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WHAT TO WATCH FOR THIS WEEK

Essentials



JACK'S MATCH

Jack Nicholson has had great competition from co-stars, whether overbearing (Marlon Brando pranking around him in "The Missouri Breaks"), or sexy (Faye Dunaway in "Chinatown") or by wry contrast (Bruce Dern in "The King of Marvin Gardens"). But nobody has ever quite matched sassy Jack with such bilge ease and foxy sharpshooting as Morgan Freeman in "The Bucket List." Freeman lets Nicholson do his Preen King Thing while gently matching him, every step of the way, as two codgers bond at sunset. Comically (even touchingly), it's a draw, and thus a playful win for both.

TALK ABOUT A PRODUCTION

If you think "The Daddy Machine" is going to be just another musical, we have two words for you: Singing dog. (And two more: Audience participation.) Diversionary Theatre, the gay- and lesbian-centered company based in University Heights, commissioned this family-friendly piece about two moms, two kids and a gizmo that somehow churns out 62 dads. The high jinks begin Friday. (619) 220-0097 or diversionary.org.

VOCAL 'RAZZAMATAZZ'

Pop, jazz, soul, blues — Patti Austin sings each with enough skill and verve that she counts everyone from Michael Jackson and George Benson to Johnny Mathis and Cat Stevens among her past vocal partners. Currently nominated for two Grammys for her "Avant Gershwin" album, she performs Saturday at the Town & Country Convention Center in Mission Valley as part of the three-day All Star Music Festival. Other festival acts include Larry Carlton, The Four Tops and Fourplay. (888) 695-0888; alistarmusicfest.com



BOLLYWOOD NIGHTS

Even with almost 1,000 pages to work with, novelist Vikram Chandra can barely contain the cops, movie stars, beggars, terrorists and others who roll through his breathtaking "Sacred Games." He'll boil things down some Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at Warwick's Bookstore, 7812 Girard Ave., La Jolla.



'WIRE' SERVICE



It matters little if you missed the first four seasons, or even if you skipped the initial episode this year, tune into HBO's "The Wire" (9 p.m. Sunday, repeats throughout the week) anyway and you'll be rewarded with the best acted, best-written, simply the best show on TV. Set in the gritty environs of Baltimore and its overburdened police department, "The Wire" has taken on city politics, the drug culture, a problematic school system and, this year, the media including the venerable Baltimore Sun, which valiantly allowed filming in its newsroom. A deep pleasure of "The Wire" is the fine performances from a diverse cast acting fearlessly.

STILL LIFE

No matter how many painters make still lifes, there always seems to be room for more. San Diego artist Thomas Hemlock proves the point with intimately scaled oil paintings in which he renders cups and saucers and other domestic objects with precision, elegance and poetry in equal measure, for a show perfectly suited to the surroundings of Bread & Cie Bakery-Cafe in Hillcrest. (619) 683-9322.

SEASONAL FARE

In 1947, John Cage wrote his first orchestra piece, "The Seasons," to accompany a dance choreographed by Merce Cunningham. Incorporating experimental techniques and Indian influences, Cage's music is his iconoclastic answer to Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons." And you'll hear excerpts from both works when Jung-Ho Pak conducts the San Diego Chamber Orchestra and soloists in concerts today in La Jolla (Sherwood Auditorium), tomorrow in Rancho Santa Fe (Del Mar Country Club) and Friday in Bankers Hill (St. Paul's Cathedral). (858) 350-0290 or sacoor.org.



CAKEWATCH

"Keep the other person's well-being in mind when you feel an attack of soul-purging truth coming on."
— Actress Betty White, who turns 86 Thursday.

OTHER CELEBRITY BIRTHDAYS

YESTERDAYS: Actress Frances Sternhagen, 78. Comedian Rip Taylor, 74. Actor Billy Gray ("Father Knows Best"), 70. Actor Richard Moll ("Night Court"), 65. Actress Julia Louis-Dreyfus, 47. Country singer Trace Adkins, 46. Actress Penelope Ann Miller, 44. Actor Patrick Dempsey, 42. Actress Nicole Eggert ("Baywatch"), 36. Actor Orlando Bloom, 31.
TODAY: "60 Minutes" commentator Andy Rooney, 89. Country singer Billie Joe Spears, 71. Singer-songwriter Allen Toussaint, 70. Singer Jack Jones, 70. Actress Faye Dunaway, 67. Actress Holland Taylor, 65. Singer-producer T-Bone

Burnett, 60. Actor Carl Weathers, 60. Rapper Slick Rick, 43. Actress Emily Watson, 41. Rapper LL Cool J, 40. Actor Jason Bateman, 39. Musician Dave Grohl, 39.
TOMORROW: Actress Margaret O'Brien, 71. Singer Captain Beefheart, 67. Actress Andrea Martin, 61. Actor-director Mario Van Peebles, 51. Actor Chad Lowe, 40. Actress Regina King, 37. Actor Eddie Cahill ("CSI: New York"), 30.
WEDNESDAY: Singer Barbara Lynn, 66. Country singer Ronnie Milsap, 65. Country singer Jim Stafford, 64. Talk show host Dr. Laura Schlessinger, 61. Director

