

## Holiday Guide Special Edition

### Fourth season of *The Office* keeps laughs coming

JESSICA BANCHESKY, '09

From smiles to tears, awkward moments to offensive behavior, NBC's edgy take-off of BBC's series *The Office* breaks new ground. The zany escapades of the employees of the Dunder Mifflin Paper Company are highlighted by a new, not-so-secret relationship between Pam and Jim, Dwight mourning the loss of Angela after euthanizing her beloved cat Sprinkles in the freezer, and Michael taking his relationship with Jan to the next level—under the same roof.

One outstanding aspect of the show is the intimate, one-on-one camera sessions which reveal the characters' personal thoughts and hilarious commentary.

The characters also keep each episode authentic, each person shedding light on daily life in a cubicle. The regional branch manager is the charismatic, obnoxious, yet

somehow likeable Michael Scott, played by Golden Globe Award winner Steve Carell. Although pompous and ribald, he embodies a warmth and innocence. When describing a fellow employee, he says, "Phyllis is like our Mrs. Butterworth. Kind of a less-urban Aunt Jemima."

But Michael is hard to imagine without his better half: brown-noser Dwight Schrute (Rainn Wilson). His undying loyalty towards Michael as well as his outrageous, distorted perception of everyday life makes him one of the most humorous characters on the show.

Next comes Dwight's rival, quipster Jim Halpert (John Krasinski). He is the clown of the branch, and his main target is Dwight. Jim is bored with his life and entertains himself with pranks such as sending Dwight faxes from "future Dwight." His charm adds an entirely new dimension to the show.

However, what truly makes the show successful is the humor each character consistently espouses. The humor is crude, often along the lines of offensive racial or ethnic humor, or perhaps sexual jokes such as Michael's favorite, "That's what she said!"

Appropriate or not, the jokes will never fail to leave mouths wide open with laughter—or at least a smile. Although over the top at times, the show is not far from reality: The breakups are real, the love is genuine, and the situations are relatable.

Season four brings with it new and exciting plot twists. Perhaps the biggest difference is setting. Many more scenes take place outside the office itself. The outlandish plots still cleverly outdo rival sitcoms. America's rendition of *The Office* is overflowing with wit and is utterly alluring. It is one office no one wants to leave at the end of the day, because Dunder Mifflin is so much more than just a paper company. 🍎

**SHOW:** *The Office, Season 4*  
**PRODUCER:** Reveille  
**NETWORK:** NBC  
**RATING:** ★★★★★ (out of 4)



### Ruth's debut album hits mark

MYLER MOODY, '10

New alternative rock band Ruth is young and fierce and worth a listen. Signed with Tooth and Nail Records, the foursome released its debut album, *Secondhand Dreaming*, June 26.

Singer/songwriter Dustin Matthew Ruth and his cohorts hail from Washington. According to the song "Here to New York," he's "chasing a storm / and it's raining on every town from here to New York." The band members may or may not have found the storm, but they're certainly hitting towns all across the nation, as they are currently on tour with rock bands Switchfoot and Relient K.

The raw energy the band displays during its short warm-up act is enough to leave the audience in awe. Electric bass player Brett Van Liew cannot help but dance around the stage, head banging and mouthing the lyrics of the songs not because a mic's in front of him, but for the pure pleasure of singing along. Drummer Ryan Wesley Peterson provides beautiful vocal harmony while bouncing to the beat. Lead guitarist Nicolus Ace Wiinikka demonstrates talent on both the electric and pedal steel guitar.

As for singer Ruth, his young, almost-innocent sounding voice compliments his lyrics perfectly. Most of the songs are upbeat with pop-rock guitar riffs and catchy choruses. Others are more mellow, and electric and acoustic guitars are mixed throughout both tempos. Vocal harmony is implemented into all songs.

Ruth grew up in Portland, Oregon with hope of a career in music. Chasing opportunity, he moved to Los Angeles but moved back a year later defeated. After several unsuccessful attempts, he formed the band Ruth.

Ruth is more than just the singer's last name, it's an acronym for "return us to Him." Ruth's spirituality shines through his lyrics. Perhaps the most potent example is from the radio-hit song "You Are" in which Ruth sings, "When You call my name to walk on water / You are the waves that I feel when I'm sinking / You are the storms that I feel when I'm dying / You are God."

