

Thursday, July 20, 2000

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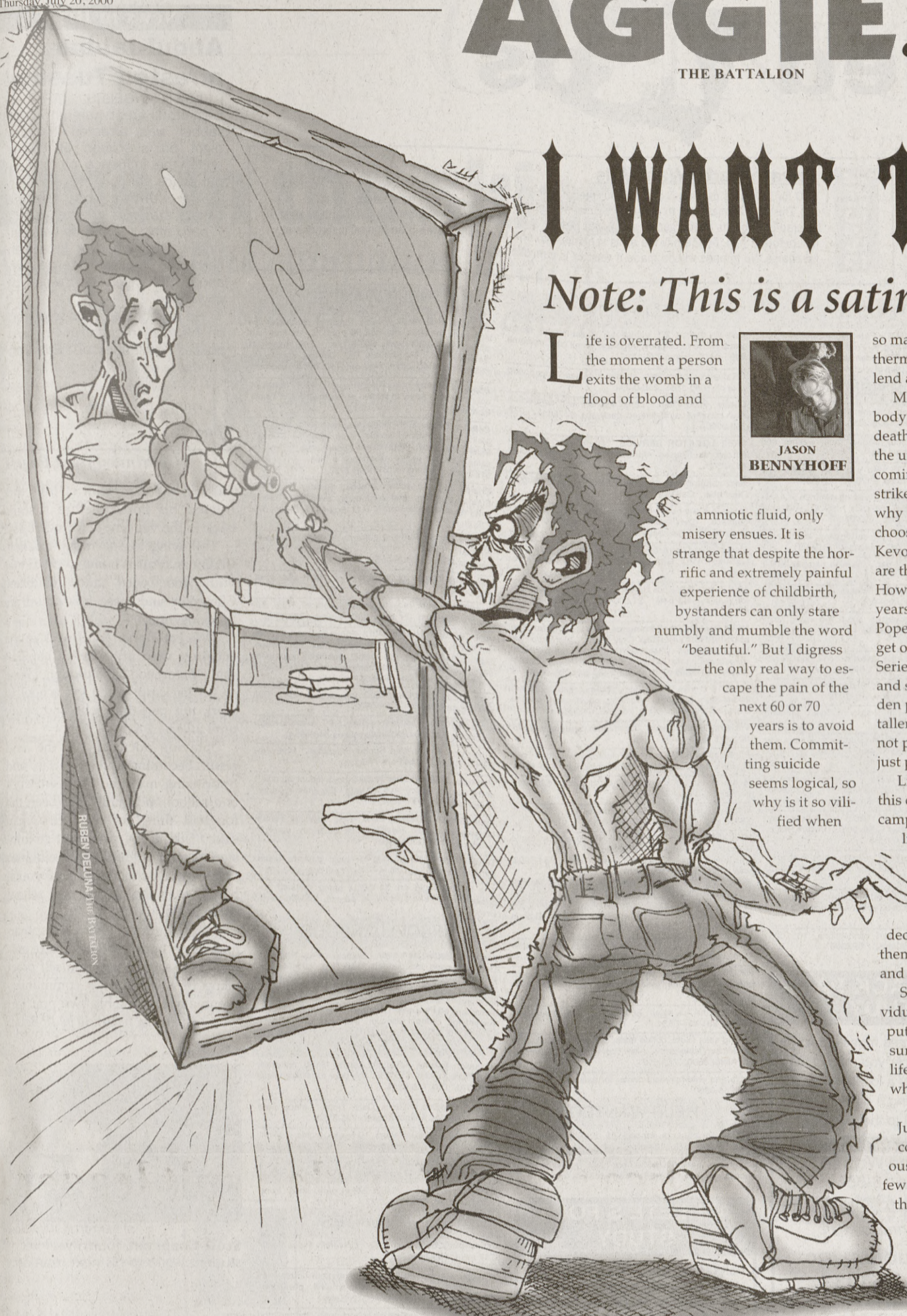
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## I WANT TO DIE

Note: This is a satirical column, do not kill yourself

Life is overrated. From the moment a person exits the womb in a flood of blood and



JASON BENNYHOFF

amniotic fluid, only misery ensues. It is strange that despite the horrific and extremely painful experience of childbirth, bystanders can only stare numbly and mumble the word "beautiful." But I digress — the only real way to escape the pain of the next 60 or 70 years is to avoid them. Committing suicide seems logical, so why is it so vilified when

so many want or need to end their lives? Furthermore, why does society punish those who lend a hand and help tie a friend's noose?

