breathe or you'll die," courtesy of Bilson. I found the acting mediocre and the story confusing, and I'm just happy that I didn't have to pay to see this movie. All in all, I hope both Bilson and Braff can bounce back after starring in this sub-par film.

Eccentric characters to match quirky visuals

THE SCIENCE OF SLEEP
Now Playing

by Jesse Ferreras
CULTURE EDITOR

There are some movies you just have to resign yourself to in order to enjoy them. *Being John Malkovich* was one of them—once you realised how strange and silly its humour was, the movie was a riot. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* was another—once you discovered that its eccentric characters and style were part of its charm, it was a disarming love story. *Spotless Mind* director Michel Gondry's latest film, *The Science of Sleep,* is exemplary of that kind of film—once you've completely resigned yourself to its quirkiness, you find yourself charmed and touched by its surrealist, yet dreamlike appeal.

Stephane Miroux (Gael Garcia Bernal) is an artist—but in a more literal sense he's a dreamer. He's so heavily wrapped up in a dream world he's conjured up for himself that neither he, nor the audience watching him, can easily determine whether he's in reality or digressed once more into his imagination. Shifting rapidly back and forth between real life and the fantasy TV show *Stephane TV,* replete with egg cartons taped to the walls for soundproofing and cardboard cameras, his mother has convinced him to come to France with the promise of a job drawing pictures for a calendar. Little does he realise that he will be spending his days in a menial job he hates, designing the calendars' margins. A frustrated Stephane takes refuge in his dreams, imagining at one point that he has giant hands with which he can push around the eccentric character in his office and, through imagination, turn his boss into a homeless man and toss him out a window into a paper city animated through stop-motion.

His ever-frequent retreats into fantasy leave a distinct impression on his next-door neighbour, Stephanie (Charlotte Gainsbourg), a fellow artist who shares his sense of fantasy. He first inspires her to craft a forest in a boat on a sea of blue and white cellophane and is charmed further when he shows her his "one-second time machine." Gradually, Stephane falls for her, but his fantasy of having her proves elusive, despite how much she takes over his dreams. Their encounters, relayed through a series of digressions into a city constructed with cardboard toilet rolls and on the set of *Stephane TV,* become a blissful fantasy for the young man, but gradually begin to gnaw away at his emotions when they don't merge comfortably with reality.

The Science of Sleep is one quirky, hilarious romantic comedy. A common complaint about dream sequences in the movies is that they detract too much from the plot—here, they don't really advance the story, but they are truly part of its charm. Bernal delivers a shamelessly eccentric, physical performance as a young man who has allowed too much of his childhood psychology to carry over into adulthood. He is totally invested in a character unlike any that audiences have seen from him before. Gainsbourg, meanwhile, doesn't quite harness the audience's attention, but forms an interesting contrast. Her character is more reserved, yet rarely shies away from delving into his imaginative world even though she does not quite love him.

What *Science* communicates most effectively is the pain of loving someone who does not love you back. Stephane's painful dreams about Stephanie are almost enough to make you cry. Depending on how much you can control your romantic side, Bernal just might do that. Either way, fans of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* have lots to look forward to.

A fateful vision of the Gaza Strip

SURREAL: A GLANCE AT A LAND THAT NO LONGER EXISTS
Fifth Avenue Cinemas
September 14

by Francis Plourde
CULTURE WRITER

In December 2003, Ariel Sharon, then Prime Minister of Israel, announced his plan for a unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza strip.

The small piece of land, about 360 square kilometres, was home to 8.500 Jewish settlers and 1.3 millions Palestinians.

Forty years of colonialism sponsored by the Israeli government was about to be destroyed. Officially, the evacuation of 21 villages and the displacement of an unknown number of inhabitants was supposed to increase the security of residents of Israel, relieve pressure on the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and reduce friction between Israelis and Palestinians.

> "THE FORMER ISREALI, WHILE KEEPING A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE, MADE A MOVIE ABOUT HUMANITY THAT WENT BEYOND NATIONAL BELIEFS...AS A RESULT, THE FILM LEAVES US WITH MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS."

By mid-July 2005, Erez T Yanuv Barzilav, an Israeli filmmaker now living in Vancouver, famous for documentaries on humanitarian situations, went with a friend to the Gaza Strip for a farewell visit. This was just a month prior to the withdrawal and a year prior into the Israeli invasion in the summer of 2006.

On their journey, they met Jewish settlers, as well as Palestinian youngsters and immigrants from elsewhere, invited in Israel to replace the Palestinians with whom the Israelis used to live and work "peacefully."

They drove through a land surrounded by barricades and electronic fences, with Israeli forces in an area where the frontiers are still to be defined. They saw a population denying its imminent departure, villages waiting for their death.

It could have been a political movie.

Instead, the former Israeli, while keeping a Jewish perspective, made a movie about humanity that went beyond national beliefs.

As a result, the film leaves us with more questions than answers. How could the Israeli settlers be prepared for this withdrawal?

Erez T Yanuv Barzilay escaped from the tricks of making a movie about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and refused to take a political stand, only questioning the Israeli government for the decision to build the villages decades before.

If the two producers—Barzilay and Dror Marcus, his Israeli friend from Cambodia, who took digital images inserted in the movie—fail to present a clear answer, their work is well-documented and gives an excellent background to anyone who follows this ongoing conflict from the outside.

It would be a shame not to mention Ben Euerby's work on the film's music. The Vancouver composer created an introspective atmosphere as important as the images themselves.

And now, a year after the withdrawal, what remains of these villages? According to the filmmaker, nothing. The Israeli government destroyed some. The Palestinians destroyed the others. Erez T Yanuv Barzilav has his reasons to condemn the Palestinians for this destruction. The Palestinians have theirs. Here begins, again, the political debate.

Mango says...

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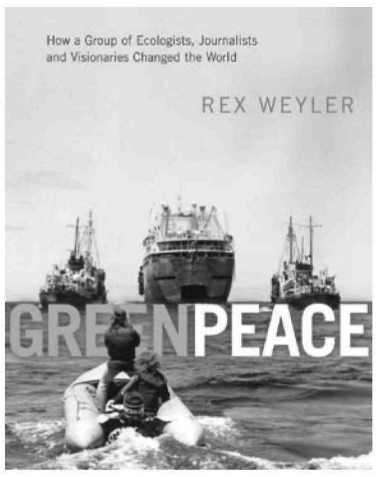
GREENPEACE: THE INSIDE STORY
by Rex Weyler
Raincoast Books

by Chelsea Theriault
CULTURE WRITER



Many readers can't resist a non-fiction book with a title like "the inside story." It hints at a reality known only to a select few.

