

Northstar Café merits a visit

BY ALISON GILBERT, '11

The first step into Northstar Café brings a rush of warm air and the scent of fresh herbs. Northstar is a modern, American-style restaurant with an organic and healthy spin. With locations in both Clintonville and the Short North, the prices are moderate and a reservation is not needed.

Ordering takes place at a register in the front of the building, and the restaurant has a first-come, first-served policy when it comes to seating. Once seated, appetizers are served within five to 10 minutes. A small, numbered card allows waiters to locate tables and deliver food. The servers are always nearby and willing to help; however, they do not accept tips.

Though Northstar offers a limited menu, the dishes are creative and well-executed. The restaurant offers a variety of burritos, salads and sandwiches, all of which have complex and sophisticated flavors and are made with the highest quality, organic ingredients on the market. Entrées range from \$3.50 to \$11. There is a soda fountain, but drinks can be custom made from fresh juices, house-brewed ginger ale or smoothies. Appetizers change seasonally.

One offering on the appetizer menu is the grilled artichoke, which comes with a dipping sauce on the side. The artichoke has a smoky, earthy flavor that is complemented by the lemony dip.

For the main course, the veggie burger and tortilla chips may sound like an average meal, but it is far from ordinary. The veggie burger is made from beets, black beans and brown rice, but its flavor and texture are almost identical to a beef hamburger. The lettuce, tomato and onion that top the burger are fresh and crisp, and the accompanying homemade tortilla chips are crunchy and have the perfect amount of salt. They are complemented with a spicy salsa that contains tomato, onion, peppers and cilantro. Picky eaters may want to stick to the excellent flatbread pizzas. Portions are filling and worth the money, and while the presentation is not fancy, it is not sloppy by any means. The food is arranged tastefully on the plate; everything has a classic feel and it is not overdone.

This earthy-chic café is perfect for high school students because it is fun, funky and also affordable. It would also be appropriate for the whole family, with a location near UA and a variety of creative food offerings. Northstar Café is the place to go for excellent food and outstanding service. It is the perfect holiday destination for those looking for somewhere to go with friends or family because of its affordable food and unbeatable flavor. ♦

REVIEW

RESTAURANT: Northstar Café

LOCATION: 951 N. High St.

CUISINE: New American

RATING: ★★★★★ (out of 4)

Caffé DaVinci serves up refreshing change to standard lunchtime fare

BY MIMI BAIR, '12

Speaking from experience, most restaurants near UAHS tend to be part of vast restaurant chains, serving reheated meals to students quickly and with as little cost as possible.

Caffé DaVinci, an Italian restaurant located snugly next to Caribou Coffee on Tremont Road, is a breath of fresh air.

The DaVinci name has long been associated with success in UA. Before the Caffé, DaVinci's Ristorante on Reed Road served customers for 28 years before it closed to make way for a mall. Caffé DaVinci continues the tradition with a smaller space but just as much love. The Caffé is run by the ristorante founder's daughter, Tina Elsea, and her husband, Kim.

Inside the sandstone-colored walls of the Caffé, the atmosphere is upscale without being uptight. The design is reminiscent of a chic bistro: casual, friendly and trendy. Customers range from high school seniors to senior citizens and everyone in between. Not only is the Caffé unique in terms of its clientele, but the ordering system is also uncommon. Instead of the customary practice of ordering at the table, DaVinci provides a modified self-service atmosphere. Guests first order their meals at a counter, pay the bill and receive a number and drinking glass. From there, customers are free to select a table where the number is placed, pick out bread and olive oil from a tray, and fill their glass. Once the dish is prepared in the back, a server delivers it to the table. From here, servers flit around to clear plates or provide second helpings, but the service is sporadic.

The dishes are brought promptly and are piping hot. The spaghetti and meat sauce appears to lack sophistication, but to say the taste is flavorful would be an understatement. The pasta is warm, thick, fresh and chewy, containing none of the rigidity of store-bought boxed spaghetti. The sauce provides a perfect complement with its rich texture and several spices, as well as the tender bits of meat that offset the subtlety of the noodles.

The only thing that could possibly improve the meal was the appearance of a cool, refreshing cup of chocolate gelato. The cup overflows with heaping portions of the airy concoction and a smooth milk chocolate flavor.

Despite the streamlined ordering process, the Caffé may not be fast enough to serve the UAHS lunch crowd at large, but Caffé DaVinci is a well-kept secret that deserves to be explored. ♦

REVIEW

RESTAURANT: Caffé DaVinci

LOCATION: 3080 Tremont Rd.