Man's fear of death is as inherent as his body odor, but far less pungent. The reason death is so feared, beyond the illogical fear of the unknown, is that people always know it is coming, but can never predict when it will strike. Given the unpredictable nature of death, why should society seek to injure those who choose to meet death head on, like Dr. Kevorkian or Gary Coleman? I know what you are thinking — Gary Coleman is not dead. However, "Different Strokes" has been dead for years. Coleman has not had a part since the Pope could walk without a limp and he will not get one until the Chicago Cubs win the World Series. I call upon Gary to end his pain now and set a powerful example for the downtrodden people of the world. He will never get any taller, and midgets are not cute when they are not playing children on television — they are just plain scary.

Like Gary Coleman, millions of people in this country are in pain. Thousands on this campus play golf in thunderstorms, daring the lightning to hit them. Hundreds more pretend to talk on their cell phones while making unprotected left turns. Why can we not accept their pain? Why do the government and society vilify their decision? Can we as a society not take pity on them and hand them a steel chair to stand on and a longer golf club?

Society imposes its view of life on the individual in many ways, regulating what one can put into one's body, where one can give pleasure to that body, and how one can end the life of that body. Society also punishes those who assist in other's deaths. Why?

Everyone needs a little help sometimes. Just as there are few people who can write a coherent column without the help of numerous copy editors and proofreaders, there are few people who have the nerve to look down the side of the Empire State Building and jump, especially now that there is barbed wire at the top of it. Some people just need a little nudge to plummet to their deaths. Should it be illegal to shove that person off a 100-story-high ledge? In no way do I advocate wholesale slaughter of hu-

man beings, but death is a growth industry, and like tobacco, it should be highly regulated.

Picture it: The government could provide death services, like Canadian health care. Hopefuls, or rather hopeless people, could apply for death permits and pay a fee to be gassed or punctured. If nothing else, this would make the phrase "Death Tax" literal. There could be package deals, two-for-ones, Christmas specials. What better way to show suffering loved ones you care than to kill them on Valentine's Day? This would generate millions of dollars in revenue for the government; suicides could lower taxes. Death just does not get any better than that.

Rather than stigmatizing suicidal people and forcing them into hopeless streams of 12-step programs, America could give its people what they really want and make money doing it. That is what the American Dream is all about.

The publishing industry could also benefit by helping the suicidal achieve their one final goal. Self-help books already make up a sizable portion of any bookstore, so why not add another topic for self-help writers to write about? Suicidal people need to know how to end their lives successfully. Every year an amazing number of people botch their own suicides. This happens for a variety of reasons, including lack of target practice, inadequate math and chemistry skills that cause people to underestimate the number of pills they must ingest, and many more. Experienced writers and researchers could bring the necessary knowledge to the suicidal. How many people really know how much Percoset to swallow to kill themselves? How does one kill oneself with the least damage to friends and family? These are the questions that self-help writers could answer with the helpful research of the medical community. These books, combined with government subsidization of suicide, could be an economic boon to the nation, spawning a whole new series of fads, like the Hula Hoop die.

Suicide lunch boxes and self-extermination kits are only the beginning. The end is a national respect for personal choice and a decline in population. The future is a nation filled only with people who are happy to be alive.

Jason Bennyhoff is a senior journalism major.

## REEL CRITIQUE

MOVIE REVIEWS

**What Lies Beneath**  
Starring Harrison Ford and Michelle Pfeiffer  
Directed by Robert Zemeckis  
Rated: PG-13

Michelle Pfeiffer is haunted by a ghost and her husband's past in the highly anticipated film *What Lies Beneath*.

