

Koontz's novel *Fear Nothing* is nothing to fear

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Suspense, mystery and science fiction books are my favorites to read. Nothing is more enjoyable than curling up late at night with a book intended to give you goosebumps.

My criteria for a good suspense novel has two elements. First, the story must hold my interest until the last page.

Second, it must have the ability to frighten me (which isn't very difficult).

Unfortunately, Dean Koontz's new book, *Fear Nothing*, fails to achieve either of those elements.

The story takes place in a small ocean community called Moonlight Bay. A 28 year old man, Christopher Snow, suffers from a rare genetic disorder that makes him sensitive to light. So, Chris must spend his whole life in darkness.

Following the mysterious circumstances surrounding his father's death, Chris begins to uncover details about a conspiracy involving his family and genetic testing at a local army base.

The first part of the book was intriguing. I enjoyed following Chris on his crusade for truth. Half-way through, however, the novel took a turn for the worse. The antagonists turned out to be genetically enhanced monkeys that had escaped from a

lab. Even though they were supposed to be vicious killers, our young hero was never in jeopardy.

The second part was also incredibly predictable. I had the mystery solved long before Chris Snow did. It's frustrating to read a book where you are smarter than the main character.

I will give Koontz some credit for attributing human-like intelligence to house cats and Labrador dogs. Most pet

owners talk to their animals (I do,) and the idea of them being able to understand and communicate back fascinates me.

Koontz is a remarkable storyteller. Those interested in his work should read some of his best pieces: *Watchers*, *Phantoms*, or *The Mask*.

Koontz's mixture of science and suspense is usually quite gripping. However, this time I was disappointed by the predictability of the story. *Fear Nothing* misses the mark.

Varsity Blues succeeds in giving football a good name

Jon Voight and James Van der Beek score good performances

ANGIE DASCHEL
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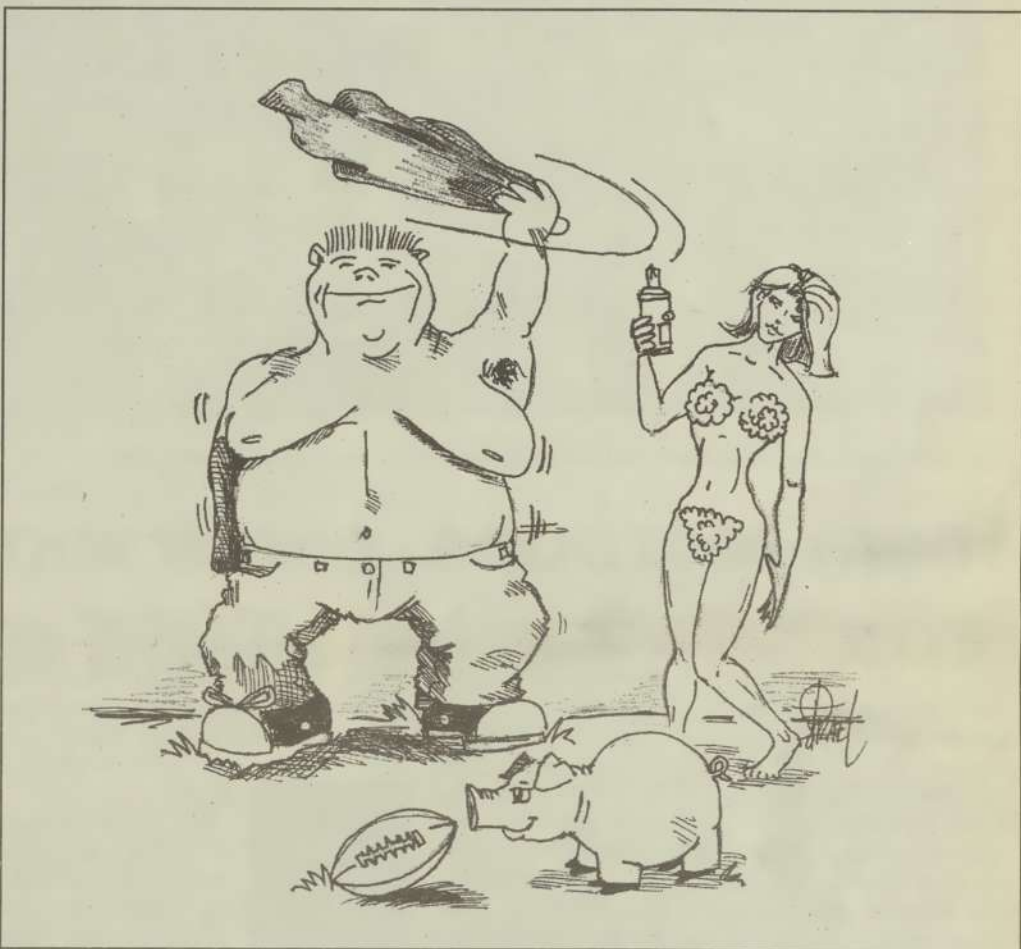
I hate high school football. I don't like the players, the coaches, the pep rallies, the cheerleaders, or even the ugly letterman jackets. That is why it pains me to admit this: I loved *Varsity Blues*. The film's plot doesn't stray far from the basic formula that every sports movie uses, but I was hooked.

