

FILM

The jumbled machinery of ‘Chappie’ never clicks

By JAKE COYLE
AP Film Writer

Neill Blomkamp’s “Chappie” is a curious Frankenstein. It’s set in a near-future Johannesburg policed by robots, but it’s not about law enforcement or social order. It focuses on the first creation of a sentient artificial intelligence, yet it’s not about the consequences of this radical invention or the nature of consciousness.

Instead, though “Chappie” bears all the hallmarks of a “RoboCop” retread or a grungier “A.I.” It’s actually more like a warped, sci-fi version of “The Jungle Book” in which a child robot must survive the urban wilds of a gang-ridden Johannesburg.

If it sounds like “Chappie” has some peculiar, crisscrossed circuitry, it most certainly does. The movie’s mismatched parts — which includes possibly the most unlikely co-starring combo of all time: the South African rap duo Die Antwoord and Hugh Jackman — fit together about as well as Johnnie Five, the “Short Circuit” bot, and a blender.

“Chappie” is the third feature from Blomkamp, who broke through with the alien refugee thriller “District 9” and followed that up with “Elysium,” a big-budget allegory in which the 1 percent live on an orbiting space station. His dystopias aren’t so unfamiliar. They marry great technological evolution with stunted social progress, organically placing sci-fi elements amid recognizable bureaucracies and urban decay.

Blomkamp likes to invert tropes. Aliens come not to invade but as desperate immigrants. Robots evolve not to annihilate but to love. Both need our help. In short, Blomkamp makes action-heavy sci-fi that’s animated by political ideas and frustrated urgency more than most Hollywood science fiction combined. It’s deservedly won him a following, as well as the helm to the next “Alien” film.

“Chappie,” too, is more spirited, more bizarrely composed than most, but its oddly jumbled machinery never clicks. The logic of “Chappie” gradually disintegrates, becoming increasingly farcical. Eventually, characters are speaking lines as finely scripted as: “I have authorized the launch of the Moose.”

“Chappie,” a Sony Pictures release, is rated R for “violence, language and brief nudity.” Running time: 112 minutes. Two stars out of four:

BRIEFLY

Improv teams to spar on stage

WALLA WALLA — Utilizing wicked-sharp wit and lightning reflexes, teams compete using audience suggestions to create scenes and situations on the spot.

Performed in Seattle since 1983, “Theatresports” is competitive improvisational theater, and it’s coming to Walla Walla. The show is Friday, March 13 at 7:30 p.m. at Power House Theatre, 111 N. Sixth Ave., Walla Walla.

Reserved tickets are \$25 each at www.phtww.com or by calling 509-529-6500. Beer and wine will be available for purchase.

Excitement ensues with iHed

WALLA WALLA — A funny, physical and somewhat sideways look at myths and fairy tales is featured in a family-friendly production by Theater Simple of Seattle.

Thrown into a world of adventure, excitement and danger, a pair of scientists test-drive iHed, a personal thinking machine, during “Myth Understandings.” The production is Thursday, March 12 at 6:30 p.m. at Power House Theatre, 111 N. Sixth Ave., Walla Walla. Suitable for ages 5-13, with plenty of fun for parents, tickets are \$9 for adults and \$6 for youths.

For tickets or more information, visit www.phtww.com or call 509-529-6500.

Stage car drives ‘Chitty Chitty Bang Bang’ production

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

The tale of an extraordinary car that takes flight on an endless adventure will cruise onto the stage at the Elgin Opera House.

Baby boomers should recall the larger-than-life children’s classic about the eccentric inventor and the beloved jalopy “Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.”

A pair of teams contributed to the car’s construction for the production, including craftsmen who spent two months building the core car on top of a golf cart chassis and creating retractable wings. Another group tended to engineering details that give the car lifting and turning capabilities, as well as an inflatable boat effect.

According to Terry Hale, Elgin Opera House managing artistic director, the Chitty car is the most important technical element of the production.

“She comes to life several times throughout the show to save our leading characters from impending doom and she does so with grace and charm,” Hale said. “She is technically the star of the show, a real diva.”

The production opens Saturday with a matinée show at 2:30 p.m. and an evening performance at 7:30 p.m. The production continues



Photo contributed by Dave Yerges

Caractus Potts (Rick Mugrage) sings his children, played by Henry Fager and Gia Tognoli, to sleep with the classic lullaby “Hushabye Mountain” during a rehearsal of “Chitty Chitty Bang Bang” at the Elgin Opera House.

