

■ In my opinion



RYAN MURPHEY
MR. SOPHISTICATION

Visualize democracy without dumb voters

With so much at stake in the coming election, voter mobilization groups such as Music For America, Punk Voter, No Vote Left Behind and Campus Activism have been campaigning fervently to increase voter turnout.

While I believe strongly in what these groups are doing, they are completely ignoring a much larger issue which, as a mall employee, I am painfully aware of: There are some Americans who should be aggressively discouraged to vote. I know this sounds like an extremely anti-democratic statement, but when you spend your workday selling shirts with images of dachshunds and a lewd double-entendre about the owner's wiener on the front, it suddenly becomes very clear that sometimes democracy must be compromised in order to preserve it.

When determining who should be encouraged to vote, I realize that there are gray areas. After all, I'm sure that some of Bill O'Reilly's viewers just watch because they think it's funny when he says "fair" or "objective." In the interest of avoiding controversy, I propose that we focus on those whose votes are inarguably a clear and present danger to national security.

At Gateway Mall in Springfield there is a place where you can purchase deep-fried Twinkies. Before you are allowed to purchase one of these, a customer should have to sign a waiver relinquishing his or her right to vote. If you think that's harsh, take a minute to think about the fact that a Twinkie is the ultimate junk food loaded with fat and sugar — essentially a butter cake filled with vanilla-flavored fat. Now consider the fact that this miniature loaf of preservatives and corn syrup is then skewered and submerged in a vat of boiling lard.

This kind of decision demonstrates the same lack of common sense that creates a market for pleated pants, and how can people who can't even make rational decisions about what they put in or on their bodies be trusted to shape the future of America? If you still feel bad for them, just consider the fact that there is a good chance these people won't live long enough to even see the outcome of the election.

Another sector of American society who should be strongly encouraged to just stay home and play video games on election day is the bumper sticker activists. Anyone whose political or spiritual dogma can be summed up in a catch phrase should not be allowed to vote on the color of M&M's, let alone the leaders of the most powerful country in the world. These are the same people who throw rocks at war supporters during peace rallies, or think that they are doing God's work by wearing a "Got Jesus?" T-shirt.

The common theme here is people who shape their beliefs on clever one-liners and knee-jerk reactions, and when you ask them if they really think the United States Army will ever hold a bake sale to buy more bombs, they just get confused and call you close-minded.

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Keeping the beat

A Eugene dance group keeps hopping with regular tours and local performances

BY NATASHA CHILINGERIAN
SENIOR PULSE REPORTER

While many dance studios around Eugene offer hip-hop and jazz classes for energetic dancers, only one studio gives dancers the opportunity to spread their energy outside the country. ZAPP, a 15-year-old performing company and branch of On Your Toes School of Dance, emphasizes street and urban styles and has an accomplished touring history.

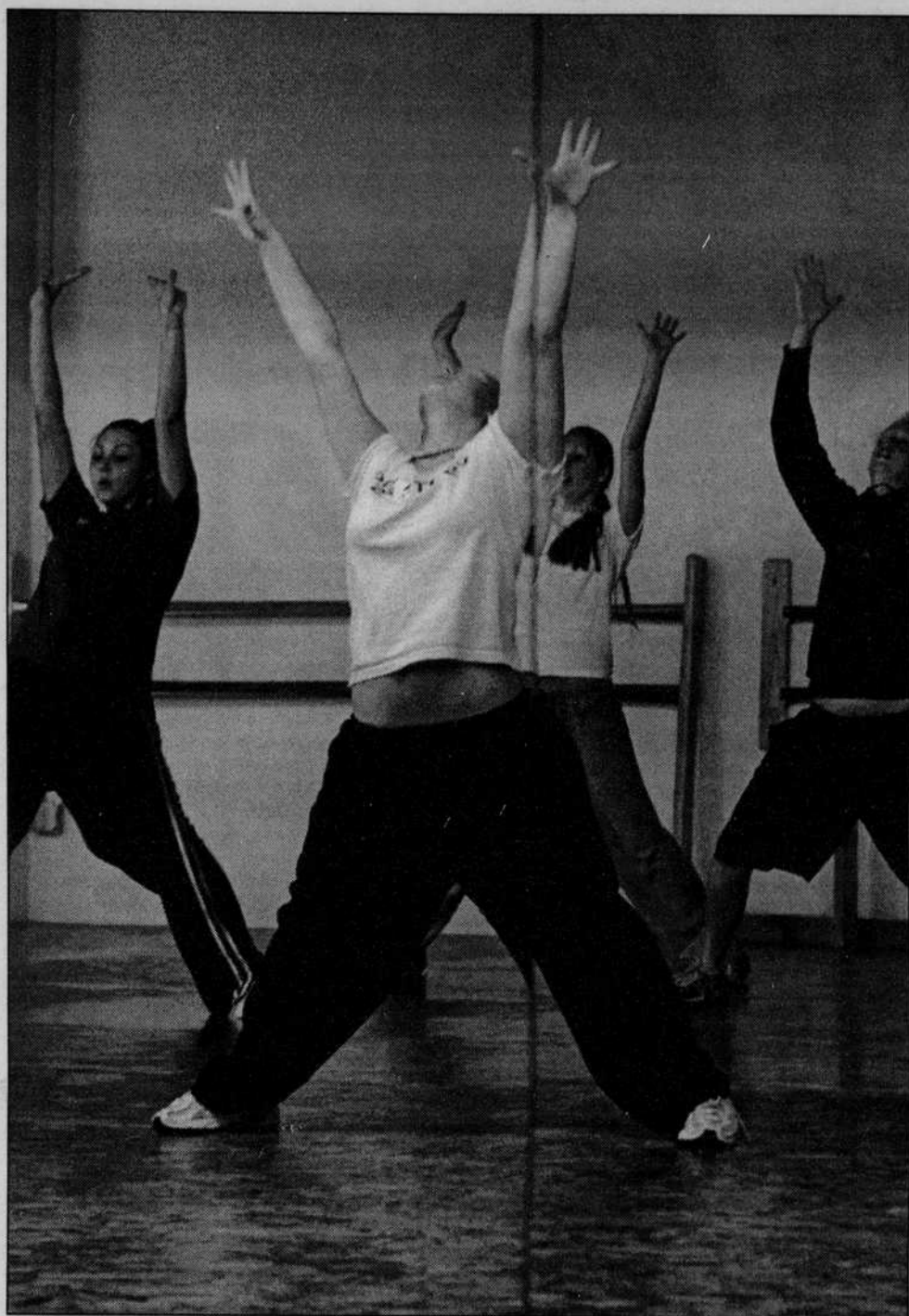
With 27 members between the ages of 16 and 24, ZAPP is the creative invention of On Your Toes School owner Cindy Zreliak, who started the company to give dancers more chances to share their art.