Rex Weyler's *Greenpeace: The Inside Story* reveals a strange reality indeed; one filled with copulating orcas, a papal blessing, close encounters with harpoons and a mescaline trip or two. This captivating history of the ecological organisation, the one your mother warned you about.

Weyler was a member of Greenpeace and photographer from 1973 to 1979 before he co-founded Greenpeace International in Amsterdam. His book traces the early years of the organisation (or "movement," as its founders preferred) from its humble roots in Kitsilano to the full-scale international activist group it became by the 80s. Beginning in 1971 with campaigns against the American government's atmospheric nuclear testing, Greenpeace acted out against commercial whaling, the skinning of baby seals in Newfoundland, and the dumping of nuclear waste, among numerous campaigns. These examples highlight the dichotomy that is central to the very identity of Greenpeace, an organisation that focuses on promoting both ecology ("green") and disarmament ("peace") through "non-violent creative confrontation."

For those of us who were born in the 80s, it's hard to imagine a time when ecology wasn't a household concept. Weyler skillfully portrays the era when people began to wake up to environmental issues, or rather, were shaken awake. He maintains an objective narrative voice and rarely uses a first-person account of events. This lends an air of storytelling to the work, making it seem fictional at times. Rather than distracting from its credibility, however, this style draws the reader in and holds one's attention.

Another arresting aspect of the book is that its action is centered heavily around Vancouver. Much of it focuses on our city in the 70s, when bright, young minds used to meet at the Cecil Pub on Granville (long before it was the "Cecil Exotic Showroom") to discuss future Greenpeace campaigns. Weyler provides fascinating details about Vancouver's past, such as how in 1969 the government proposed a highway along the beach around Point Grey. By blockading bulldozers at Spanish Banks, future members of Greenpeace stopped the project and helped preserve the city's charming character.

As the climate changes, revisiting the early days of the environmental movement seems more relevant than ever. In contrast to a few decades ago, when matters of the environment were the concern of only a few "ecoholics," nowadays one is confronted by a growing fear of ecological collapse. *The Inside Story* profiles individuals who refuse to be held down by the chains of apathy and address the changes they see happening in their world. Rex Weyler writes, "World changers...stumble upon history and make the best of it. Or a mess of it." Read his novel to see how Greenpeace has tried to preserve the best of it.

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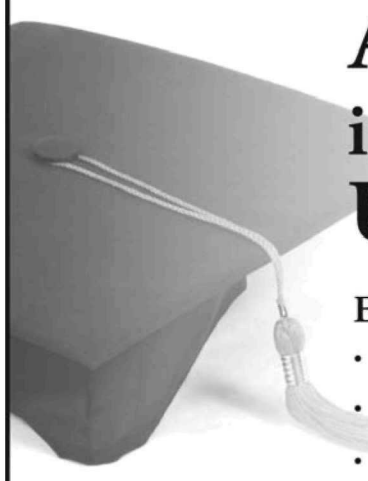

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Chekhov's *Seagull* soars over Vancouver

THE SEAGULL
United Players of Vancouver
at Jericho Arts Centre
until October 1

by Alia Dharssi
CULTURE WRITER

Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* opened with a cacophony of intoxicated laughter, as the inebriated character of Masha (played convincingly by Wendy Podgursky) stumbled onto the stage, closely followed by Medvedenko (Stephen L.A. Wall), a sober and geeky schoolteacher desperately in love with her. So opened Chekhov's tale of unrequited love turned tragic with a pinch of dark humour.

The Seagull deals with a spectrum of characters all linked to one another by their unrequited love for each another. Though Medvedenko loves Masha, she loves Konstantin, a young writer, who loves Nina, an aspiring actress. Nina is captivated by Trigorin, a famous and accomplished playwright, who is controlled by Irina, the frustrated Konstanin's mother.

Chekhov's work is characterised by major dramatic acts that are committed offstage. On stage, the drama is created through the everyday actions and words of the characters. In certain scenes, all the characters spoke softly or interacted in the background while one character was meant to be the centre of attention. This may have been intended to create a sense of a multifaceted everyday scene; however, the multiple actions on stage were distracting and it was sometimes unclear which character the audience was supposed to pay attention to.

The mundane was made captivating, as all the actors presented dynamic portrayals, especially Sally Clark's comical performance as the self-centered Irina. She is so glaringly insensitive towards her son and his aspirations to be a writer that it is amusing. Danielle McKechnie's performance as Nina, meanwhile, was the best of the play.

The performance was crowned by well-timed music and sound effects in the midst of a unique Dali-esque set that was accompanied by eclectic costumes bearing little resemblance to 19th century Russia. The backdrop's distorted quality meshed well with the existential anxiety of the characters. Commendations are due to Irina Templeton for directing *The Seagull* to a soaring production.

Hundreds protest violence in Darfur

by Mary Leighton
NEWS STAFF

PEACE RALLY: Vancouver residents rallied on Sunday to protest the violence in the Darfur region of Sudan. **IVAN ZHAO PHOTO**

Hundreds of thousands of people all over the world rallied on Sunday to protest the violence in the war-torn Darfur region of Sudan, and to encourage world leaders to step in.

The rally at the Vancouver Art Gallery was one of 50 held around the world. More than 200 people stood in the rain to hear speeches by human rights advocates, aid agencies, community leaders and students.

Also at the rally were Sudanese people hoping to increase awareness of the violence occurring in their home country.

Khamis Rahma Abdeckarim grew up in Darfur and spent ten years in Egypt before obtaining a Canadian visa through a United Nations (UN) program. He attended the rally "because many Canadians do not know what's going on. These people [in Darfur] are innocent people. They are voiceless."

Abdeckarim believes that UN peacekeepers are the answer, and that the current government in the capital of Khartoum is not to be trusted. He blames the Khartoum government for supporting the militias that are inflicting the violence in Darfur.

Abdullah Habib from the Sudanese Canadian Society echoed this sentiment. "I don't trust this government. I personally support the UN peacekeepers."

In the Arab-dominated country, Darfur's population is mostly black-African. For years, there have been tensions between the mostly African farmers and the mostly Arab herders. The conflict began in 2003, when rebel groups attacked government targets. The government then launched a militia campaign in the Darfur region.

