

Tuesday, April 30, 1991

The Battalion

Landis pulls off hit with mob-movie parody 'Oscar'

By Julia Spencer
The Battalion

"Some films are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." (With apologies to Sir Francis Bacon.) Oscar is like a proffered tray full of tasty hors d'oeuvres: not very profound, but nevertheless a movie to be sampled without hesitation, and one sure to give viewers plenty of laughing gas to take home with them.

Director (or should I say chef?) John Landis has assembled a scrumptious array of talent for this ensemble effort, from old-time movie stars Yvonne de Carlo and Kirk Douglas and Italian actress Ornella Muti, to "Rocky Horror" veteran Tim Curry and big guy Sylvester Stallone, who manages to acquit himself rather well in this very clever and amusing farce.

They say that a genre or topic's popularity has come full circle when parodies and spoofs begin to appear. After last year's spate of gangster flicks gave us theaters full of gun-toting goombahs rat-tat-tatting in Dolby Stereo, Oscar's comic take on all the classic stock characters brought giggles and guffaws of recognition from the audience.

The fast and furious action takes place one morning at the home of Angelo "Snaps" Provolone (Stallone), a Prohibition-era mobster who has promised his dying father (Douglas) he will go straight. Instead of buying into the Vatican to gain respectability, like Michael "The Godfather" Corleone, he has chosen to become a banker, and trade

bootlegging for board meetings. Old habits die hard, however, and there is a great deal of humor in Snaps' efforts to re-train himself and his henchmen.

However, as is always the case in this kind of comedy, everything seems to happen at once. Although he has an important meeting at noon with the bankers, and has ordered not to be disturbed, his accountant Anthony (Vincent Spano) rousts him out of bed with the news that he has been skimming profits to the tune of \$50,000. Not only that, but he wants a raise, a permission to marry Snaps' daughter. To this already volatile mix, add two dispatious tailors, a gold-digging maid, a scholarly elocution teacher (Curry), a few identical black leather bags, a demanding wife, soft-hearted thugs, a couple of eager stool pigeons, some watchdogging detectives and a wilful daughter who will do anything to get out of the house, and you have irresistible comic chaos.

The brisk pacing and clever dialogue keep Oscar humming right along, leaving you no time to even glance at your watch. From the clips and previews I saw, I wasn't sure whether or not this film would work, but the infectious spirit of the movie prevailed, and all my doubts were quickly erased - or maybe I should say "rubbed out." That isn't to say that it's flawless; Stallone tries a wee bit too hard in some scenes, and the soundtrack wasn't quite in sync at times on the print I saw, but all in all, the cast works well together, and really seems to revel in the delightful campiness of it all. This movie is an offer you can't refuse. Capisce?

Students drop off items to aid local charities

By Yvonne Salce
The Battalion

If you're wondering what to do with that psychedelic orange and blue couch your mother handed down to you (the same couch she and your older brother used in college), and you think it's about time to invest in a new wardrobe, since the jeans you've been wearing could probably find their own way to campus; well, whatever you do, don't throw them away.

If you haven't grown too sentimental to the heirloom couch, there are several organizations in Bryan/College Station willing to take not just the couch, but clothes, toys, VCRs, electrical items and even unused air conditioner filters.

"It can be old or out of date. We will find a use for it," Sam George, division director of Goodwill Industries for B/CS, says.

Generally this time of the semester usually calls for spring cleaning or students moving out of apartments and dorms. Goodwill and the Twin City Mission in Bryan welcome students' usable furniture, clothes and just about anything else.

JoAn Sebesta, assistant executive director of the Twin City Mission, says this time of year is the best time for the mission. Student contributions are what carry the mission through the summer months, she says.

"We take almost anything, even if it's not in good condition," Sebesta says. "We would love to have furniture, mattresses and box springs and non-perishable food items."

The mission serves over 150 meals a day to the homeless.



RICHARD S. JAMES/The Battalion

Ronald Corley plays solitaire during one of the slow moments at his job as the Goodwill trailer attendant.

While the mission welcomes most items, there are certain items that cannot be used at Goodwill. Refrigerators, freezers and other large appliances are prohibited because of scrap metal and dumping regulations. They are also unable to accept mattresses and box springs and any food items.

In any event, Goodwill has received a large amount of good material in the past few days — the majority of its clients being students.

Ronald Corley, an attendant at the Goodwill center, says he has about 10 to 16 students daily.

Eighty percent of their donations are clothes, with the rest being household items, says Corley.

"A lot of people say, 'Well, this isn't very good.' But we'll take it and find a use for it," Corley says.

Among some of the items jammed into the donation trailer are record players, baseball bats, batons, vacuum cleaners, clocks, desks and toys.

With students cleaning out their living places, George predicts the trailer will fill up at least

twice a week. The donation site is open everyday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information call 822-9167.

The Twin City Mission will have a trailer in the Kroger parking lot, in College Station, on May 2. The trailer will be there everyday from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. for at least two weeks. Anyone interested in donating food should call the main office 822-7511.

Both organizations can provide receipts for income tax purposes upon request.

Reviewer sleeps through Alarm's latest, hits snooze on 'Raw'

By Rob Newberry
The Battalion

The Alarm
Raw
I.R.S.