For those who are not sure whether to buy the CD or not, the band has posted a link on its MySpace to listen to the album, all the way through. And if that's not enough, the 12-song set is half price, only \$5.99, on iTunes for a limited time. It seems as though the band members are eager to get their music out no matter what the cost. And as fans already know, to listen to anything else is ruthless. 🍎



**MUSIC REVIEW**  
**CD:** *Secondhand Dreaming*  
**ARTIST:** Ruth  
**STUDIO:** Tooth & Nail Records  
**RATING:** ★★★½ (out of 4)

## 'Wicked' author's first stab at fairy-tale genre foretells future success

SARAH BARRINGER, '11

The story of Cinderella is universal. Everyone knows how Cinderella was harshly treated by her stepsisters and stepmother. Everyone knows how she fell in love with the prince and married him after an incident with a slipper. And everyone knows how the stepsisters justly received their unhappily ever after. But, what do the ugly stepsisters think of all this?

*Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*, written by Gregory Maguire and published in 1999 by ReganBooks, is the story of Cinderella from a stepsister's point of view. Maguire also wrote *Wicked*, the well-known book and musical. In both works, Maguire uses a dark and mysterious style, leaving readers with many unanswered questions.

Most people think of the ugly stepsisters as mean and cruel. In this story, however, they are nothing of the sort. They're not perfect, but despite how they look on the outside, they are loving characters.



**LITERARY REVIEW**  
**BOOK:** *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*  
**AUTHOR:** Gregory Maguire  
**RATING:** ★★★ (out of 4)

Iris, one of the ugly stepsisters, is extremely plain. Ruth, her sister, is slow and can hardly speak. The stepsisters and stepmother have come to Holland, running for their lives. The family makes its way through the new land, eventually rooming with a painter.

This painter, Schoonmaker, insists on painting Iris's portrait. Schoonmaker eventually presents the painting of Iris to a wealthy family in the tulip market.

Iris and her family eventually move into the wealthy family's home to work as servants. After living with the family for several months, Clara's mother dies (Cinderella is called Clara) and the tulip market crashes, hurling Clara's father into depression. Clara retreats into the kitchen and won't come out.

Disregarding the fantasy elements in Cinderella, the retelling matches the original surprisingly well. The light in which the situations are presented is simply altered. Clara in both stories becomes the kitchen girl,

but in *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister* she does it by choice.

Just as *Wicked* is, *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister* is very dark. The story begins in a miserable state, just after the death of Iris's father. Iris sees Clara's mother die and the rest of the family fall into ruin. Throughout this, Iris is haunted by an imp she has created in her mind.

Maguire's descriptive, yet mysterious writing style makes the story easy to picture, full of dirty streets and care-worn characters. Questions are continually appearing and disappearing as they are answered, but some are never answered at all. Iris initially thinks that her father was killed, but at the end, she questions this and the reader never learns the truth about her father.

*Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister* is a beautiful retelling of Cinderella with a twist and is filled with darkness, mysteries and unanswered questions. Even those who could never dream of liking such horrible characters as the ugly stepsisters will find their hearts warmed and realize that the ugly stepsisters were helping Cinderella all along.

## Movie Tavern makes 'Dinner and a movie' easier than ever

MICHELLE DAVID, '11

The Movie Tavern at Mill Run is serving up more than the latest movies—it's also serving dinner. Not just the typical hotdog-popcorn-candy-soda "dinner," this theatre also has meals ranging from pizza to sandwiches to salads and more. The first in Ohio, with headquarters in Texas, the Movie Tavern is located in the former Movies 12 on Ridge Mill Drive.

The atmosphere of the Movie Tavern is fun and laid back, similar to any movie theatre. The servers are friendly and the seats are comfortable. Narrow tables face the seats, and the tables have dimmed lights so customers can see their food.

The rows of tables have red-lit buttons, which can be pushed at any time to call a server over. Drinks arrive promptly, but the food takes a while longer; about 15 minutes on a night that isn't crowded.