Dr. Norman Spencer (Ford) and his beautiful wife Claire (Pfeiffer) have a presumably happy marriage

and lovely home until lights start flickering, steam begins rising out of nowhere and a face starts appearing in the bathtub. A ghost is trying to tell Claire something, but what? She starts investigating her supernatural episodes and makes an appointment with a psychiatrist in the process. After spying on her curious neighbors, Claire assumes the creepy man from next door murdered his wife and her ghost is causing the strange occurrences in the Spencer household. After realizing the man did not murder his wife, Claire asks herself: What else can I conjure up? How about the spirit of a real dead woman? After continued sightings, Claire wonders: What is this ghost that looks exactly like me trying to tell me?

Too bad Pfeiffer did not listen closer to what the ghost was trying to say. The spirit was telling her to get out of a bad movie production before it was too late or else face the bad review of a movie critic.

But a ghost is not the only scary element of this ridiculous film.

The film's storyline is outlandish and completely ridiculous. The movie reaches and reaches with sickening irony and forced coincidences until it ends up way out on a movie limb.

Ford's character is pathetic, but his acting abilities are not to blame. The story is so awful, a bad performance is almost in order. His past unfaithfulness as a husband loosely ties the film together, but there were not enough references to his past to make this element of the movie credible.

Humor takes away from the little suspense that is built up in the beginning of the movie. People do not watch suspenseful movies for a good laugh; they watch for a good scare. Zemeckis (*Forrest Gump*) must realize mixing humor with thrills does equal quality entertainment. Did Hollywood directors learn nothing from Wes Craven's painful-to-watch

*Scream* trilogy?  
*Beneath* does not know what it wants to be as a film. It jumps from comedy to thriller and falls short as a good movie in every way.

What lies beneath a film with great publicity and intriguing theatrical previews? In this case, a horrible movie. A ghostly word of warning: Stay away! (Grade: D-)  
— Dewey Badeaux

**Loser**  
Starring Jason Biggs, Mena Suvari and Greg Kinnear  
Directed by Amy Heckerling  
Rated: PG-13

Jason Biggs is the big nerd on campus in the surprisingly witty comedy *Loser*.

Paul Tanneck (*American Pie*'s Jason Biggs) is starting his college career at New York University and does not seem to fit in with his newly acquired dormmates or the big city.

His gullible yet good-natured attitude is mocked and abused until he meets fellow classmate Dora Diamond (Suvari, *American Beauty*). Dora falls on hard times trying to support herself through college on minimum-wage and last-resort jobs. To make matters worse for Dora, her boyfriend, the egotistical professor Alcot (Kinnear), keeps Dora around as his personal slave.

Paul and Dora help each other through the hardships of college, and together, the two shine. This movie is about having the courage to push back at people who put other people down.

Amy Heckerling (*Clueless*) has a real winner with *Loser*. The writing is smart, the jokes are clever and right on time, and the movie's soundtrack is

full of fun songs, including cool new tunes from the rock group Everclear.

Cameo appearances by big-name comedians, including Dan Akroyd and David Spade, add to the top-notch humor of this charming film.

The relationship between Suvari and Kinnear is slightly questionable, but all in all, this must-see movie is one of the best comedies of the summer. (Grade: A-)  
— Dewey Badeaux

**X-Men**  
Starring Hugh Jackman and Patrick Stewart  
Directed by Brian Singer  
Rated: PG-13

The long-awaited arrival of the movie adaptation of the most successful comic book series has brought moviegoers new reason to love the silver screen.

In the not-too-distant future a "war" is brewing between mutants (homosuperiors) and humans (homosapiens). The government is on the verge of establishing mutant registration, and the Brotherhood of Mutants, spearheaded by the

grudge-holding Magneto, is plotting to radiate the human population into mutantville.