I used to say the Alarm was my favorite band. *Declaration* introduced me to the rebellious rock'n'roll of the post-punk era, and I still think *Strength* is my favorite album of all time by any band. The live version of "Rescue Me" said exactly what I use to think about this band: they were the future of rock'n'roll.

I guess with such high expectations, it was inevitable that they would let me down. With *Raw*, not only do they fail to produce the energetic, emotional music they're capable of, they revel in the stale music of rock's past.

I'll give credit to the Stones, the Beatles, Bob Dylan, and all those others who made rock what it is today. But I'm not crying about the fact that most of these performers are washed up. Throughout *Raw*, the Alarm laments the state of modern music,

and tries to take a step backward toward those performers of yesterday.

"Moments in Time," the fourth track off the new disc, is so full of allusions to other music, it reads like a T.S. Eliot poem. Vocalist Mike Peters cries out lines that reminisce on so many oldies: from Buddy Holly to Dylan, Elvis Presley to John Lennon. The whole thing is set against a slow acoustic rhythm; it sounds like a lengthy lamentation sung at some funeral. "These moments in time live on forever in my mind," says Peters. I'm sorry he's still haunted by so many old tunes — wish he'd take a look forward instead.

If that song wasn't enough reveling in the past, the guys try to pull off a cover of Neil Young's "Rockin' in the Free World." Now, I've seen this band live, and I know they can tear through some covers. But not only is this song too young (no pun intended — it only came out in 1989), they don't even make it convincing. No special touches by the Alarm; for the first time, I think they actually

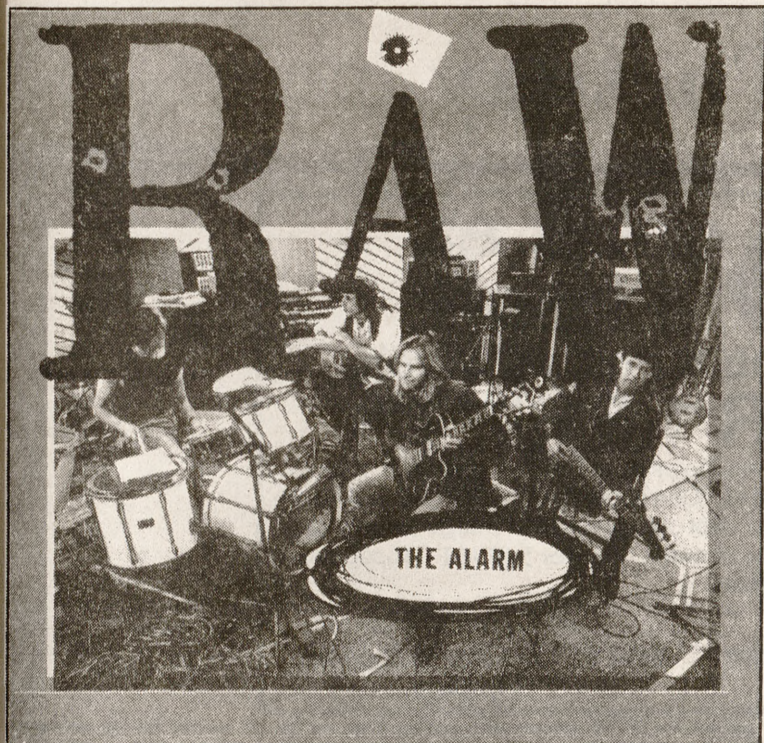
screwed up a song that was already good.

Strength is still a favorite album of mine for the same reason it always has been: Peters deals with relationships in such a desperate mood, I want to get all depressed and moan the blues with him. *Raw* is missing that desperation; instead, Peters sings about some love that is out-of-this-world (out of reach in my opinion) in "Hell or High Water." His demands of "someone I can depend on" on my favorite album is sacrificed on *Raw* for "I'm not looking for commitment...no everlasting promise" in "Let the River Run Its Course."

Raw may not be a total disappointment for more lenient fans than me. I've always liked to hear guitarist Dave Sharp perform the contributions he makes to the band with drummer Twist, and this new record has three Sharp/Twist numbers, the most that have ever appeared on a single record. Too bad I don't think any of these tunes are as good as *Declaration*'s "Tell Me" or *Eye of the Hurricane*'s "One Step Closer to Home."

The Alarm has always been a powerful live band, and they really tried to capture some of their musical energy on this disc. *Raw* was appropriately named, recorded live in the studio. The acoustic guitars stand out well and the harmonies sound a lot crisper, but the attempt at capturing their live energy just can't outweigh the fact that the songwriting isn't as good as it could be. I tried to find one bright spot on the album for me. I kind of like "Lead Me Through the Darkness" — the lyrics recall "Walk Forever By My Side" and the guitar riffs echo "Strength," both great numbers off that album. But this song is stuck right in the middle of so much disappointment that I hardly ever make it there.

The truth is, I've been a little disappointed in the Alarm for a while now. *Change* was evidence of a downhill trend, and last Christmas' release of a greatest hits disc didn't impress me. So now I don't say the Alarm is my favorite band. But I still expect great things from them, and *Raw* just isn't it.



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