March 13-14, 20-21, 28 and April 3-4 at 7:30 p.m. and March 14, 21, 28 and April 4 at 2:30 p.m.

Hale is excited to see so many people work in harmony to bring crucial elements together to make the production work. His favorite productions are shows where parents and grandparents can attend with their children and everyone enjoys the experience. “Chitty Chitty

Bang Bang,” Hale said, is that type of show.

“In a time when we are so focused on the hand-held technologies that consume our lives, live theater is a medium that can bring so many humans together to share a wonderful experience together,” he said. “This show contains everything we love about a big family musical, vibrant musical numbers, a

WHAT TO DO

Festivals

Wee Bit O’ Ireland

- March 12-15
- Heppner
- www.heppnerchamber.com

Most activities free. The celebration includes lots of food, plenty of blarney and great entertainment.

No Limits Monster Trucks by Checkered Flag Productions

- March 13-14, 7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, March 14, 2 p.m.
- TRAC Center, 6600 Burden Blvd., Pasco

www.checkeredflagproductions.com

All reserved seats are \$30, general admission is \$25/ages 12 and up, \$15/ages 2-11. Discounts for tickets purchased in advance. Free pit party for all ticket holders an hour before evening shows.

Wildhorse Celebrates 20 Years

- Saturday, March 14, 8 p.m.
- Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.

Fireworks at 8 p.m. with a visual and interactive show following in the Rivers Event Center featuring P-Town Dueling Pianos with Jim Fischer and Kevin Guitron

Art

First Saturday Spin-In

- Saturday, March 7, 1-4 p.m.
- Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St.

Fiber obsessed folks can drop-in and bring a project to work on. Coffee, tea and work space provided.

Whispers Quilt Exhibit

- Tuesday-Fridays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturdays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St.

www.pendletonarts.org

Free. Exhibit features collection of works by Central Oregon Studio Art Quilt Associates members. Also, a sewing bee table is set up to engage visitors in trying simple stitching techniques. Runs through March 28.

Ramp It Up: Skateboard Culture in Native America

- Monday - Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Opens March 14
- Tamastlikt Cultural Institute, near Wildhorse Resort & Casino.

www.tamastlikt.org

Free admission opening day, regular admission is \$10/adults, \$9/senior citizens, \$6/youths, free/5 and under or \$25/family of four. Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service celebrate the vibrancy, creativity

and history of the American Indian skateboarding culture.

Open Regional call for entries

- Tuesday-Fridays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; Saturdays, noon-4 p.m.
- Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St.

www.pendletonarts.org

Entry fee \$10/adults, \$5/teens. Artists may enter up to two works of art in any medium except photography. Cash prizes, show runs April 9-May 29

Deadline to enter is April 4. First Draft Writers’ Series

- Thursday, March 19, 7 p.m.
- Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St.

www.pendletonarts.org

Free. Featured author is Robert Stubblefield, who has Eastern Oregon roots now residing in Montana, has published fiction and personal essays. Also, short open mic readings from the audience.

Heritage Station Museum

- Tuesday-Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- 108 S.W. Frazer Ave., Pendleton

www.heritagemuseum.org

\$5/adults, \$2/student, \$4/seniors, \$10/family.

Music

Herrick

- Saturday, March 7, 9 p.m.-1 a.m. No cover
- Wildhorse Sports Bar at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.

Dakota Brown

- Saturday, March 7; 9 p.m. to midnight. 21-and-over. No cover

- Hamley Saloon, 8 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton

Young Artists Competition

- Saturday, March 8; time TBA

- Hermiston High School auditorium, 600 S. First St.

www.inlandnorthwestmusicians.com

Sponsored by Inland Northwest Musicians, young artists vie for cash prizes and an opportunity to perform with the Inland Northwest Orchestra.

Navy Band Northwest ensembles

- Monday, March 9; 7 p.m.
- SAGE Center, 101 Olson Road, Boardman

www.visitsage.com

Free. Features Passage, a rock band, and the Five-Star Brass quintet.

Vibe Central

- Friday, March 13; Saturday, March 14, 9 p.m.-1 a.m. No cover
- Wildhorse Sports Bar at

Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.

