

Wednesday's Editorials, Columns & Letters

P.O. Drawer 1272 409 W. Hill Email: ads@brownfieldonline.com Phone: (806) 637-4535



"HEY, LOOK, EVERYBODY... WE AVOIDED THE FISCAL CLIFF!"

Paper 'n Ink... good un's and bad un's

By Lynn Brisendine
Last I wrote about the best of movies I have seen over the last few months. "Lincoln" and "Les Miserables" were excellent, at least in my opinion. A couple of others I took in during the last few months also entertained and I think should have been included in the awards presentations which are now ongoing.

"Skyfall," the newest James Bond flick, was fun. It kept me guessing along with the plot and saw 007 prevail over a truly bad guy.

"The Dark Knight Rises" was another couple of hours well spent. The special effects alone made it a thriller.

Some other motion pictures, though, weren't received all that well by critics or fans. These movies too receive recognition, albeit, unwelcomed.

The Razzies is a compilation of the worst films to be screened over the last year. I can't agree or disagree with any picture on this list, as I have seen none of them.

They include "Battleship," "The Oofieloves in Big Balloon Adventure" (that one I did not only not see but it is the first time I have heard the title), "That's My Boy," "A Thousand Words," "The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part II."

I suppose most of these titles were roundly panned when they entered theaters and I took the critics' word for it and didn't waste my money or my time on any of them.

I have a friend who questions any movie with a story that just can't be related to anything in the real world. He admits he "just doesn't get it." A lot of the movies on the Razzies list have that problem. This vampire battling werewolves just leaves me parroting my friend, "I just don't get it."

After trying to watch Adam Sandler in a few movies which have found their way to the movie channels has left me wondering just how anyone could find his stuff funny. Last year he made the Razzies with his dual role of playing a character and his sister. It was a bomb.

One movie which I didn't see make the dreadful list, which I caught a few minutes of one night last week, was the modern reincarnation of the Three Stooges. Growing up in the '50s and '60s, the Stooges were staple fare in reruns on many television channels. I am afraid that one of my "faults" is a love of good slapstick comedy. And the Stooges were some of the best.

This latest attempt at bringing back the trio's humor fell completely flat with this writer. I have to admit I only watched a few minutes of this rot when I decided something else had to be better.

In my history of going to movies, I have only

walked out of a showing early a few times. One of those included about 30 minutes of "Rosemary's Baby." It was not just a horror movie, but in my books, a horrible movie.

I suppose everyone remembers seeing movies that were magnificent. My list would be long. The first time I saw "Doctor Zhivago" I was entranced. Being a baby boomer, any of the 007 movies starring Sean Connery are right at the top. And of course the first Superman movie was an enjoyable return to comic books at the barber shop. At the same time this movie was being aired, another came along which took my breath. "The Raiders of the Lost Ark" began with fast action and didn't slow down until the credits ran.

I know Superman doesn't exactly pass the "I just don't get it" reality philosophy, but like much in life, exceptions happen.

Some other movies which hit the entertainment max for me include "Jaws," "Jurassic Park," almost any movie starring John Wayne, "Forrest Gump," "Saving Private Ryan," "Moulin Rouge," "Chicago," the last three Batman movies, and I am confident the list could fill this column.

I have also been in audiences which sat through some pretty rotten stuff. "The Lords of Flatbush" continues to be a movie that offered much but was truly awful.

Awful would be my description of any of the gore and most of the horror movies. If I am uncomfortable while trying to watch something, then I made myself a rule long ago to just skip all of that junk.

It is easy to spot these movies by watching the preview trailers trying to lure people into the dark to watch the mayhem. I look at that junk, turn to Linda, and say, "That one looks like a good one to miss."

I realize a lot of people like to see actors meet terrible endings and some even root for the monsters being shown, but not this guy. I go to a movie for one thing and that is to be entertained and to enjoy the story, the special effects and the experience.