The Arab Janjaweed militia is the most prominent in the region, but the government denies any link to it.

The African Union has sent 7,000 soldiers to monitor a ceasefire brokered in 2006, but there is little to suggest that the Janjaweed is being disarmed as ordered or that the violence is diminishing. Britain and the US have been pushing for the UN to take over the peacekeeping mission, but Sudan will not allow a UN force on its territory.

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir has dubbed the UN mission "re-colonisation."

Nastaran Mohammadi, co-president of the UBC chapter of Canadian Students for Darfur, compares the conflict to those "going on in India and Pakistan," as they involve "small ethnic groups" who have little or no voice to speak out against the violence.

The Canadian Students for Darfur raise money through the One Dollar a Student Campaign to send to Oxfam. The group also tries to raise awareness about Darfur.

At the Vancouver rally, Parker Jay, speaking for the Youth Human Rights Group, said that in Canada, "we take our human rights for granted." He encouraged people to join groups like Oxfam, to become more aware and to spread the word. Other speakers also encouraged fundraising for Darfur and petitioning the Canadian government to play a stronger role.

Habib added that rallies to raise awareness are essential, saying that "public opinion is really important."

TrekConnect connects UBC students and alumni

by Hung Te Tjia
NEWS WRITER

Over the past three months since the service was launched, TrekConnect has grown in popularity with UBC alumni.

Inspired by popular online social-networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, UBC is now offering a similar service to alumni. TrekConnect is a place for alumni to connect with business, academic and personal opportunities that the 225,000 alumni living and working around the globe offer.

Dianna DeBlaere, project manager for UBC Alumni Affairs, said that the response from alumni has been encouraging. "It's been overwhelming. We're hoping by the end of the month to open up the service to all students as well."

Since the launch, TrekConnect has grown from 120 to 7,177 registered users. Currently, graduates from 1975 to 1999 make up 45 per cent of the population with the rest comprised of graduates from 2000 to present day.

Registrations will increase with the addition of current students at the end of the month, said DeBlaere. "TrekConnect canbecome really useful for students who are wanting to go on exchange and are hunting for opportunities," said DeBlaere.

Caroline Chingcuano, a first-year arts student, said she will register for TrekConnect when it becomes available. "TrekConnect would most likely attract my attention more than Facebook, since most of the time you're focused on your primary community in Facebook anyway," she said.

"That also means in 20 years time, I can contact the [guy] I always checked out in psych 100," added Chingcuano.

The launch has been relatively smooth with only the problem of localising American software, according to DeBlaere.

"We are the first Canadian university to offer this service. Many of the hiccups have been ironing out any possible problems in its translation across the border as Canada has very different laws about privacy," said DeBlaere.

One potential problem with open social networks—where anyone can join—is identity theft. TrekConnect's solution is a closed or trusted system—one that requires a student's identity to be verified by use of their UBC number before being admitted to the system.

TrekConnect is a similar service to MySpace and Facebook. Registration requires a name, email, and alumni number. Once logged on, alumni can search for others by name, class, year, geography and interests. Interest groups range from food and wine to roller coasters. Forums are also available for general discussion, announcing and planning events, and the exchange of goods and services.

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War and Peace: The Aceh struggle

by Deena K.Y. Hussein
NEWS WRITER

A panel of leading experts on Aceh offered nationalist, scholarly and humanitarian perspectives on conflict-torn Aceh from the 1950s to the post-tsunami peace process and reconstruction, Tuesday afternoon at the Liu Center for the Study of Global Issues.

The Conflict

The lecture attempted to put the Aceh conflict into historical context. According to Nurdin Abdul Rahman, a Free Aceh Movement or Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) Representative in the Helsinki Peace Talks, the "first cause of tension" between Aceh and the Republic of Indonesia was the government's decision to incorporate Aceh into the North Sumatra province. This dashed Aceh's hopes for self-governance.

"This memory is embedded until now," he said. "It hurt the feeling of justice of the Aceh people."

After rebelling against this perceived injustice, the Acehnese were given "special territory" status that granted greater autonomy from the centralised government in Jakarta. However, Rahman declared this was an "agreement on paper, never in practise."

In response to increased military control, human rights violations and unfair exploitation of Aceh's natural gas resources, the GAM was established in 1976 with the goal of independence for Aceh.

GAM's declaration of Aceh's independence was a "negation of the Jakarta government," said Rahman, adding that Jakarta's government retaliated by sending troops into Aceh. Mass arrests of GAM members ensued and others were arrested and imprisoned for four years for distributing pro-independence pamphlets, including Rahman.

After briefing the audience on the history of conflict in Aceh, Rahman noted that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed by the government and GAM in July 2005 detailing the terms of a peace agreement, is considered by the Acehnese an opportunity for self-government, and not autonomy.

"The word autonomy hurts them. They prefer self-government," said Rahman. "Though if you look in a political science dictionary the words are the same."

The role of Yudhoyono's government

Offering a governmental perspective on the issue, General-Consul of the Republic of Indonesia, Bunyan Saptomo discussed Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's strategy in Aceh. Sworn into office in October 2004, his manifesto included a pledge to seek peace in Aceh. Saptomo quoted the president's three central aims: promoting peace and security in Aceh, protecting justice and human rights, and spreading prosperity. Saptomo said that Yudhoyono believes these aims can be achieved through focus, determination, commitment and the highest level of leadership.

Saptomo also said that long-term tsunami recovery is not possible without peace and that military operations must give way to relief operations, providing photos to exemplify his point. Some photos showed the construction funded by the government, Canadian Red Cross, and United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Post-tsunami peace

The December 2004 tsunami, which occurred just 150km off the West Coast of Aceh, hastened the peace process because GAM's hope for independence and the military's ambitions for power were lost after the disaster, according to Chris Dagg, SFU International Advisor to the Institutes of Islamic Studies (IAIN) Indonesia Social Equity Project.

Dagg, who visited Aceh before and after the tsunami, described the image of the aftermath as pictures of Hiroshima were placed side by side. He outlined four main challenges facing the region: recovery from the conflict, recovery from the tsunami, establishing an effective local government, good relations with Jakarta and the introduction of Islamic Shari'a law and its impact on society. There is a need for Canada and the international community to remain active in Aceh to further peace and stability, he said.

