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Comedian

A. J. Jamal

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LIFE style

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Editor's note

You are holding before you the first issue of Life Style magazine. The magazine is a weekly publication of The Battalion and takes the place of Monday and Thursday's lifestyles sections.

As the frazzled editor of the magazine, I would like to point out that the magazine is written, designed and edited completely by Texas A&M students. I would appreciate any comments, criticisms, story ideas or praise you can contribute.

Battalion editorial offices are in 216 Reed McDonald, and I also can be reached at 845-3313.

Years ago, The Batt published a magazine called At Ease. The premise for Life Style is similar and will feature reviews of recorded music, live music, films, theater, art and books.

We also will spotlight local personalities and events in Bryan-College Station and surrounding areas.

I hope Life Style will be a magazine you will look forward to every Thursday to provide information for your weekend.

I hope you will read and enjoy the feature articles and identify with another person's life.

I hope the magazine doesn't fall out of The Batt when you take it out of the newsstand and lie on the sidewalk polluting our campus as many advertising inserts often do.

Well, with all my hopes in mind, welcome back for Spring 1991 and good luck.

— Kristin North

Josh Alan to play Sunday

Dallas guitarist Josh Alan is scheduled to perform a set at the Front Porch Cafe Sunday night. Alan's guitar work falls nothing short of incredible, and his technique is very original.

Alan's style draws heavily on traditional blues, but he spiffs things up with some slide-guitar and jazz. One minute he'll be strumming through jazz chords, then all of the sudden he's soloing way up high on the neck of the guitar. Next thing you know, he lays the slide across the strings and screeches through some bluesy riffs. All in the same song.

Alan's performance will likely include several covers, as well as some of his original material. He can tear through Jimi Hendrix's "Stone Free," and he does some nifty acoustic work on some Led Zeppelin metal. His solo work includes "Knocking Off," a nifty use of delay effects and rhythm pounding on the body and neck of the

guitar that give the song an appropriate title.

Other originals by Alan include "Thanksgiving at McDonald's in Time Square" and "Happy Hour." The first tune sketches characters Alan saw as a reporter in New York City, and the second reveals all the terrible situations about every bar and saloon musicians play in. But both songs show Alan's off-the-wall dark humor.

In addition to guitar playing, Alan has developed his style of humor through writing cartoon strips with his brother Drew Friedman. The two have a pair of books in print, as well as work in many magazines.

Josh Alan is an extremely talented and innovative guitarist. For a look and listen to some of the best guitar work College Station will probably see this semester, give Alan's show a try on Sunday night.



Bonfire of Vanities — read the book

By John Righter

For filmmakers, the hardest project to pull off is the adaptation. More difficult than the sequel, the translation from printed word to screen is a tenuous endeavor.

Brian De Palma ("Body Double," "The Untouchables") is the latest director (and producer) to try to resurrect a best seller. With "Bonfire of the Vanities," a shoddy, lifeless movie, De Palma widely misses the mark.

In fairness to De Palma, trying to coax a 700-page book into a two-hour time slot is very difficult, if not impossible. And of course, the usual flaws resulted.

Most distressing is the fact that De Palma lost all of the class friction that author Tom Wolfe so painstakingly developed. The premise of the novel is the two worlds of New York — the upper-class Manhattan and the lower-class, mostly minority, Bronx. It is at the center of this storm that Wolfe operated.

The flying atom that sets off the class war is Sherman McCoy (Tom Hanks), a Wall Street bonds broker and self-proclaimed "Master of the Universe." It is when Sherman and his mistress, Maria Ruskin (Melanie Griffith), take a wrong turn into the Bronx, "the jungle," that his world begins to tumble.

In escaping a suspect robbery attempt (the novel is more ambiguous during this sequence than the film), Sherman and Maria sideswipe a black teenager. Sherman wants to report the incident to the police, but is persuaded not to by Maria. The failure to report is a crucial error.

Bruce Willis portrays the drunken Peter Fallow, reporter for The City Light. In the novel, Fallow is British, but the change of nationality is only one of several distortions that ruin the role and importance of Fallow.