James Van der Beek ("Dawson's Creek") plays Johnathan Moxon, a second-string quarterback for the West Canaan Cougars, a football team with 22 division championship titles that is led by a demanding coach (Jon Voight, *Mission Impossible*). The small town of West Canaan has only one interest: football. The boys that play for the team are allowed to do anything they want, since they are the town's heroic claim to fame. They drive around naked, steal po-

lice cars and party like it's 1999, and never get in trouble.

When the team's star quarterback gets injured, Van der Beek gets a chance to show everybody how good he is. He soon discovers that being the star has some surprising perks, which include being seduced by a gorgeous cheerleader wearing nothing but a whipped-cream bikini. There are also numerous disadvantages, mostly having to do with their win-or-die coach.

If you can overlook Van der Beek's larger-than-normal forehead and his incredibly fake southern accent, then you'll enjoy *Varsity Blues*. Like other MTV Films productions such as *Joe's Apartment* and *Dead Man on Campus*, this movie won't solve any problems, raise social awareness about a certain topic, or make you think too hard. *Varsity Blues* has one purpose: to entertain. Isn't that what movies are supposed to do?



New video rentals: Rush Hour and 54

ANGIE DASCHEL
Associate Editor

The creators of *Rush Hour* did their homework. Movies like *Lethal Weapon*, *Grumpy Old Men* and *Thelma and Louise* scored well with their audiences because of the chemistry between the partner characters in the movie. *Rush Hour* is effective because Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker each compliment the other's talent without upstaging.

Tucker plays an unruly LAPD cop who gets assigned to show Chan, a Hong Kong policeman, the city and to keep him from meddling in an FBI kidnapping case. Of course, Chan and Tucker become interested in the case and try to solve the crime themselves.

Fast-talking and bug-eyed, Tucker is at top comedic form in *Rush Hour*. Taking into account that Chan does most of his own stunts, he delivers an amazing physical performance. *Rush Hour* was one of the fun-

niest movies to come out in 1998, and it shouldn't be missed on video.

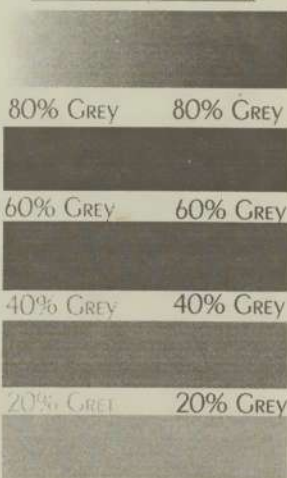
The late 1970s were a time of drugs, disco and casual sex. Studio 54 in New York City combined all these elements to create the night club for everyone who was anyone to let it all hang out. *54* tells the story of Shane, a young man from New Jersey played by cutie Ryan Phillippe (*I Know What You Did Last Summer*).

Shane is allowed entrance into the exclusive club by the owner, Steve Rubell, played by Mike Myers. After seeing the strangely enticing world of Studio 54, Shane lands a job there as a bartender. Shirtless and muscle-bound, the bartenders have access to anything they desire. Neve Campbell has a surprisingly small role as a soap star who tries to further her career at Studio 54. Salma Hayek plays a coatcheck girl/aspiring disco singer.

Although *54* is visually stun-

ning and tells an interesting story of sex, drugs and rock and roll, it could have been longer, because the plot wasn't developed fully. Campbell is used mostly as a visual prop because she doesn't do much more than smoke and drink, and Hayek's attitude quickly becomes annoying. However, to miss this movie would mean missing Myers give a wonderful performance as a pill-popping homosexual.

Quality Control Strip



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