Aiding Aceh

Humanitarian relief in Aceh was challenging, according to the Canadian Red Cross Information Delegate Russ Froese. He said that Canada poured in $300 million in aid and made a ten-year commitment to reconstruct Aceh and deal with the staggering scope of destruction and debris. The initial relief phase focused on stopping the spread of disease, no easy task given the number of corpses, missing people and destruction of 60 per cent of the Ministry of Health.

In areas of the worst destruction such as Kaju and Nias, 80 per cent of the houses were destroyed and the inhabitants were missing, he added. This raised the difficulty of tracing land owners and the problem of land registry. Supplying food and water to the survivors, especially in remote areas, was particularly challenging, he added. Fortunately, he Acehnese helped the Red Cross in the massive debris clean-up.

"I was impressed by people's courage, how they tried to recover," Froese said. Because of quick marriages, a baby boom and taking care of children and strangers there is more pressure on women, he added.

Reflections on the stability of long-term peace

The experts dwelled on potential threats to peace in Aceh including the prospect of Islamic Shari'a law falling into the hands of "extreme Muslims." Rahman noted that the Aceh people, a Muslim majority, are generally "tolerant and respect other traditions." Dagg added that the West needs a better and more complex understanding of Shari'a law.

An audience member raised concerns about the state of the economy after the NGOs, with their substantial investments, leave Aceh. Rahman explained that the Acehnese were being trained in industrial and business skills to "introduce new economic sources" to the people such as the development of the cocoa industry.

Acehnese people are more hopeful about this peace process, according to Froese, because the trauma will unite them in efforts to overcome the system's problems.

Lessons from the peace process

According to Froese, we need "new ways of understanding each others' cultures and respect them." In conflict zones, he said, it is difficult to do this because there are crises all the time.

Where Western media are embedded with the military, they send the locals to do the reporting, Froese said, using the war in Iraq as an example. The problem with media coverage of crises, he added, is that "there is no historical context in the news."

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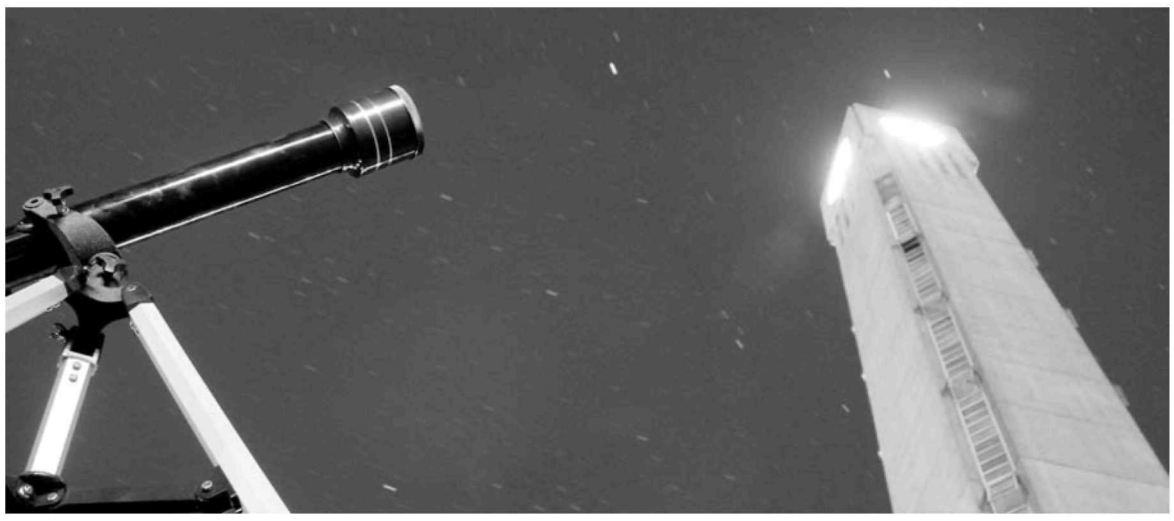
UBC astronomer detects faintest stars



STARS AFTER SUNSET: Beyond the visible eye are the faintest stars. **OKER CHEN PHOTO**

by Myles Estey
NEWS WRITER

With the aid of an international team of astronomers and the Hubble spacecraft's exceptionally high resolution camera, UBC astronomy professor Harvey Richer has discovered a group of previously undetected stars.

"The project was to take images of a very old star cluster, one of the oldest known in the galaxy, even the universe, and take images for almost six days at extremely high resolution," said Richer. The result was the detection of the faintest and oldest white dwarf stars ever found—findings which have attracted attention from both astronomers and the scientific community at large.

White dwarfs are stars that have used up all the energy needed to produce nuclear reactions, which create the light we see reflected in the night sky. These stars continue to sit smoldering and burnt out, but still warm and dimly lit.

As these stars slowly burn out, their diminishing temperature, and the subsequent decrease of reflected light, allows for each star's age to be measured.

"The rate at which [stars] cool is very predictable, so their temperature [functions much like] a clock," said Richer. The reliability of nature's clock and the proficiency of Hubble's technology has brought scientists one step closer to understanding our universe's earliest moments.

Jaymie Matthews, associate professor of astronomy and astrophysics at UBC, said the discovery "tells us about the stars forming at the start of history, and at the start of our universe," and likens it to an "early chapter of the beginning of our [universe's] history."

Richer likens the stars to Cain and Abel: the offspring, but not the oldest stars themselves.

The importance of learning about these ancient white dwarfs, Richer added, "[is that] we learn how a very early generation of stars formed in the universe...[which is] very important for establishing how soon after the Big Bang stars started to form."

The major significance of this discovery is that these ancient stars show that the universe is older than previously thought.

Matthews explained that "we think about [the discovery of these old stars] in the same way we think about an Olympic athlete breaking a world record...it is a significant improvement to the previous ability in the field."

Mathews further emphasised that while Richer's work is currently being met with excitement, the true significance of the discovery will take time to fully unfold.

