

Arts & Entertainment

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'Superbad,' 'Juno' incorporate new modes of comedy

Over the past few years, American comedy films have begun to incorporate a lot of new elements into the grand scheme of what is considered "a funny movie."

One of these comedic routes to success has become the mockumentary: reality television style humor used in a growing number of films such as "Juno" and "Superbad," most recently.

You know when you're telling a really funny story to your friend, and then you deliver the punch line only to be greeted by your buddy's blank stare and clear lack of amusement? The only hackneyed phrase you can defend yourself with is "You had to be there."

Well, films like "Superbad" and "Juno" were there, or at least capture the hilarity of what it was like to "be there." Improvisational acting, socially awkward scenarios and ridiculous character interactions are managing to capture that essence of the moment more and more.

In "Juno," Michael Cera's character, Paulie Bleeker, knocks up his longtime friend, the self-titled heroine of the movie.

At one point in the movie, Juno corners an intensely anxious Paulie Bleeker in the hallway of their common high school. Bleeker tries to attack Juno, telling her it's her fault that she's pregnant. His voice slowly trails off with a quiet laugh and awkward gulp. He stands there, clearly unsure of himself in every way. The scene shows back and forth the two characters, and Cera's self-conscious, pencil-like stance is intended to be the humor.

Cera's tongue-tied, self-conscious demeanor is further relied on in "Superbad," where the improvisational conversations between Cera's character Evan and actor Jonah Hill's character Seth about high school drama and penis jokes becomes the highlight of the film.

The dialogue for most of these interactions is unscripted and makes the conversations come off much more real and more serious in meaning.

In an interview with IGN.com, "Superbad" producer Judd Apatow said, "I like to let them surprise each other because I just think the acting's better if they always think there's a chance the other guy might do something unexpected. The idea that anything might happen."

This comedic technique has been utilized by Apatow before in "The 40-year Old Virgin" and "Knocked Up," two recent films that were received well at the box office.

This technique of mockumentary-style acting is not new. In 2003, FOX released the show "Arrested Development," which chronicled the misadventures of a dysfunctional, formerly wealthy family. The show incorporated the above elements of situational comedy but, for whatever reason, never really climbed in ratings.

It would appear now, however, that movie goers are ready and eagerly awaiting more of real life-style comedies. "Juno" has already brought in over \$100 million at the box office.

Expect to see much more from Apatow, Cera and others, as they pioneer in a new age of comedy film.

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Lecture to dismiss myths about Appalachian dialects

By Patrick Snyder
A&E Editor

Kirk Hazen classifies himself has a "middle-class, suburban Detroit kid."

That "kid" is in charge of a \$250,000 project to study Appalachian dialect in West Virginia and its surrounding areas.

Hazen, associate professor of linguistics and director of the West Virginia Dialect Project, will present a lecture today at 7 p.m. in Room 130 of Colson Hall.

"It [the lecture] will be on the facts and fictions of English in West Virginia," he said.

He will go in-depth on specific topics, including how Appalachian English demonstrates ignorance and stupidity.

"I'll include some jokes that are normally about West Virginia, then I'll talk a little bit about how the language works."

He will also disprove that English in Appalachia is one dialect.

From scholar to scholar, the definition of "Appalachia" changes. This is why Hazen designated his project to West Virginia, the region universally accepted as Appalachia.

There are four distinct regions identified by Hazen's studies and in his Dialect Project proposal.

The first is the Northern Panhandle, which is associated with Pittsburgh and the Upper Ohio Valley dialect.

The Eastern Panhandle takes on parts of the Upper Potomac and Shenandoah Valleys and Northern Virginia and Western Maryland.

Both the North Central and Southern regions of the state are identified and grouped individually.

Another point in Hazen's lecture will be the myth of the fading Appalachian English.

"It's changing because it's a living language. It's changing, but that doesn't mean there won't be an Appalachian English in the future, it just won't sound like the Appalachian English of 100 years ago."



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Kirk Hazen will discuss facts and fictions of English in West Virginia today at 7 p.m. in 130 Colson Hall.

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Manager Sam Lufti reveals Britney Spears' 'mental issues'

NEW YORK (AP) — Barbara Walters said she has been contacted by Britney Spears' manager and "very good friend," Sam Lufti, who said the pop singer has seen a psychiatrist.

Lufti told her the 26-year-old pop singer "is suffering from what he describes as mental issues which are treatable," Walters said Monday on ABC's "The View."