Hand Picked

- Saturday, March 14; 11 a.m.
- Irigoen Seventh-day Adventist Church, 205 Tumbleweed Blvd.

www.hand-picked.com

No admission charge, a free-will offering will be taken. Gospel bluegrass music. A fellowship lunch will follow. If desired, bring a vegetarian dish to share.

Agony & Ecstasy

- Saturday, March 14; 7:30 p.m.

- Vert Auditorium, 480 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton

www.oregoneastsymphony.org

\$20/adults, \$15/students, seniors, \$45/family. Oregon East Symphony presents Felix Mendelssohn’s “Symphony No. 4” and in collaboration with the Oregon East Symphony Chorus will perform Mozart’s “Requiem in D Minor.” Soloists include Lezlee Flagg, Andy Cary, Emily Muller Callender and Steve Muller.

Willow Creek Symphony

- Sunday, March 15, 4 p.m.
- Irigoen Jr./Sr. High School, 315 E. Wyoming

www.inlandnorthwestmusicians.com

Free, donations accepted. Reception follows to meet and greet performers.

Concordia University

Wind Ensemble

- Friday, March 20; 7 p.m.
- Hermiston High School, 600 S. First St., Hermiston.

No admission charge, a free-will offering will be taken.

Jaennette & Lou Sing & Play the Blues

- Friday, March 20, 7 p.m.
- Sno Road Winery, 111 W. Main St., Echo

M-80’s/Metal Shop

- Friday, March 20; Saturday, March 21, 9 p.m.-1 a.m. No cover
- Wildhorse Sports Bar at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission

Night life

Thursday Night Comedy

- Thursdays, 8 p.m.
- March 12: Njalo Bealum
- March 5: TBA
- Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.

St. Patrick’s Day Beer Pong Challenge

- Saturday, March 14; 10 p.m.
- Mac’s Bar & Grill, 1400 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton

21 and older. No entry fee. \$100 cash and \$100 gift card for The Rainbow to be used on St.

Patrick’s Day goes to winning team. Other prizes include \$50 Mac’s gift card for best St. Patrick’s team name. Get a partner and come early to ensure entrance into tournament.

Digital Karaoke

- Thursdays and Saturdays, 8 p.m.
- The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston

Mac’s Trivia Night

- Thursdays, 8 p.m. No cover
- Mac’s Bar & Grill, 1400 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton

21 and older. Teams of 2-8 compete in trivia contest with other teams. Live host and prizes.

Wine tasting

- Fridays, 4-8 p.m.
- Sno Road Winery, 111 W. Main St., Echo.

Open Mic

- First/Third Friday each month, 8 p.m. to midnight
- The Packard Tavern, 118 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton

www.facebook.com/groups/pendletonopenmic

Karaoke

- Fridays 8 p.m. (9 p.m. if game on)
- Riverside Sports Bar, 1501 Sixth St., Umatilla

- Fridays, 8 p.m.
- The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston

Theater, stage & film

“Chitty Chitty Bang Bang”

- March 7, 13-14, 20-21, 28, April 3-4; 7:30 p.m.
- March 7, 14, 21, 28, April 4; 2:30 p.m.
- Elgin Opera House, 104 N. Eighth St.

www.elginoperahouse.com

Reserved \$17/\$8. Take a musical adventure with an out-of-this-world car that flies through the air and sails the seas.

“Theatresports”

- Friday, March 13; 7:30 p.m.
- Power House Theatre, 111 N. Sixth Ave., Walla Walla

www.phtww.com

\$25/general admission. Recommended for ages 18 and up. Relying on years of experience, wicked-sharp wit and lightning reflexes, two teams face off for competitive improvisational theater. Using audience suggestions, they create scenes and situations on the spot with a panel of local judges deciding the winner. Beer and wine available for purchase.

“Mama Mia”

- Thursday, March 19
- Toyota Center-Windermere

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

- March 7, 14, 21, 28, April 4; 2:30 p.m.
- March 7, 13, 14, 20, 21, 28, April 3, 4; 7:30 p.m.
- Elgin Opera House, 104 N. Eighth St.
- \$8-\$17, group rates available. 541-663-6324
- www.elginoperahouse.com

cinematic cast of talented children and adults, exciting set pieces, a dog and a flying car.”

The cast features many talented veteran actors, as well as young new actors who have an opportunity to work closely with each other. Hale said it’s been rewarding to watch young actors shine while being mentored by directing staff and fellow actors.