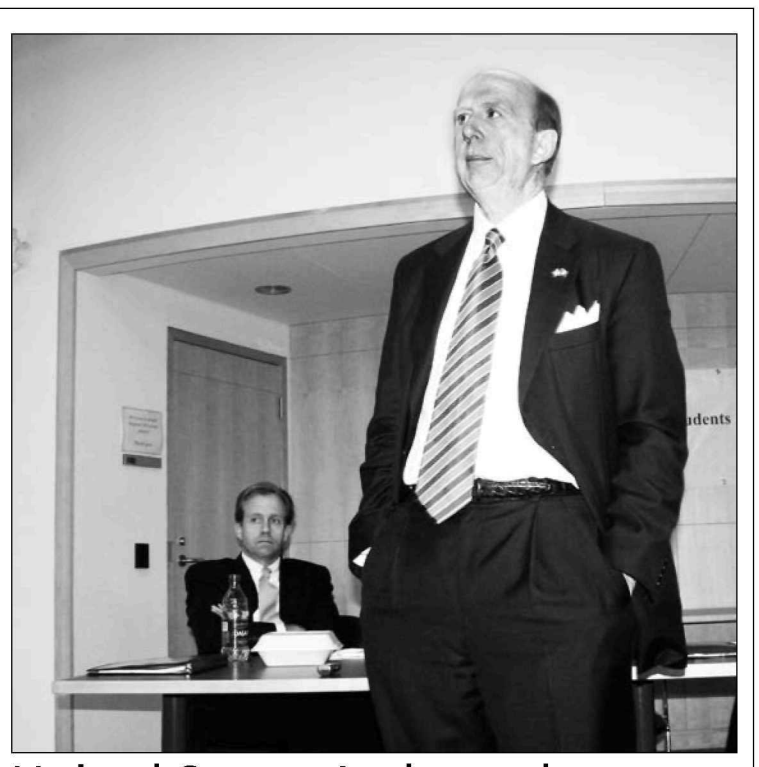
"The science to come out of this is still unfolding," said Matthews. He described Richer's findings as "part of a series of breakthroughs continuing to describe the history of our universe and our lives."

Richer also emphasised his finding's potential to improve our knowledge of the universe. Due to the proximity of the cluster to our planet, he believes it functions as a very accurate archive of our terrestrial and extra-terrestrial history.

He added that the importance of learning about these nearby star clusters is that they function as accurate gauges for other star clusters—information that will be verified and improved on by the future Hubble missions Richer's team is already planning.

"By talking to some very old neighbours, you learn the history of your neighbourhood," Richer said." [And] that's exactly what we are doing with these nearby star clusters."

Richer and his team will be putting in an application for a new expedition on the Hubble, in time for the January deadline.



United States Ambassador

US ambassador David Wilkins visited the Liu Centre Wednesday. The event was organised by the International Relations Student Association. Wilkins said he noticed a considerable improvement in Canada-US relations over the past two years. **LAURENCE BUTET-ROCH PHOTO**

NEWS BRIEFS

The Ubyssey better than J-Schools: *Georgia Straight*

In the September 21 *Georgia Straight* article "The Best of Vancouver," sub section "Best of Media, Arts and Culture—Critics' Choices" *the Ubyssey* was named the "best place to get a real education in journalism."

The Ubyssey beat out both the Langara and the UBC master of journalism programs.

The Ubyssey is pleased.

Reduce BC tuitions: citizens

The majority of BC residents believe tuition should be reduced, according to an Ipsos-Reid poll. The poll showed that 80 per cent of residents support cheaper tuition and 84 per cent believe the government should increase public funding to post-secondary institutions.

Students frustrated by noise

Frustration is mounting among students and professors with classes in the newly renovated Buchanan D block as noise produced from nearby construction crews is proving to be a nuisance. The Buchanan complex is undergoing phased renovations. Block D was finished in time for this September's classes while Block C is currently being worked on.

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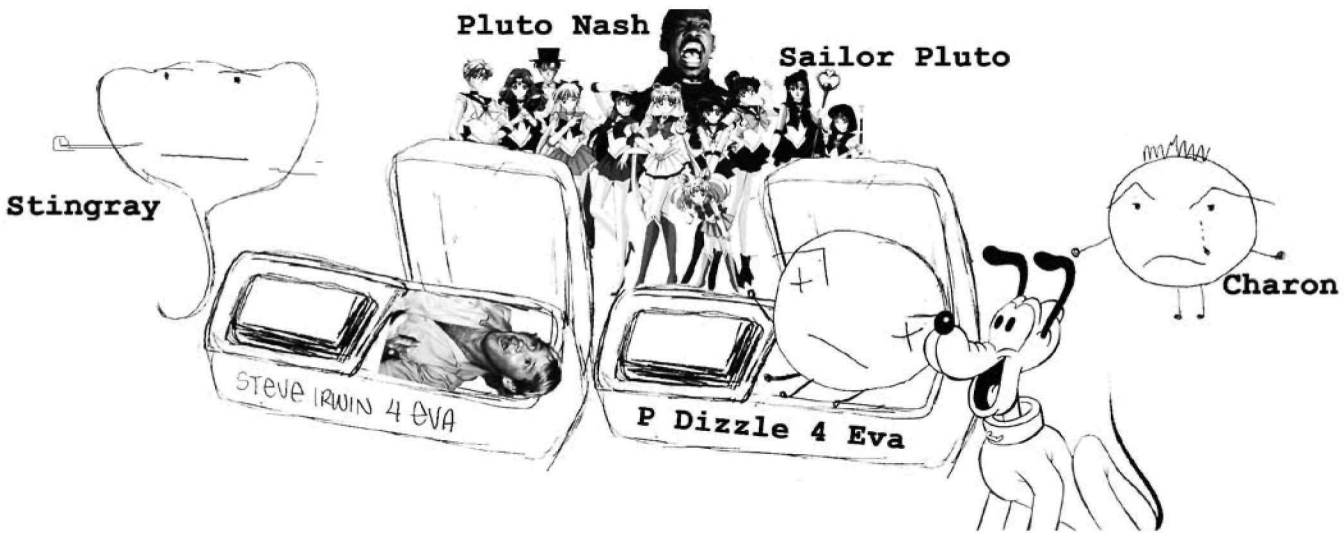


Putting the 'fun' back in funeral

Steve Irwin. Pluto. It's been an unusually tough month for those two. The former lanced through the heart by a usually innocuous stingray, the latter by a bunch of nerdy scientists who took issue with making a planet out of a small, planetary-sized rock.

Irwin was a testament to the human spirit. His fun loving ways, his peculiar fetish of crocodiles: he was an animal's man. But also a human's human.

Unfortunately, while everyone's been too distracted by Irwin's death and Pluto's deplaneting, nobody's been thinking about the poor stingrays that have suffered since Irwin's tragic demise. Over the past two weeks, reports of mutilated stingray corpses have been washing ashore all over Australia—most likely his fans' finding a way to avenge his death.