CUISINE: Italian

RATING: ★★★★★ (out of 4)

Madagascar 2 amuses, though it breaks no new ground

BY PRACHI SINGH, '12

In the dark theater, the screen is illuminated by a large tree in the middle of the plains of Africa. Suddenly, a pulsing beat is heard and the tapping feet of several animals are seen. This is followed by the bobbing neck of a giraffe and the shaking tails of a hippopotamus, lion, and zebra. As jumping lemurs cheer, the four animals turn around and sing their own rendition of Reel 2 Real's hit song "I Like to Move It." Thus the audience is reintroduced to Alex the lion (Ben Stiller), Marty the zebra (Chris Rock), Gloria the hippo (Jada Pinkett Smith) and Melman the giraffe (David Schwimmer), the main characters of *Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa*.

Sequel to the popular DreamWorks Animation movie *Madagascar*, *Madagascar 2* is generally amusing for all ages, although the plot feels unoriginal and repetitive at times.

Directed by Eric Darnell and Tom McGrath, the 90-minute plot follows Alex, Marty, Gloria and Melman as their plane to New York crashes somewhere in continental Africa. Along for the ride are King Julien (Sacha Baron Cohen), Maurice (Cedric

REVIEW



MOVIE: *Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa*
STUDIO: DreamWorks
RELEASE DATE: Nov. 26
RATING: ★★★ (out of 4)

the Entertainer) and the four James Bond-esque penguins. After crash-landing, the penguins stay behind to try and mend the plane. Alex and the others stumble upon an idyllic watering hole and meet others of their kind. The four characters then separate as they get to know their own species better.

As a result, the movie follows several different storylines, some more interesting than others. Alex was separated from his father, Zuba (the late Bernie Mac), and upon finding his family again, must become the alpha lion of the pride. The storylines of the supporting characters, such as King Julien's effort to rule everyone in Africa or the penguins' attempts at rebuilding the crashed airplane, are far more engaging.

Despite some of the mundane storylines, the characters and themes are better developed in this film than in the last. Marty, upon discovering that every other zebra in Africa is exactly like him, struggles to find something unique about himself. Melman deals with two heavy burdens: his inevitable death and his inter-species love for Gloria.

To contrast the few profound moments in the movie, the writers include a healthy dose of comedy. Most notably are the slightly psychotic penguins, who provide humor from beginning to the end.

Although *Madagascar 2* is engaging, it is nothing groundbreaking. Most of the jokes will garner at least a smile, but the themes and elements in the movie have already been explored in other animated films. Overall, Alex the lion sums the movie up best when he says, "It's like déjà vu. Like I've been here before." ♦

Four Christmases lacks humor

BY MARISA PATWA, '12

The success of this year's hit holiday movie, *Four Christmases*, was capitalized when the movie premiered Nov. 26 and banked an astounding \$18.2 million in ticket sales. However, the movie's success is likely in response to its holiday theme rather than the merits of the movie itself.

The movie stars Reese Witherspoon and Vince Vaughn as Brad and Kate, a happy couple who do not want to have kids or get married. It is clear that by the end of the 88-minute long feature, they will be married and pregnant and happy because of it.

The plot revolves around Brad and Kate's tradition of ditching their families every year for Christmas,

instead traveling to an exotic location of their choice. But this time fog hits, making it impossible for them to fly out. A TV crew at the airport interviews them about their failed holiday plans, their families see the news segment, and Brad and Kate are stuck with four Christmases in one day.

Directed by Seth Gordon, the PG-13 movie is packed with a respectable cast of supporting actors, including Robert Duvall, Sissy Spacek, Jon Voight, Tim McGraw, and Kristin Chenoweth. As a group, they portray Brad and Kate's kooky family members, who create turmoil and stir up some hidden emotions between Brad and Kate while on their corny Christmas adventure.

Although Vaughn and Witherspoon are talented, they lack chemistry in this unfunny comedy. Vaughn seems to play

REVIEW



MOVIE: *Four Christmases*
STUDIO: New Line Cinema
RELEASE DATE: Nov. 26
RATING: ★★ (out of 4)

the same character he has played in several other movies, such as last year's similar holiday failure *Fred Claus*: the doughy, lovable tough guy who seems to babble on in never-ending circles. Witherspoon, who had a spot-on portrayal of June Carter in *Walk the Line*, seems to have forgotten her artistic integrity in this

unfortunate production.

Overall the movie makes little impact. Viewers will leave *Four Christmases* having neither enjoyed themselves nor feeling dissatisfied. Surely the movie will not be featured on anyone's "Best Christmas Movies of All Time List" but rather gives viewers something to do for 88-minutes: munch on buttered popcorn while wishing they had stayed home to watch the *A Christmas Story* marathon. ♦

Fantasy book turned film pleases again

BY KELSEY KESSLER, '10

REVIEW



MOVIE: *Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*
STUDIO: Walt Disney Pictures
DVD RELEASE DATE: Dec. 2
RATING: ★★★ (out of 4)

Fantasy books turned film continue to bring magic to viewers, as shown by *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*. Released on DVD and Blu-Ray Dec. 2, this film is sure to please anyone looking for *The Lord of the Rings* adventure minus the blood and guts.