Remembering the Three Stooges had me recalling a movie made around my senior year in High School. It was the last movie the comic trio appeared in, at least that I can recall. I forgot to list it above as a favorite. But even almost 50 years later, I can see a rerun of this film and have a great laugh. "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World" had a great cast of some truly funny men and women.

Movies are a part of our lives, all of our lives. I hope next award season I get to say, "yes, I saw that movie and it was great."

State Capital Highlights

Compiled by Ed Sterling, Texas Press Association



140-day legislative session begins

AUSTIN — The 83rd session of the Texas Legislature was called to order in the House and Senate on Jan. 8.

State Rep. Joe Straus, R-San Antonio, was elected speaker of the House, setting in motion his third consecutive term as leader of the chamber and his fifth two-year term as a state representative. State Rep. John Zerwas, R-Simonton, nominated Straus, and was followed with seconding speeches given by Reps. Jason Isaac, R-Dripping Springs; Rene Oliveira, D-Brownsville; Patricia Harless, R-Spring; Senfronia Thompson, D-Houston, and John Otto, R-Dayton.

After the vote, Straus was administered the oath of office by Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Wallace Jefferson, and then he spoke. Straus acknowledged the change in composition of the body, calling it "the largest class of new members in 40 years." Forty-three of the 150 members of the House are freshmen, while 96 are Republicans and 54 are Democrats.

"Texas does not face a fiscal cliff, but we do face a demographic cliff," Straus said. "Our rapid growth requires a steadfast commitment to the core responsibilities of government, such as a quality education, a reliable water supply, a healthy transportation system, and an honest state budget." About education, Straus said, "Our priorities should begin where our future does: in public education. More than 5 million children are enrolled in our public schools, which is more than the total population of 29 states. More than three million of them are deemed economically disadvantaged, and almost one million of them speak limited English. The education of all our students will determine whether

Texas is a land of prosperity or lost opportunities."

Last session, the Legislature cut more than \$5 billion from the education budget.

Meanwhile, in the East Wing of the Capitol, the Senate, presided over by Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst, convened. Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, D-San Antonio, was elected president pro tempore, chosen by her peers to step in and preside whenever the lieutenant governor is away. She served Texas as a House member from 1990 to 1999 and has been a member of the Senate since 1999.

Gov. Rick Perry addressed the body, focusing his comments on fiscal conservatism with a reminder that the Legislature pulled the state out of a multi-billion-dollar deficit last session.

"We chose the responsible path, the fiscally conservative path, and that path has led us here today," Perry said. "We sat down, separated our wants from our needs, prioritized, and tightened our belts, wherever necessary, and wherever possible. Far from the catastrophe many predicted for us at the time, that approach helped our economy improve more quickly, and more profoundly, than many had expected."

Then Perry cautioned the Senate not to look at the state's new, healthier, revenue estimate and be tempted to spend freely.

Combs estimates revenue
Here's what Gov. Perry was cautioning about, and what lawmakers are looking to as the potential fix for a lot of problems.

Texas Comptroller Susan Combs on Jan. 7 released the state's biennial revenue estimate, projecting \$101.4 billion available for general-purpose spending during the state's 2014-15 fiscal biennium.

"Texas experienced a very strong rebound from a severe recession," Combs said in pre-

pared remarks.

"The state's robust economic recovery led to better-than-expected revenue collections in major taxes such as the sales tax, oil and natural gas production taxes and motor vehicle sales taxes. The outlook for both the economy and state revenue is for continuing expansion as the fast-growth of the economic recovery gives way to moderate, sustained growth."

Combs said about \$3.6 billion would be set aside for future transfers to the \$8 billion Rainy Day Fund.

The Texas economy, in inflation-adjusted terms, is projected to increase by 3.4 percent in fiscal 2013, another 3.4 percent in fiscal 2014 and 3.9 percent in fiscal 2015. The state's unemployment rate, which reached 8.2 percent during the recession, is expected to continue slowly dropping and average 6 percent during 2015, Combs said.