But even before they were slaughtered, the stingrays had a rough deal.

Imagine the scene for a minute: you're swimming along the seafloor, minding your own business when a big, obnoxious Australian tries to grapple you while yelling "Crikey" for the cameras. He slowly massages his big, slimy, oversized hands all over the stingray's rubbery body, caressing it like was his grandma's golden 80 birthday. Well, you'd be pretty pissed off too!

Let's face it: the stingray didn't have it out for Irwin from the get-go. It didn't plot how to best calculate its demise and lie in wait for the unsuspecting human to paddle by. It just defended its innocent life by trying to harm the predator it mistakenly thought was going to kill him. So seriously, why the stingray carnage? Let it go people. The man pried open alligators' mouths with his bare hands for giggles. Is anyone really surprised that one day the animals would fight back and win?

And don't even get us started with Pluto.

What would motivate astronomers to demote Pluto from planet to dwarf-planet status? There's no doubt that these scientists didn't take into account the other Plutos in existence.

Sailor Pluto, from the Sailor Moon series, while not an original member of the Sailor Moon team, will lose all meaning to her name—especially, being that she *is* the gate keeper of the fourth dimension. Watch your magna people. Without the planetary status she will be demoted to Dwarf Sailor Pluto. Go Dwarf-Sailor Pluto! That doesn't have the same ring to it. They've just kyboshed her forever in annals of anime.

What about the Greek god Pluto, fearsome ruler of the ancient Underworld? Poor guy, he must have been so lonely. It's bad enough that he had to occupy a dark, dank realm where the world casts off its dead. It wasn't enough that he had to share custody of his own wife with his mother-in-law six months out of the year. He finally gets a little credit when scientists name a planet after him (let's not forget it's the smallest, most distant one.) And then it gets taken away from him. The events of his life are enough to fill a Booker Prize-winning biography about a triumph over mediocrity.

Shall we go on? Pluto the Dog. While there has been debate as to whether Pluto the Dog was named before Pluto the Planet, the probability of that happening is unlikely. Pluto was named on February 18, 1930. Pluto the Dog was introduced sometime in 1930, but the exact date is unknown. If you calculate the odds, it's 48 days from January 1 to February 18. That means there's an 87 per cent chance that the planet was named first.

Furthermore, Pluto was already a little dopey, poorly functioning dog and now with the name change, he would consequently have to rename Pluto the Dog to Pluto the (less-functional) Dwarf-dog. That's a travesty. Walt must be rolling in his grave.

Let's not forgot about the *Adventures of Pluto Nash*. A classic Eddie Murphy flick, a sure-fire hit, which went straight to video. With a budget of $100 million, it was both a sure blockbuster, and classic in the making. In the end it made $4.5 million dollars ($95 million lost). Those Pluto naysayers must have had a head start on the changing perceptions of movies with Pluto in the title. We can only imagine what this has done to DVD sales.

This small group of vocal astronomers have forever tarnished and distorted the image of Pluto, and thereby its marketability. Do those scientists realise how much they've damaged its credibility? Did they even think about how much money the poor planet could make in a lawsuit?

Lastly, is anyone thinking about the children? One day little Timmy goes to school with his papier mache and coat hanger model, all nine planets dangling happily in their orbits. He gets an "A." Twelve months later, his little brother takes in the same model because their mother is sick of elementary school projects requiring adult supervision. How does the esteemed education system respond? It fails Andy, all because some scientist with nothing better to do decided that nine planets was too many.

Have some foresight people!

Streeters

Who do you miss more—the planet Pluto or Steve Irwin "the crocodile hunter"—and why?

-Jayne Zhang
Biology 3

"Pluto. Because I was a big fan of Sailor Moon, and Sailor Pluto was my favourite character."

-Adam Speirs
History 4

"Steve Irwin. He had more of an impact on my life."

-Jonathon L. Seagull
Medieval studies 3

"Pluto. I don't approve of animal hunting or harassment, even if it does make for good entertainment."

-James Vaughan
Materials Engineering 8

"Steve Irwin. Just because they redefined Pluto, it still exists. But Steve Irwin lost his life."

-Nadine Hewamualige
General Science 4

"The crocodile hunter. That man was a genius."

—Coordinated by Mary Leighton and Ivan Zhao

LETTERS

VOTE FOR PEANUT

by Ben Cohen

Lets be honest: with an amazing name like Peanut why should this cat not win. However, this article is actually more about destroying the reputation of the opposing candidates than explaining why Peanut "Bike Mechanic" Mayne should win.

I shall begin by degrading Mango "Bobby Fischer" Burkholder-Chalmers. I believe this name alone denotes why this feline should lose. Not only lose, but to be jeered at, maybe a rotten tomato or two thrown in its general direction to make sure. Lets look at the feline's nickname for starters: Bobby Fischer. For anyone that knows who that is, you are lame, and for everyone else, let my lame self enlighten you. Bobby Fischer, in short, is/was a chess player. Considered one of the greatest players of all time, he won the World Chess Championship in 1972.

After that, he actually stopped playing chess competitively for some time. Many people asked why; I believe it's because he was a wanker. Well, with quotes like these, I double dare you to disagree with me:

'I am clearly the best player in the world'

'I'm kind of a big deal, people know me'

'Chess is a war over the board.....if you take my queen I will f*& %$g kill you!' (Actual quotes may vary).

Now should someone, let alone a cat, who even remotely resembles this horrible mans persona, win. I say NO!

More proof, you say? Well, here it is. Mango, being the contestant's first name, is a thinly veiled cover-up for the cat's real disposition. Mango is quite clearly a little on the tanned side, one may go as far to say the cat is ginger, a little chestnutty, strawberry blond, or maybe even reminiscent of a carrot. Whatever your preference, the cat is clearly red. What, I hear you asking, does this have to do with why Mango should lose? I believe it to be quite clear. However, I shall, nonetheless, prove my point Socrates style, and answer your question with a question of my own. Are there any red heads in power? Do they actually win anything? The correct answer is no, or if it is yes, I am clearly a liar. To put it harshly, the cat is red, so its chances of winning are rather slim, bordering on none.