It has been 1,300 years in Narnia since the Pevensies ruled and walked back through the wardrobe to return to London. The Telmarines, the name for humans in Narnia, have taken over and tried to rid the land of all the magical creatures. However, as only a year has passed in Earth's time, the Pevensies quickly find themselves called back to Narnia to help Prince Caspian, next in line for the throne, defeat his uncle, King Miraz, as he continues to purge the land of the true Narnians.

As a sequel to *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the film has matured to produce a movie that is entertaining to both adults and children. The immense battle scenes and innumerable deaths lead to a darker feel. This is paired with the fact that the Pevensie children, although still relatively young, ruled Narnia for many years, and therefore contain the maturity and knowledge to once again try to save the magical land.

Thanks to superb special effects, the Narnians are truly brought to life. With talking mice, dwarves, walking trees, centaurs, fauns and more, about half the cast has been digitally created or modified in some way. After watching these creatures for the 142-minute duration, one may think they truly exist because of the intricate animation and crystal clear detail. The battle scenes also would not have been possible without the digital enhancements, yet they blend well into the other scenes.

The Blu-Ray and Collectors' Edition DVDs are filled with an extensive list of special features, including set and location tours, audio commentary, behind the scenes interviews, technology and production, bloopers, deleted scenes and more. If the film was not appreciated before, these extras are sure to prove the hard work that went into the film. With detailed behind the scenes looks at the pre-production planning in the featurette "Previsualizing Narnia" and "Sets of Narnia: A Classic Comes to Life," it is clear that the director, Andrew Adamson, and his crew put forth their best effort to truly bring the Narnia book to life, just as author C.S. Lewis imagined it.

Yes, the story is not as detailed and complex as *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy; however, *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian* is sure to please. With a steady pace, perfect picture and many bonus features, this thrilling film does the original book justice. ♦

Daniel Craig again meets James Bond fans' expectations, though film gets bogged down in plot details

BY NOAH GRUMMAN, '12

REVIEW



MOVIE: *Quantum of Solace*
STUDIO: MGM
RELEASE DATE: Nov. 26
RATING: ★★★ (out of 4)

Some say it is best not to mix personal problems with work. Yet in the new James Bond film, *Quantum of Solace*, Bond unites the two, seeking revenge for the death of his girlfriend and saving the world from a terrible plan he happens to stumble upon.

Bond's need for revenge seems to differ from previous Bond films, which usually center around a villain, glamorous women, and a few fancy cars and gadgets. But personal problems usually do not mix well with work, and in this film, Bond's personal problems almost cause the plot of the movie to be left behind.

A sequel to the 2006 hit *Casino Royale*, *Quantum of Solace* stars Daniel Craig as Bond for the second time. Directed by Marc Forster, *Quantum* builds on the plot from *Royale*: after Bond's girlfriend was blackmailed and killed for his casino winnings, he seeks revenge.

In his hunt for those who wronged him, Bond is led from Italy to Haiti, Austria, and even the remote Bolivian desert, to investigate an organization called Quantum. With the help of Camille (Olga Kurylenko), a Russian woman who also seeks revenge against Quantum, Bond is led to Dominic Greene, a businessman who is secretly attempting to steal Bolivia's water supply. In order to stop Greene, Bond must elude both Quantum, the CIA and his own British government.

While *Royale* has a clear storyline, little time is spent explaining *Quantum of Solace's* convoluted and confusing plot. Greene's "evil plan" to steal Bolivian water is weak and not well-explained. Unlike other Bond antagonists, Greene as a character is often bland, despite obviously being evil. He has no defining feature like previous villain Le Chiffre's tears of blood, or Goldfinger's love of gold. While actor Matheu Amalric does well in portraying Greene as brutal and corrupt, Greene and his cohorts are not memorable villains.

To compensate for the confusing plot, director Marc Forster gives the viewer an excess of action scenes. The 106-minute runtime is packed with Bond sprinting across Italian rooftops, going on high-speed harbor chases, and speeding through Haiti in thrilling pursuit. Yet the plot gets muddled in a multitude of minor characters that are hard to keep straight. Even with a knowledge of previous Bond films, keeping track of characters is difficult.

Full of chase scenes and thrills, action enthusiasts and Bond fans alike will enjoy this movie. Though it does not measure up to *Casino Royale*, *Quantum of Solace* is still a decent continuation of the Bond collection. ♦

American Idol winner finds his sound in new album

BY MARA DALTON, '10

Each year, tens of thousands of Americans compete on the show *American Idol* for a chance to prove their singing ability and get a shot at a major recording contract. In the show's seventh season, David Cook, a 25-year-old from Blue Springs, Missouri earned the title of "American Idol." Cook released his first album since his win Nov. 18, self-titled *David Cook*. This new pop album, produced by RCA, is sure to be a hit.