Bills address water issues

State Rep. Allan Ritter, R-Nederland, chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, on Jan. 10 filed H.B. 4 and H.B. 11, legislation "designed to help ensure Texas will meet its future water needs," he said. To pay for what the bills propose, "I would make a one-time allocation of \$2 billion from the state's Economic Stabilization Fund, often referred to as the Rainy Day Fund, to capitalize a new, dedicated revolving fund for use in financing water projects in the State Water Plan," Ritter said.

"It is vital for the future of Texas that a dedicated source of revenue be established for funding the State Water Plan," Ritter added. "Our economy depends on it, our communities depend on it, and ultimately, our daily lives depend on it."



Thinking in Type...

By Brian Brisendine

The new year already is shaping up as one of significant change for the most important aspect of our community -- the Brownfield school system.

The search is on for a new superintendent to lead the district following the coming retirement of Jerry Jones.

A firm with knowledge and experience has been contracted to lead the hunt and I'm confident they will present qualified applicants for our school board's consideration.

It is the most important decision they will make as members of that board.

Whoever is chosen will have big shoes to fill.

Mr. Jones is a friend and mentor whose tenure, in my view, has been a success.

Under his leadership, the facilities of BISD -- buildings and offices, courts and fields -- are in their best shape in the district's long history.

Students, faculty and staff should appreciate the school houses and ball fields they use every day and understand that they rival and often outmatch the offerings of other districts.

Likewise, the residents of Brownfield should take pride in the appearance, quality and functionality of our educational buildings and athletic facilities.

Just as importantly, the district's finances are strong despite repeated cuts to funding from the state and federal government.

BISD takes care of its employees with competitive pay and generous stipends.

BISD supports its students with the best technologies available.

On top of that, BISD has a healthy fund balance, to the credit of Mr. Jones and an attentive school board.

I hope his replacement is as community minded and motivated.

Another big change thrust upon the district is an unexpected vacancy in the BHS Principal's office.

Health and personal issues were cited in the mid-year departure of former Principal Jerry Lawrence. I hope all is well with him and his family.

But I think his resignation must be seen as an opportunity for the BISD school board to make a much-needed policy change.

Whatever his strengths were, he

did in my opinion have one glaring weakness in performing his duty on a daily basis and that was simply that he did not reside in Brownfield.

It is an unfortunate truth that many employees of BISD don't live within the district's boundaries.

I think that needs to change, most specifically within the ranks of campus administrators.

I believe strongly in the positive influence of civic duty and community spirit. If we're proud of where we live, we'll work harder to make it a better place.

We'll join a club. We'll volunteer. It's a work ethic that needs to be instilled in our children.

But it's a lesson that loses veracity when our kids see their educators put this community in their rearview mirror at the end of each day.

I'm married to a dedicated teacher and I couldn't begin to count the number of times her students, present and past, run up for a hug at the grocery store, at local restaurants, at festivals in the park.

Those embraces are brief, but they are by no means trivial.

Almost as often, a parent will approach with a concern about a recent grade or a question about an

upcoming event.

I see these moments, however impromptu they may be, as invaluable interactions that strengthen the bond between an educator and her pupils and their families -- all critical pieces of a quality education.

It's no leap to deduce that educators and administrators who live elsewhere don't make those same connections, to the detriment of all involved.

Fiscally speaking, the trend troubles me as a taxpayer.

School administrators are well paid and more than deserving of that compensation.

But the very tax base that supports those salaries suffers when they cash their paycheck in a Lubbock bank, pay their taxes on Lubbock property, buy their gas and groceries at Lubbock stores.

I hope our school board, who all live and work in Brownfield by the way, will take that into consideration with all future administrative hires.

They work hard in a noble profession.

They deserve Brownfield's support.

Brownfield deserves theirs.

Letter to the Editor

P.O. Box 1272 Brownfield, Texas 79316
Sign and include address and phone number...
You may also send your letter via the Internet.
Send it to
publisher@brownfieldonline.com

The News requests that letters be concise and reserves the right to edit for libelous content or inappropriate language and space. We will edit a letter to conform with the standards we use in publishing a responsible community newspaper.

Thanks for reading the News.
Call 637-4535
Subscribe today...