Now on to the next candidate, Muffin "I'm in China!" Wang. For starters, just reading this name makes me giggle a little bit, the cat is named after a muffin. How ridiculous is that, for anyone who watches Seinfeld, only the top of it is good anyway, who cares about the rest? (Please don't think about that metaphor)

Now don't even get me started on the cat's nickname, "I'm in China!" as it appears, the cat is quite clearly not in China. Unbeknown to the cat, it is Canada, and Canada is not China just as an Orange is not a Banana. The last thing you want is a delusional feline speaking entirely in Chinese to be in power. Next thing we know we will all be chanting Mao incessantly and UBC will become a purely authoritarian University. English 101 will be replaced with a compulsory sweatshop course and terror and all sorts of bad things shall reign alongside particularly good economic growth.

Well, there are some brief reasons as to why Peanut should win!

So basically, Vote for Peanut.

—Ben Cohen, an Australian Exchange student living at Totem who thought he would write in to the Ubyssey's rather ingenious cat competition.

Editors note: Muffin "I'm in China" Wang is actually in China. Though born in Canada, he was flown to his new home in China with his owner, last July.

Correction:
The Ubyssey Page Friday September 15, 2006
We stated that Kimveer Gill had unregistered firearms. His firearms were registred. *The Ubyssey* regrets this error.

T-Birds face tough test in Saskatchewan

Record: 1-1-0 (Fourth in Canada West)

Last week: UBC suffered its first loss of the year in a deflating 18-17 defeat to the University of Alberta Golden Bears in Edmonton. Early turnovers in the first quarter ended up being costly for the T-Birds, who managed to come back from 13 down to tie the game at 17 before losing on a last second punt-single by first-year Alberta punter Adam Fagomeni.

Who to watch: Fourth-year running back Chris Ciezki ran for 97 yards on 16 carries last week, continuing his strong start to the season. Second-year Braden Smith was the lone bright spot for UBC's receiving core on Saturday, collecting 111 yards on only five catches in the loss.

Coach's comment: "We need to be physical with their football team and definitely win the battle on specialty teams. We need to limit the run because they run the ball really well, and we need to put some points on the board."

—T-Birds coach Ted Goveia

Canada West games Week 4

UBC at Saskatchewan: (AM 730)	12:30 pst
Alberta at Manitoba:	12:00 pst
Simon Fraser at Regina	2:00 pst

OKER CHEN PHOTO

After a difficult loss in Edmonton last Saturday, the T-Birds will head to the prairies again in hopes of accomplishing something no UBC squad has done in over five years—win in Saskatoon.

"They got a good football team. We certainly need to play physical at their place," said head coach Ted Goveia. "Saskatchewan is always known for having a team that runs to the football and works hard on every play and we need to match their enthusiasm, and if we're able to do that and hang in the game then we've got a good chance."

The T-Birds will be trying to rebound after last Saturday's heartbreaking 18-17 defeat that saw them tie the game with less than four minutes left before losing on a punt-single with no time left on the clock.

"[The loss] is kind of like a hangover. You're hurting a little bit the day after and you start to feel a little bit better every day after that," added Goveia. "The first practice was kind of tough, and guys were still wondering what happened and how it kind of fell off the rails for us in the first quarter but I think they also know after looking at the game film that Alberta played a really good football game and we didn't. Were it the case that we played our best football game and we weren't able to beat Alberta, I think that'd be a little more discouraging."

Saskatchewan is coming off a 52-7 victory against Simon Fraser and have already established themselves as the team to beat in Canada West, going 3-0 thus far in climbing their way to #2 in the CIS Top Ten Poll.

Led by rookie quarterback Bret Thompson, the Huskies are first in the league in total offence, and will test a UBC defence which has been solid thus far in the young season, allowing only three touchdowns in two games. @

—Boris Korby

MATCHUP

	W-L	PF	PA	H	A
UBC	1-1	39	34	1-0	0-1
SASK	3-0	117	27	2-0	1-0

LEADERS

UBC PASSING

	CMP%	YDS	TD	INT
Blake Smelser	52.3	349	1	1

UBC RUSHING

	CAR	YDS	AVG	TD
Chris Ciezki	26	194	7.5	1

VS.

SASK PASSING

	CMP%	YDS	TD	INT
Bret Thompson	47.1	508	4	4

SASK RUSHING

	CAR	YDS	AVG	TD
Scott Stevens	59	405	6.9	5

Record: 3-0-0 (Tied for first in Canada West) #2 in CIS Top 10 Poll.