Receiving food during a movie can be distracting for not only the receiver, but also the patrons nearby. Plates and silverware hitting against each other and slurping drinks create distraction from the overall mood of the movie. Trying to eat and watch the movie at the same time might cause some details of the movie to slip past the viewer. But the servers are very efficient, and they bring the food quickly, creating only a minor disruption.

The theatre is also clean and organized. Once a server is

called over, they will be on task for the caller. For the most part, servers stay out of sight unless someone pushes the red button.

Coca-cola products are served in large cups with free refills. The unsweetened iced tea comes with sugar packets and lemons on the side upon request.

The Goodfellas pizza is listed as an entrée for one, but at 10 inches this pizza can satisfy at least two. The pepperoni's—listed as a double serving—were sparse, and the crust was thin and a little on the greasy side. Despite this, the overall dish had the right balance of cheese, sauce, and a unique crust that tasted doughier than other pizzas. For \$8.79 it was a good meal and worth the money for a nice "dinner and a movie" combination.

The chicken strip basket was a delicious entrée that was supposed to come with chicken strips, seasoned fries, and cole slaw. However, the cole slaw never came. Nevertheless, the chicken strips were nicely breaded to a crunch, coming with a side of ranch dip. The fries were soft, thick and well-seasoned, though a bit flavorless on the inside. A little ketchup added the desired taste. The food was served at just the right temperature; however, after eating slowly and concentrating on the movie for a while, the eventually-cold food lacked appeal. Considering the quality of the food, the chicken strip basket was worth \$9.99, even with its smaller portion size.

The Movie Tavern boasts some other nice reasons to visit the establishment. It offers free admission to OSU football games, and when the movie *Ratatouille* came out, patrons could go early and get their faces painted like rats; during the showing of *Pirates of the Caribbean*, the servers actually dressed like pirates.

Anyone who has never been to The Movie Tavern should definitely check it out. The experience is enjoyable, and in the end it is a value in offering a casual and relaxed venue to see a new release and eat a tasty dinner.

**RESTAURANT REVIEW**

**RESTAURANT:** *The Movie Tavern at Mill Run*  
**PRICE:** \$\$ (out of 4)  
**RATING:** ★★★½ (out of 4)



## P.F. Chang's offers quality dining for Winter Dance groups, couples

SARAH WATSON, '11

With Winter Dance coming up, choosing the right restaurant to begin the evening can be a tough decision. Students who are fans of Chinese food in general will find that P.F. Chang's in Dublin a great choice.

A Chinese restaurant that fashions its food after the five main culinary regions of China—Canton, Hunan, Mongolia, Shanghai and Szechwan—P.F. Chang's is a slightly less formal choice for the Winter Dance. The dim lighting and warm colors that make up most of the décor create a relaxed atmosphere that allows for conversation and an enjoyable meal.

P.F. Chang's menu includes a wide array of dishes, ranging from noodles, sophisticated meats, seafood and vegetarian dishes to soups and salads and diverse desserts. Drinks include Coca-cola products, teas and coffees. Tea is served in a rustic, iron teapot along with a small teacup.

Lettuce wraps are a good choice for meat eaters and vegetarians alike. They can be served with both chicken and tofu, both of which have sharp, distinct tastes that are balanced by the cool, crisp lettuce wraps in which the mixtures are rolled. However, the chicken has a more wholesome, sweeter taste, that is more appealing than the tofu. However, the tofu is as tasty as tofu can be, with crunchy water chestnuts to balance out the chewy tofu, which has a faint tar-like flavor.

With an long list of chicken dishes, sweet and sour chicken is always a good choice. Although it is served with pineapple, onions and peppers, a visually-unappealing combination, the taste is sharp, sweet and light. Orange peel chicken, another dish that associates fruit with chicken, is also a good choice, although the sauce can be a bit thick and clumpy. The taste is tangy and spicy, very different from that of an orange. Sauces aside, the overall quality of the chicken sets P.F. Chang's apart from the average Chinese restaurant. The chicken is juicy and tender, unlike other restaurants which fry their chicken to death and then smother it in sauce to try to make up for it.

The sea bass is a wonderful choice for any student who enjoys fish, although it is among the most expensive dishes at \$20. Served over healthy, green spinach, the sea bass is presented nicely, though the sauce that pools at the bottom of the dish can overpower the other flavors. Avoiding the otherwise perfect spinach, the sea bass has crispy edges, and the inside is tender and cooked to perfection.