Fallow is fed the story of the hit and run by Albert Vogel, a lawyer who

works in cahoots with the Reverend Bacon. Bacon has a pivotal role as the minister and social activist with questionable ulterior motives.

In the film, Bacon is obviously corrupt, dropping the uncertainty of Wolfe's work, and subsequently, wasting the tension of his motives and his sincerity to the black community. With the controversies recently surrounding Yahweh Ben Yahweh and Al Sharpton, Bacon's overtness is unfortunate and an important role is lost.

Once the story of the hit and run breaks, Sherman becomes scapegoat and martyr. The district attorney's office views Sherman's incident and subsequent negligence as a means to appease their minority constituents and offers Sherman to the lions. This final display of self-centered action completes the circle of vanity, in which no character is appealing.

Interestingly, the role of Judge Kovitsky is changed with Morgan Free-

man playing a similar character in the film. The casting of a black judge in this role is the one positive alteration that De Palma and screenplay writer Michael Cristofer make from the novel.

Key book references to "master of the universe" and a thrown jar of mayonnaise are sloppy and insignificant on screen. Further, the pivotal roles of Assistant District Attorney Larry Kramer, and Sherman's lawyer, Thomas Killian, two of the funniest novel characters, are crudely distorted in Cristofer's script.

Overall, "Bonfire of the Vanities" is a disappointing film that fails to capture any of Wolfe's wry wit, class tension or historical sense. Bruce Willis is terrible as Fallow, while Hanks and Griffith are fairly solid.

As with most adaptations, the best choice is not to be lazy and to instead, read the book. Wolfe's "Bonfire" sizzles. De Palma's "Bonfire" is a wash.

Godfather

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than makes up for it on a personal level.

The first two films were basically a complete story of Michael Corleone's fall from innocence to ruthlessness. The third is a separate story, taking place 20 years after the last and documenting Michael's search for redemption.

The setting is 1979 and Michael Corleone (Al Pacino) has made good on the promise he made to his wife, Kay, in the first film. The Corleone family is no longer involved in illegal activities, bestowing its territories to the flashy Joey Zasa (Joe Mantegna). This is not to say that Michael has given up ambitions.

To redeem his family, he has set up a charity in his father's name that works with the Catholic Church. He

also attempts to help the Vatican with financial matters in return for control of one of the Vatican's biggest corporate investments.

Entering as Michael's personal watchdog and righthand man is his nephew, Vincent (Andy Garcia). Vincent is everything that Michael is trying to renounce: violent, proud and hot tempered. Complicating matters further is the love affair between Vincent and his first cousin, Mary (Sophia Coppola). Mary is, of course, Michael's daughter.

The film concludes with a family reunion in Sicily to attend the operatic debut of Anthony Corleone. In this scene is a clever reworking of the first film's most brilliant sequence. The climax, though powerful in context with the movie's theme, loses much of its

punch due to the limited acting ability of Sophia Coppola.

Coppola isn't as bad as most critics are making her out to be. It's merely that her small, crucial role demands a little more strength than she gives.

In fact, acting seems to be the one crucial element of the movie that was lacking. Winona Ryder, originally cast as Mary, could have transformed the film into the tragedy it was meant to be. Ryder appeared in three other Christmas movies, so viewers might have expected to see Edward Scissorhands as the Corleone gardener.

Also sorely missed is Robert Duvall as Tom Hagen, a character who added a lot of weight to the first two films. He is replaced

by George Hamilton (George Hamilton?!)

The best and most consistent performance is given by Andy Garcia, who is riveting as a two-bit thug who eventually becomes as calculating and ruthless as Michael Corleone once was.

To sum up, "Godfather III" is a fine film taken on its own merits. It concludes the Godfather trilogy with the same sense of epic tragedy that has marked all the Godfather films. However, it doesn't do this with an epic scope. Coppola was content to make a smaller picture that concentrates more on the characters. If the movie doesn't seem to live up to its predecessors, you have to remember what big shoes those are to fill.