With a string of A-list actors aboard this \$75 million extravaganza, including Ian McKellan (Magneto), Stewart (Pro-

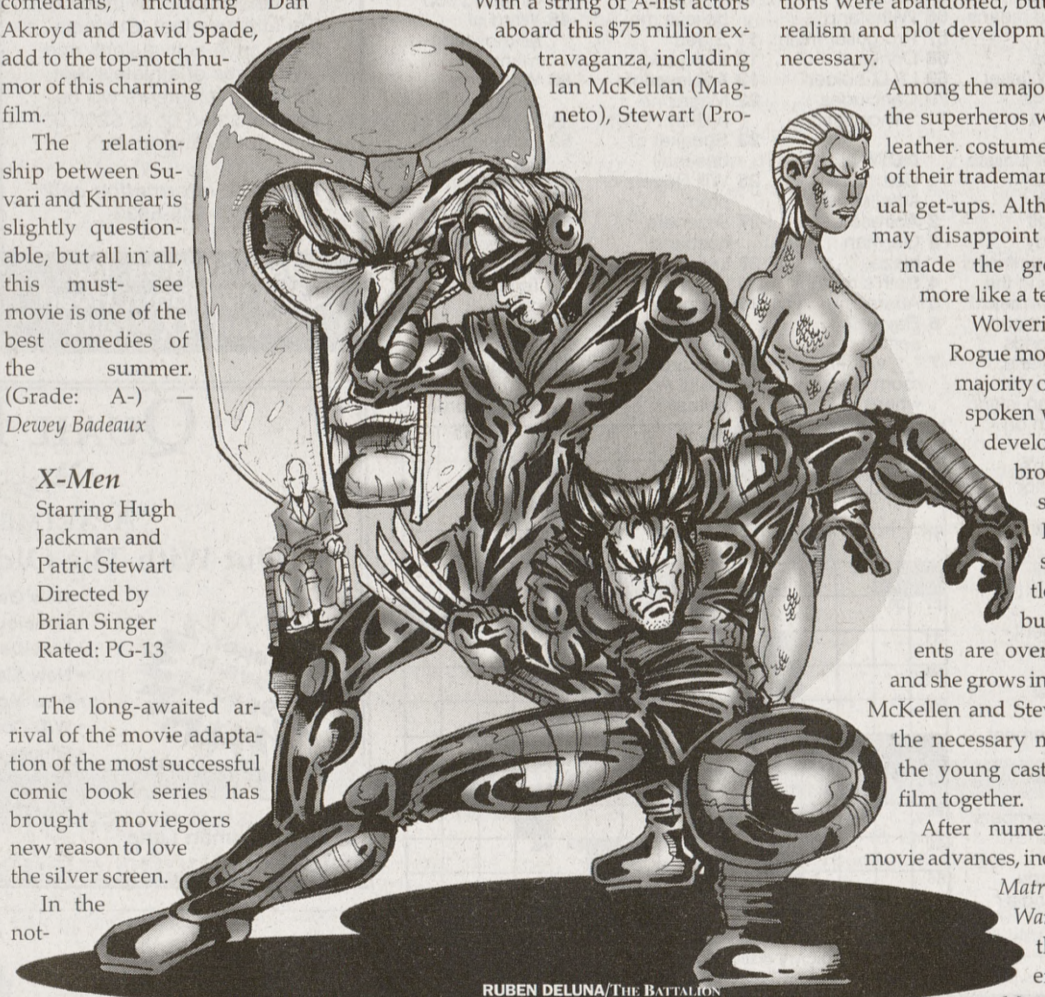
point of alienating the X-Men fan base. Singer was successful in the transition from pages to reel. Some traditions were abandoned, but to create realism and plot development it was necessary.

Among the major changes, the superheroes wore black leather costumes instead of their trademark individual get-ups. Although this may disappoint some, it made the group look more like a team.

Wolverine and Rogue monopolize a majority of the film's spoken words and develop a big brother-lil' sister bond. Paquin seems a little miscast, but her talents are overwhelming and she grows into her role. McKellan and Stewart bring the necessary maturity to the young cast and hold film together.

After numerous sci-fi movie advances, including *The Matrix* and *Star Wars Episode I*, the special effects in *X-Men* had to wow audiences. From the scene-stealing morphs of Mystique to the retractable talons of Wolverine, Singer and his team brought the 37-year-old fantasy to life.

All that lies ahead for this film is repeat viewing and the anticipation for its sequels. *X-Men* is this year's summer movie blockbuster. (Grade A-)  
— Jeff Kempf



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

A = instant classic B = a cut above C = average  
D = don't buy it F = burn in effigy