John Carpenter, 60. Actress-dancer Debbie Allen, 58. Singer Sade, 49. Singer Maxine Jones (En Vogue), 42. Model Kate Moss, 34.
THURSDAY: Actress-singer Eartha Kitt, 81. Actor James Earl Jones, 77. Talk show host Maury Povich, 69. Singer William Hart (The Delfonics), 63. Singer Steve Earle, 53. Singer Paul Young, 52. Actor-comedian Steve Harvey, 51. Singer Susanna Hoffs (The Bangles), 49. Actor Jim Carrey, 46. Actor Joshua Mattia, 42. Singer Shabba Ranks, 42. Actor Naveen Andrews ("Lost"), 39. Musician Kid Rock, 37. Actress Zoëy Deschanel, 28.

FRIDAY: Singer-songwriter Bobby Goldsboro, 67. Comedian-singer Brett Hudson (the Hudson Brothers), 55. Actor-director Kevin Costner, 53. Country singer Mark Collie, 52. Actor Jesse L. Martin, 39. Rapper DJ Quik, 38. Singer Samantha Mumba, 25.
SATURDAY: Actress Jean Stapleton, 85. Actress Tippi Hedren, 78. Actor-singer Michael Crawford, 66. Actress Shelley Fabares, 64. Country singer Dolly Parton, 62. Singer Martha Davis (The Motels), 57. Actor Desi Arnaz Jr., 55. Comedian Paul Rodriguez, 53. Actress Katy Sagal, 51. Singer Trey Lorenz, 29. Actress Drea de Matteo, 26. Actress Jodie Sweetin ("Full House"), 26.

MOVIES OPENING FRIDAY

"CLOVERFIELD" — The tale of a monster attack on New York City is recounted through a small group of friends.
"CASSANDRA'S DREAM" — Ewan McGregor and Colin Farrell are brothers who resort to crime in Woody Allen's latest.
"MAD MONEY" — Diane Keaton, Queen Latifah and Katie Holmes play three workers at the Federal Reserve planning to steal some money about to be destroyed.
"27 DRESSES" — Katherine Heigl plays the eternal bridesmaid who must now watch as her sister marries the man she secretly pines for.
— DALLAS MORNING NEWS



Ewan McGregor (left) and Colin Farrell star in Woody Allen's "Cassandra's Dream." Keith Hamshire / Weinstein Co.

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CALIFORNIA RESEARCH FOUNDATION

No negative vibes from Hannah

By Erin Podolsky
DETROIT FREE PRESS

You may not have seen her recent San Diego concert, and maybe you've somehow missed the TV show, but it's certain you've heard the name Hannah Montana. Disney has hit big with the goofy feel-good "Hannah" series, which stars Miley Cyrus as a teenage girl who lives a secret life as a beloved pop star. Cyrus and the Mouse House have scored major wins with anything collaborated with the "Hannah Montana" name, including the meagorator and the two "Hannah" soundtracks, both of which debuted in the top spot on the Billboard Hot 200 chart and together have sold 5.9 million copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

How much longer the "Hannah Montana" obsession will last is anybody's guess, although it will no doubt fade as Cyrus and her fans grow into their driver's license years. Whatever the projected lifespan, a look at five sets of "Hannah" lyrics and their deeper meanings.

"Best of Both Worlds"
Lyrics: "You got to movie premieres (s' that Orlando Bloom?) / Hear your songs on the radio / Livin' two lives is a little weird / But school's cool 'cause nobody knows / Yeah you get to be a small town girl / But big time when you play your guitar / You get the best of both worlds."
Tween Translation: The "Hannah Montana" theme song highlights the oddity of living a double life when our girl is oh-so-normal when not wearing her streaky blond wig. You could be her friend, or just as easily be her. Depends on your vocal cords, and whether your dad ever rocked a mullet on CMT.

"Who Said"
Lyrics: "Who said, who said I can't be Superman I say / I say that I know I can / Who said, who said I won't be president / I say, I say you ain't seen nothing

not stop at pop star when they could be commander in chief or, better yet, a man of steel."
"We Got the Party (With Us)"
Lyrics: "It's Friday and there's nowhere to be / We're kickin' it together it's so good to be free / We got each other and that's all we need / The rest is up to you and me."
Tween translation: Make your own fun, but only if it's not a school night.
"Nobody's Perfect"
Lyrics: "Sometimes I work a scheme / But then it flips on me / Doesn't turn out how I planned get stuck in quicksand / But no problem can be solved / Once I get involved / I try to be delicate / Then crash right into it / But my intentions are good / Sometimes just misunderstand."
Tween translation: If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.
"Make Some Noise"
Lyrics: "Don't let anyone / Tell you that you're not strong enough / Don't give up /

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