"He said that she has been to a psychiatrist and that she, I assume, is starting some kind of treatment," Walters, a co-host on the ABC daytime talk show, said.

"She has been having mood swings. She's been having trouble sleeping, and also, she is in touch with her mother - 'cause we had heard she wasn't - and her mother has been very supportive of whatever it is that Britney is going to do," Walters said.

Lufti has been staying with Spears constantly, "and he got in touch with us," Walters said. "I can't vouch for this; he seemed to be very knowledgeable, and he certainly was very nice."

Spears' attorney, Sorrell Trope, didn't immediately return a phone call seeking comment Monday. Spears' spokeswoman at Jive Records, Gina Orr, didn't immediately respond to an e-mail seeking comment.

Spears has spiraled downward since filing for divorce from Kevin Federline in November 2006. Her bizarre public antics include shaving her head bald, attacking a car with an umbrella and bringing along a paparazzo pal on trips to a Los Angeles courthouse in her custody case with Federline.

The singer was taken to a Los Angeles hospital by paramedics earlier this month after police were called to her home because of a dispute involving her sons Sean Preston, 2, and Jayden James, 1. She has lost custody and visitation rights with the boys.

Spears reportedly has had a rocky relationship with her mother, Lynne Spears, whose book about raising her family in the spotlight was put on indefinite hold last month after younger daughter, Jamie Lynn, 16, announced that she is pregnant.

Sculptor Adam Brandejs makes artistic statement with Genpet hoax



GENPETS.COM

This image, titled "Mounted," displays an exhibit of Adam Brandejs' packaged sculptures, otherwise known as bio-engineered Genpets. For more about Brandejs and his artwork, visit www.genpets.com.

By Brittany Franklin
A&E Writer

Are bio-engineered pets the wave of the future? That was the claim made by Genpets.com, a Web site dedicated to the explanation and marketing of the plastic-packaged pets, supposedly made from gene splicing between a certain type of mouse and jellyfish.

According to Genpets.com, the company "uses a process called Zygote Micro Injection, which is quickly becoming a favorable method to combine DNA or to insert certain proteins from different species."

Most notably, it was used in 1997 to splice mice with bioluminescent jellyfish and has since been used to create glowing rabbits, pigs, fish and monkeys. Since then, human DNA has been injected into rabbits and chimpanzees, spider DNA into sheep, and now, Genpets have arrived.

Although these claims may seem outrageous, it is hard to argue with the legitimacy of a Web site with photographs of the product, packed and

hanging on shelves, ready to be sold. It is especially convincing when accompanied by a 50-page catalog going into more detail about the process with instructions on how to become a retailer.

Too bad it was all an elaborate hoax.

"I saw the Genpet Web site when I was online looking at future business opportunities," said WVU sophomore Sean O'Keefe. "I came across the Web site and saw it. I didn't think it was possible, but it looked really legit. I got so bugged out."

Curious and slightly concerned about these new "pets," O'Keefe decided to e-mail PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), which

responded by saying that Genpet is, in fact, a completely falsified concept.

"The Genpets Web site is actually an artistic statement by Canadian sculptor Adam Brandejs, expressing his reservations about bioengineering. His Web site, www.brandejs.ca/portfolio/Genpets/What, explains in further detail.

The Genpets themselves are sculptures made of plastic, latex and other materials.

"We are happy to report that no animals are being harmed by Mr. Brandejs," said PETA Research Associate Julian Carr in her response.

This was an elaborate and well played out deception by Brandejs, a Toronto-based sculptor and programmer, one

that has obviously succeeded in fooling many into believing that Genpets are alive and for sale.

Brandejs reported the public's response on his Web site.

"While in the store window of Iodine Toronto, the shop owner began sleeping in the store as many nights, people would bang at the windows furiously. Some in protest of the small bio-genetically engineered creatures trapped in plastic, some wanting to wake them up or buy them. Hordes of teens wanting a bioengineered pet met confused, baffled or even shocked looks from parents."

Brandejs made the Genpets from a variety of materials, including several different kinds of plastics, Latex rubber and polyurethane foam. He also employed a makeup artist in their creation to make them look as real as possible.

Although they are not living, the limited number of Genpets are indeed for sale, going for around \$1,200 for the animatronics and \$800 for the non-moving variety.

In Brandejs's explanation for creating the Genpet product hoax, he asks one to "consider both sides of the issue and consider how we treat animals in farms and pet stores today. How does that relate?"

The Genpet sculptures have been featured in museums around the globe and are mentioned on the Web site for the Museum of Hoaxes in San Diego, Calif.

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