

Mac grill offers low-priced eats

Jeff Sorensen
The Clackamas Print

Romano's Macaroni Grill on SW 3rd and Yamhill in downtown

Portland has much more to offer than a bowl of Kraft Easy-Mac™, and might even be one of the finest Italian restaurants in Oregon.

Upon entering "The Grill," I was greeted with soft, earth-toned paint, a ceiling-mounted sound system offering some light

background music, and a nice, warm fire. There is a wall of colored glass behind the bar to the right, a ceiling-high wine rack in the back of the main dining room, and everything is lit softly by strings of outdoor-style patio lights hanging in rows across the ceiling, giving the entire place a feeling of romanticism and comfort.

As if that wasn't enough, the whole experience was topped off by an exposed kitchen in the back

of the restaurant where the cooking and waiting staff could be heard shouting food orders back and forth in light-hearted Italian, giving it an authentic Roman feel.

The waiter, Greg, was immediately attentive and began by pouring olive oil and some fresh-ground pepper into a small saucer for the bread, which he happened to be already holding. There were several appetizers, making the choice a bit difficult, but I settled on the *mozzarella alla marinara* followed by a delicious Caesar salad topped with parmesan cheese grated from a block right at the table.

The entrée menu offered a large variety of Italian and Italian-inspired food. Baked chicken, fire-baked pizza, and many combinations of pasta and sauce were just waiting to be complimented by any number of sausages or meats of my choosing. It may have been a bit stereotypical, but I couldn't resist the meatball lasagna.

Beyond the size of the portions and the impressive

presentation, the taste is what I should really take pride in. The lasagna was easily the most memorable dish I've ever paid for on sheer taste alone. The meatballs were so good enough to be cooked between six layers of pasta and cheese and all of it was topped in a tomato-meat sauce that was a refreshing relief from the tangy and often-misused marinara.

So what does this amazing experience cost? Roughly 20 percent less than the popular Clackamas Garden (before the tip) ... a fact that Grill Manager John Haskins is actually quite proud of.

"There's something special here," said Haskins. "Children are welcome ... seniors are welcome. [It's] a downtown restaurant experience without the price."

Romano's is a restaurant franchise that plans to build more in Tualatin and Clackamas. While they do reserve a portion of the restaurant as walk-in business, they take reservations as well, and Haskins recommends getting your reservations early on Friday and Saturday nights, even though he says getting reservations is possible.



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Romano's Macaroni Grill is located on SW 3rd and Yamhill and offers delicious low-priced Italian food.

Documentary tackles evil genius in 'Abel raises Caine'

Ben Maras
The Clackamas Print

What would you think of a campaign called "Society for Indecency to Naked Animals" with the intent to force all people to clothe their naked animals? How about the first International Sex Bowl?

These topics (among others) and the evil genius who brings them up are tackled in the documentary "Abel Raises Caine." The evil genius spoken of is no other than Alan Abel, professional hoaxer on a mission from God: to keep the media honest by lying to them.

Directed by Alan Abel's daughter, Jenny Abel, the film is anything but the expected sappy love-letter to daddy. On the contrary, it is a laugh-out-loud funny yet deep exposé on the antics of a man who has never held a 9-to-5 job, and thrives off of humor, and who has duped papers even outside of America (the U.K.'s respected *Daily Mirror* was one of his targets).

The doc uses recent footage of his daily life as well as clips from the past talk shows and news reports which were products of his handy work.

The scale begins with his first large-scale hoax, Omar's School for Beggars, a fake institute which gained nationwide recognition

before being uncovered as a complete fabrication.

It continues by humorously claiming his later work, which includes a mockumentary called "Is There Sex After Death?"—a campaign to ban breast feeding—claiming that women receive erotic experiences from breast feeding their children and his most famous hoax, the aforementioned SINA.

Not just focusing on his acts, it goes in depth to the reason behind his jokery—to show the utter absurdity of the system by mocking it, without it even realizing. He is quoted in the film that SINA and the campaign to ban breast feeding was actually a mockery of the religious right movement which was waging war for any and every cause for a little publicity.

His whipping boy of choice was the media, who would line up and take the bait hook, line and sinker, especially if they thought they would be witnessing the first annual International Sex Bowl, complete with announcer and referee, or a tell-all confession of an Iranian man involved in the Iran-Contra scandal, and is now trying to return several billion dollars to the United States.

Detailed in the film is his career in politics, especially when he acted as campaign manager for Yetta Bronstein, a Jewish who ran twice for president—losing both times by a landslide, although she

received a handwritten note from President Richard Nixon. Pretty good for someone who didn't even exist.

The high point in the film is when Abel is approached by a Hollywood company for the rights to make a movie about his life. On his way to negotiations he heard some businessmen involved in the negotiation, unaware who was in the elevator with them, saying that they should wait until Abel died so that they could buy his estate for "next to peanuts."

Sadly, just weeks later Alan Abel's obituary ran in all of the

nation's large newspapers, reading that he had suffered a heart attack while skiing. The Abel estate's phone was ringing off the hook from the company wanting to close negotiations. Unfortunately for them, this was the first time that the papers would have to retract an obituary—Abel had duped them off. All negotiations were off. Apparently famous film companies can't take a joke.

So what did this journalist think about Abel's using the media as his personal tool for his own exploits, at the expense of serious news? It's a good thing he's

alive—the so-called fourth branch of the government (the media) needs someone to keep them in check, and his abuse is a welcome addition to keep reporters honest and on their toes.

Abel Raises Caine is easily one of the best documentaries you would ever see, and deserves 'A' for intimate directing with seeming amateur and never dragging despite the almost two-hour runtime.

Of course I could be lying. It could be terrible. So go rent it when it comes out on DVD a few months and see for yourself.



ABEL Photo courtesy of alanabel.com

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