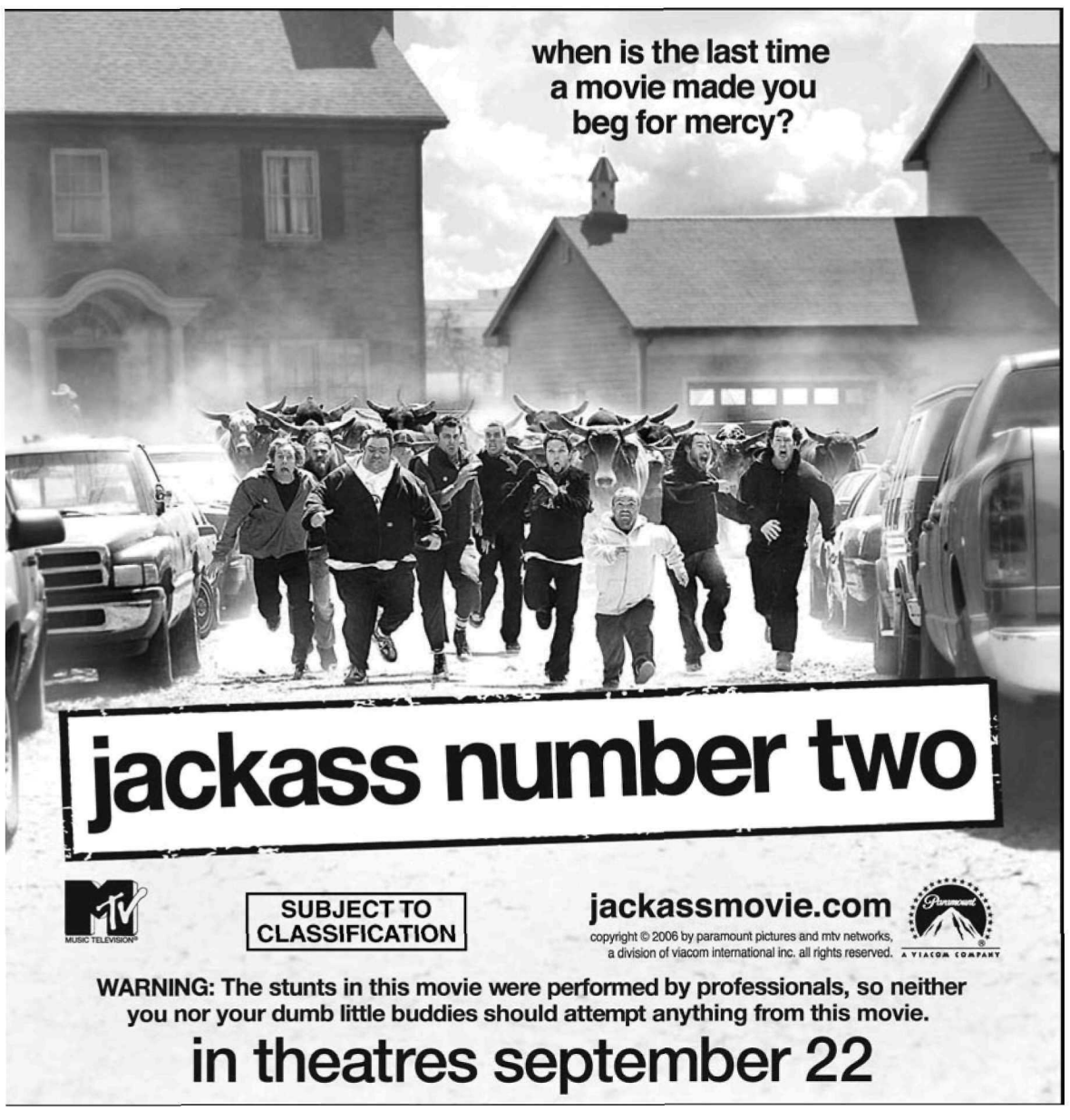
Last week: Saskatchewan is coming off a 52-7 thumping of Simon Fraser at Swangard Stadium in Burnaby. The Huskies dominated the game from the opening minutes, building up a 17-0 lead by the end of the first quarter before cruising to victory.

Who to watch: Saskatchewan has been putting points on the board at will this season. The offence has been highlighted by running back Scott Stevens, who has five touchdowns and has averaged 135 yards on the ground per game thus far.

Key Stats: Saskatchewan hasn't lost to UBC in Saskatoon since 2001.

The Huskies have outscored their opposition 117-27 in their first three games of the season. They lead the league in total offence, averaging 520 yards/game, and are second in total defence (324 yards/game against).

Canada West Standings:	W	L
Manitoba	**3**	**0**
Saskatchewan	**3**	**0**
Alberta	**2**	**1**
UBC	**1**	**1**
Calgary	0	3
Regina	0	3



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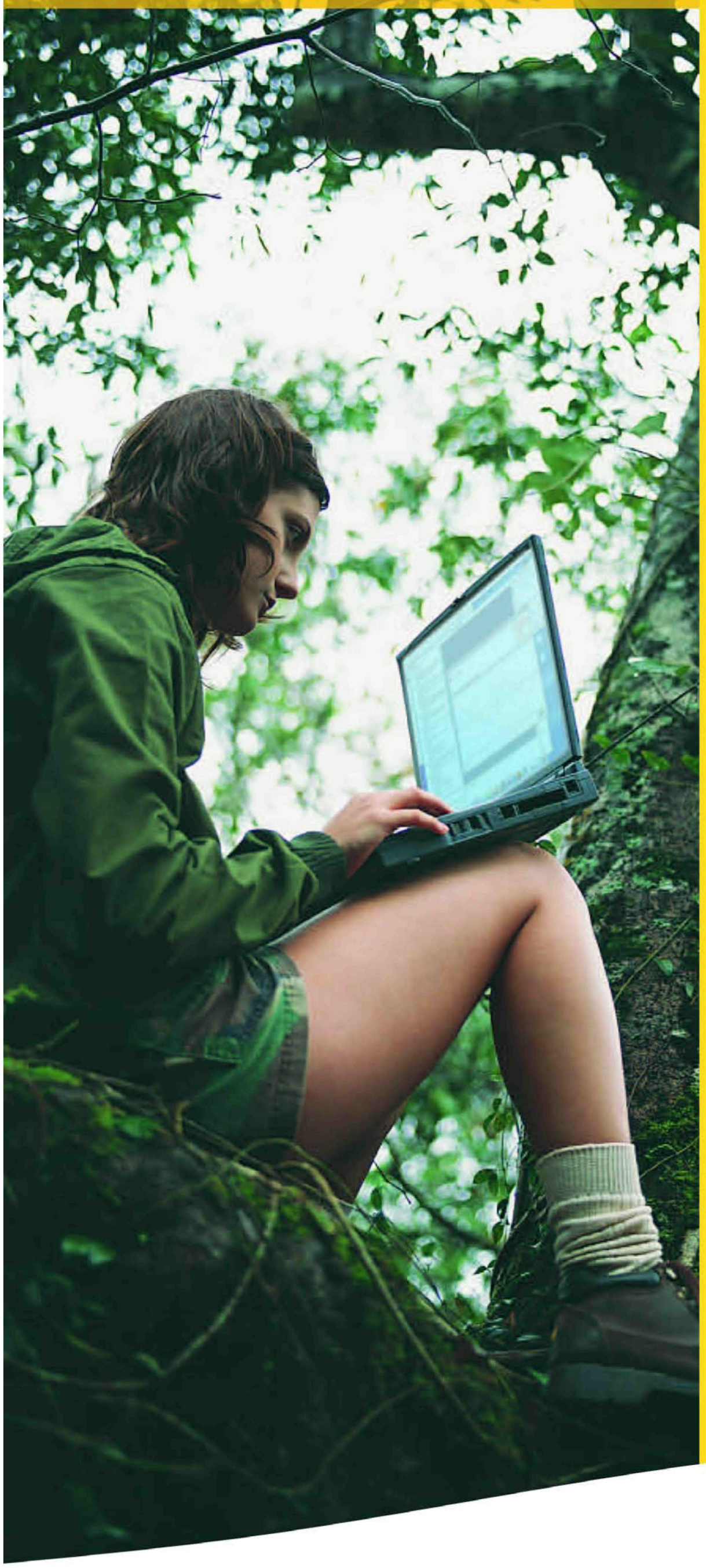

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