Completed in 1912, the Elgin Opera House is on the National Register of Historic Places. Hale and his family moved from the Portland area for the purpose of reviving the theater arts program and re-opening the opera house, which had been closed for several years.

Since re-opening in 2006, it has staged more than 25 live theatrical performances. In addition, a major restoration project was completed in time for the Elgin Opera House’s centennial celebration in 2012.

Theatre, Kennewick

www.ticketmaster.com

\$59.50-\$82. Musical based on songs by Abba. The story-telling magic of timeless songs propels this enchanting tale of love, laughter and friendship, and every night everyone’s having the time of their lives.

“The Princess and the Pea” auditions

- Monday March 23; 10 a.m.-noon
- AC Houghton Elementary School, 1105 N. Main St., Irigoen
- Elgin Opera House, 104 N. Eighth St.

Missoula Children’s Theatre production open to students from kindergarten through 12th grade. Rehearsals will be held throughout the week. Performances will be staged Saturday, March 28 at 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. For information, call Angela at 541-314-0166.

Hot tickets

- On sale starting March 6. Garth Brooks, April 12-13, Moda Center, Portland. Reserved seats (\$74.89) via www.ticketmaster.com.

- Go on sale March 16. Umatilla County Fair concerts: Dustin Lynch (Aug. 11), John Michael Montgomery (Aug. 12), Latino Night (Aug. 13), Hinder (Aug. 14) and Warrant (Aug. 15). Reserved seats (\$12) via 541-567-6121 or 515 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston www.umatillacounty.net/fair

- Guys and Dolls.” Wednesday, April 22, Toyota Center, Kennewick. Reserved seats (\$54.10-\$74.10) via www.ticketmaster.com.

- Sasquatch Music Festival. Memorial Day weekend, Gorge Amphitheater, George, Wash. Reserved seats (\$325 and up for 4-day pass) via www.livenation.com.

- Creation Festival. July 30-Aug. 1, Benton County Fairgrounds, Kennewick. Reserved seats (\$45-\$150, plus camping packages) via www.creationfest.com.

- Gentlemen of the Road Stopover featuring Mumford & Sons, Foo Fighters, Flaming Lips and other national, regional and local bands. Aug. 13-15, Walla Walla. Reserved seats (\$199) via www.mumfordandsons.com.
- Foo Fighters. Saturday, Sept. 12, Gorge Amphitheater, George, Wash. Reserved seats (\$45-\$75) via www.livenation.com.

Want to get your event listed in our calendar? Send information to tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com, or c/o Tammy Malgesini, 333 E. Main Street, Hermiston, OR, 97838.

Ringling Bros. to give up elephant acts in three years

In this Jan. 3 photo provided by Feld Entertainment Inc., elephants perform at the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus at the Amalie Arena in Tampa, Fla. The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus said it will phase out its iconic elephant acts by 2018.

AP Photo/Feld Entertainment Inc., Gary Bogdon



By TAMARA LUSH
Associated Press

POLK CITY, Fla. — The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus will phase out the show’s iconic elephants from its performances by 2018, telling The Associated Press exclusively that growing public concern about how the animals are treated led to the decision.

Executives from Feld Entertainment, Ringling’s parent company, said the decision to end the circus’s century-old tradition of showcasing elephants was difficult and debated at length. Elephants have often been featured on Ringling’s posters over the decades. The decision was announced Thursday.

“There’s been somewhat of a mood shift among our consumers,” said Alana Feld, the company’s executive vice president. “A lot of people aren’t comfortable with us touring with our elephants.”

Within two hours of the announcement, animal rights groups took credit for the decision, saying that the pressure put on the circus ultimately led to Feld’s decision.

“For 35 years PETA has protested Ringling Bros.’ cruelty to elephants,” Ingrid E. Newkirk, president of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, wrote in a statement. “We know extreme abuse to these majestic animals occurs every single day, so if Ringling is really telling the truth about ending this horror, it will be a day to pop the champagne corks, and rejoice. ... If the decision is serious, then the circus needs to do it NOW.”

Feld owns 43 elephants, and 29 of the giant animals live at the company’s 200-acre Center for Elephant Conservation in central Florida. Thirteen animals will continue to tour with the circus before retiring to the center by 2018. One elephant is on a breeding loan to the Fort Worth Zoo.