Chocolate dominates the dessert menu, though it also includes New York-style cheesecake and banana spring rolls, with prices ranging from \$6-\$8.

A downside for those watching their weight is the enormous amount of calories that can be found in several of the dishes. Many dishes have calories numbering over 900; one dish, Lo Mein Pork, has a whopping 1820 calories. For those who do not typically watch their calories, that's almost double the calories of a steak burrito with rice, cheese, tomatoes, sour cream, lettuce and a 13" flour tortilla (1060 calories).

P.F. Chang's China Bistro is located at 6135 Parkcenter Circle, Dublin, Ohio. Prices for appetizers range from \$3-\$9, and the prices for main dishes, including vegetarian main dishes, range between \$5-\$20. 🍴

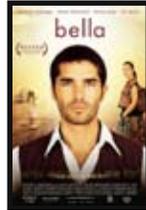


## Bella is beautiful

MOLLY STIEBLER, '09

**B**ella, a low budget, yet artistic indie film is a thought-provoking drama that will surely have you grabbing for a box of tissues. This tearjerker just goes to show that a good movie doesn't need to be costly; rather, all it needs is a blend of down-to-earth actors, some heartfelt words, and a few twists, turns and aesthetic appeal.

Director Alejandro Monteverde seems to have mastered this formula as *Bella* has exceeded many expectations, winning the People's Choice Award at the Toronto Film Festival. Originally *Bella* was made to attract Latino audiences, but having won multiple awards it's evident that the film has a universal appeal. *Bella* is fresh and offers a unique plotline different from any Hollywood film. It offers moviegoers new subject matter to consider and is open-ended for personal interpretation. Despite controversy over the movie's view on the widely-disputed social issue of abortion, Roadside Attractions thankfully picked up the film where it can now be enjoyed nationwide.



### RESTAURANT REVIEW

RESTAURANT:  
P.F. Chang's China Bistro  
PRICE: \$\$\$ (out of 4)  
RATING: ★★★ (out of 4)

The movie takes place in modern-day New York City in an upscale Mexican restaurant. There, main character José (played by Mexican soap-opera star, Eduardo Verástegui) is a chef suffering from a scarred past. Nina (Tammy Blanchard) is a waitress with an uncertain future. When she is fired because of repeated tardiness, José chases after her, only to discover she is pregnant and without a husband or a boyfriend. Determined to help her, the chef leaves his kitchen for a day and turns his attention towards his troubled co-worker. Together they impulsively roam the streets of New York City, where some superb cinematography is captured.

Nina finds she can trust José as he reveals to her his past as a suave, clean-shaven professional soccer player. Minutes away from signing a multi-million dollar contract, a tragedy turns his life upside down. As more and more pieces of his past are revealed, the viewer is left curious, always wanting to know more. With Nina still facing a tough decision concerning abortion, she looks to José for support. She realizes that good consequences can come from bad situations.

Verástegui speaks with such passion in his voice, and with much of his face now covered by a beard all that can be seen are his soulful eyes, reaching his audience with full force. He seems so real to life and natural on screen, making it easy to sympathize with him. Conversely, Blanchard speaks with a bitter tone, as her character holds a lot of resentment. Her sarcastic mood mixed with Verástegui's hopeful character makes for a movie filled with colorful emotion and personality. Directors could not have made better casting choices.

*Bella* is also largely appreciated for its artistic symbols and motifs. Every detail was considered in the making of this movie, as each song seems to be carefully selected so that the lyrics match what is happening in the scene. Together, the repeated symbols, cinematography, and soundtrack work in perfect harmony to retell the wonderfully-crafted true story of *Bella*.

As the film is rated PG-13, rethink bringing a younger sibling. The movie also requires full attention, because all the flashbacks and flash-forwards get confusing. Perhaps with a little more planning and a tighter script, producers could have improved the film.

In the end, *Bella* is worth the time and money to go see on a weekend afternoon. Its artistic appeal, cultural diversity, and compelling cast will make the evening especially enjoyable. *Bella's* unique charm and drama outweigh the confusion and jumbled sub-plot. 🍴





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