Most of the songs start off quieter, becoming louder and more intense when the first chorus comes around and the drums and other instruments start up. "Permanent" is the exception to this. It skips the drums and guitar, instead combining Cook's voice with piano and a string orchestra; in the end, this combination fails.

The lyrics, most of which are written at least partly by Cook, are one of the album's many assets. Each song manages to incorporate the

REVIEW



ALBUM: *David Cook*
ARTIST: David Cook
STUDIO: RCA
RATING: ★★★★★ (out of 4)

universal theme of love—finding it, keeping it or losing it. In "Come Back to Me," Cook sings with emotion, "When you find you / come back to me." As if the lyrics themselves cannot properly convey the emotion, in most songs the tone of his singing takes it further. One song where this is most evident is "I Did It For You," where he sounds desperate, as though he's begging for forgiveness as he sings, "You turn away / From all those things / That I've been trying to say / and all those promises / I shouldn't have made / I did it for you." He uses a similar voice in "Lie," crooning, "So lie to me and tell me that it's gonna be alright." If the music and Cook's voice are not enough, such hypnotizing, heartfelt lyrics make this album memorable.

As Cook co-wrote nine of the album's songs, many of the tracks are specific to the events of his life. One song, "A Daily Anthem," honors one of his brothers, Adam (hence the song's capitalization), who was diagnosed with brain cancer about 10 years ago. In it, he shows his support and love for his family, singing, "If I told you that you're everything / Would you sing along." His sense of family is even further evidenced when later in the same song he sings, "It's a half-baked blessing / For the lessons I've learned, / Never deserved."

Most listeners probably will find themselves singing along, because with this album Cook has found his sound. The lyrics and instruments fit his voice almost perfectly. Those who liked David Cook during the *American Idol* season will most likely enjoy this idol's first album since. ♦

The Killers hit right note with *Day & Age*

BY EVAN SMITH, '11

The Killers have had it tough these past few years. With the huge success of their debut album, *Hot Fuss*, the band had a lot to live up to. Their following album, *Sam's Town*, did not quite capture what made *Hot Fuss* such a hit. Instead, it went for a gruffer, more south-of-the-border style, and many Killers fans were disappointed by the shift in sound.

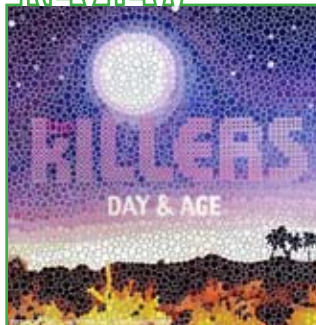
With the Nov. 4 release of their newest album, The Killers find themselves once again bombarded with overwhelming expectations. Produced by Stuart Price and recorded through Island Records, the Killers' newest album, *Day & Age* (\$13.99), offers a return to form for the Las Vegas-based alternative rock band. By incorporating a variety of new stylistic variations on the band's classic pop sound, *Day & Age* is an exceptional album that fans will love.

The Killers' sound has elevated significantly since their debut album, and *Day & Age* is a testament to that. The Killers present an album that fully embraces the pop nature of *Hot Fuss*, thus making the entire album feel more confident, showing their understanding of their style and genre and ensuring the listener nothing but top-notch pop music all the way through.

That's not to say this new album is a rehash of *Hot Fuss*—quite the contrary. Using synthesized tempos and '80s-style beats, this album has the striking qualities of all the best pop ballads of that decade, but infused with a classic Killers sound. Returning to the catchy style of their first album, *Hot Fuss*, the band also adds a new layer to their overall sound.

The album is somewhat of an oddball, though. Starting from the very first note

REVIEW



ALBUM: *Day & Age*
ARTIST: The Killers
STUDIO: Island Records
RATING: ★★★★★ (out of 4)

of the album opener and ending with the final track, The Killers sample different sounds of other bands and infuse them within their own sound to create songs both unique and familiar. "Losing Touch" has a touch of David Bowie in it, combined with some rallying saxophone cries and frontman Brandon Flowers' smooth vocals. "Human" offers a retake on an '80s guitar ballad, while "Spaceman" seems to be sampling a touch of the classic rock band Queen. The later tracks, "Neon Tiger" and "Goodnight, Travel Well," have a hint of U2 in them.

The Killers' new album is perfect for any fan of pop music and alternative rock and will appeal to those who enjoyed *Hot Fuss*. *Day & Age* is a strong return to that classic Killers' sound, while at the same time incorporating a completely new and much more confident style. ♦