"There wasn't a big outlet for jazz and hip-hop dancers in Eugene," she said. "ZAPP grew out of On Your Toes. We wanted to perform more than at recitals and competitions."

ZAPP focuses on jazz and hip-hop styles of dance, but some of its moves draw from African and Caribbean styles, among others. Music choices include songs from bands such as Outkast and the Dilated Peoples, and costuming generally features athletic and street styles. The company holds auditions every year in the late summer for its three categories of dancers: Seniors, Elites and Graduates.

While all three groups perform regularly together, the more advanced Elites and Graduates have the busiest performing

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TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTOGRAPHER

Hanna Harrison has been dancing for four years and is practicing with the rest of the cast of "Strictly Urban Rhythms Generate Excitement" at the On Your Toes School of Dance in Eugene. SURGE is presented by Zreliak Artistic Performing Productions.

■ Movie review

'Dirty' film does its best to sex up normalcy

Filmmaker John Waters delivers a convoluted message with his portrayal of absurd sexual fetishes and seemingly normal characters

BY RYAN NYBURG
PULSE EDITOR

Since his first film, 1964's "Hag in a Black Leather Jacket," John Waters has remained an enigma to American filmgoers. His movies are trashy, full of stilted dialogue, absurd situations and cardboard characterizations. Yet all of this is done as aesthetic principle. In this way, Waters has leveled the playing field for audiences: Since it is no longer a question of whether his films will be good, all that remains is to decide whether they are entertaining.

Water's latest, "A Dirty Shame," splits the difference between his early, trashier 1970s work ("Pink Flamingos," "Multiple Maniacs") and his latter, more polished films ("Cry-Baby," "Hairspray"). The story involves a prudish woman (Tracey Ullman) who receives a concussion and wakes up a sex addict. She discovers an underground society of fetishists who, with their Christ-like leader Ray-Ray (Johnny Knoxville), believe they will reach a state of grace through the discovery of a new sex act. Their competition is the Neuters, a group of outraged citizens attempting to promote a 1950s form of decency in their neighborhood.

A lot of the trappings of Waters' work show up

here, particularly his tendency to split moral issues into absurdly simplistic black-and-white dichotomies. In "Dirty Shame," the characters are either sex addicts or prudes, with no middle ground. Whether or not Waters is making a joke by framing the plot this way is open for debate.

Throughout the film, Waters presents a laundry list of obscure sexual fetishes, ranging from an attraction to dirt and filth to being turned on by human sandwiches. (My new, all-time favorite pick-up line: "We hope that one day you'll be our lettuce.") Another ongoing plot device is having an accidental head trauma flip a switch, which causes a person to go from being prudish to being sex-starved, or vice versa. In a way, this makes the point that sexual perversion is totally arbitrary and that fetishes can pop up in just about anybody. They are a part of everyday life for a wide range of normal people and are not confined simply to some fearfully alien other. (By the way, I get academic bonus points for using the word "other" to indicate an outsider. Just so you know.)

But any deep analysis might be giving the film credit for subtlety it does not possess, especially when the concussion theme leads to an extended joke involving David Hasselhoff and a commercial airplane restroom. On its own, the

film is entertaining in its absurdity and contains some pitch-perfect moments. Waters uses a montage of 1950s nudist-colony films to connote someone's transformation into a sex addict, and then religious films for the transformation back into a Neuter. The film also wouldn't work without the interesting collection of novelty hits and obscure early rock 'n' roll cuts. It works as a reminder of why everyone thought rock was so sexually charged when it began.

The film did receive an NC-17 rating, probably due to a few extended scenes of full-frontal nudity. But since the film contains nothing along the lines of David Spade being covered in excrement (not that I have anything against such a turn of events), I think the rating system might be a little skewed. The film, in fact, stands above today's vomit stream of gross-out comedies — it is trying to make a point, though in a convoluted sort of way. It never really gets inside its characters and digs around. The script lacks an understanding of the intricate nature of fetishes, the sort of understanding Luis Bunuel had when he directed "Belle de Jour" (bonus points for reference of foreign film director). Although the assault is a bit too blunt for the satire to work, some of the barbs strike home. And the film is funny, if for nothing other than its unabashed absurdity.

"A Dirty Shame" opens tomorrow at the Bijou Arts Cinema.

ryannyburg@dailyemerald.com