Two confess to local robberies

by Elizabeth Jardina

Houston police have arrested two men involved in a string of 10 armed robberies in the Rice area, one of which was the Dec. 18 sexual as- sault of a female student in a resi- dence south of campus. Another case cleared by the arrests is the Nov. 28 armed robbery of 9303 Chaucer Drive in which three students were held at gunpoint.

Christopher Desmoulin Perry, 24, was arrested Friday after police traced him using a phone number he left in a stolen car. His fingerprints matched evidence found on two of the robberies, and he appeared on film from security cameras at ATMs. In several of the robberies, victims were forced to accompany their attacker to ATMs to withdraw money from their accounts.

Perry confessed to committing nine robberies in areas near Rice dating from last spring, including a May 11 robbery at a house rented by Rice students on McClendon Street.

Perry told police he had an ac- complice, Cyslical "Red" Lewis, 22, in this last robbery, which took place in West University on Dec. 22, Lewis, who was arrested Monday, also ad- mitted to the Dec. 18 sexual assault and robbery. Perry was not involved in that crime.

Police said Perry committed most of the robberies without Lewis. Perry, who has a previous con- viction of misdemeanor theft, has been charged with three counts of aggravated robbery.

Lewis, whose criminal record in- cludes narcotics offenses, has been charged with two counts of aggra- vated robbery and one count of ag- gravated sexual assault.

Perry told police that he had a drug addiction, citing problems with "fly" — marijuana cigarettes dipped in embalming fluid and sometimes laced with PCP — and crack. Lewis also allowed to frequent use of "fly."

In the Nov. 28 Chaucer robbery, as well as the May 11 robbery of students living on McClendon, the attacker told the victims that they needed money because he had an ill mother.

The police said the case was still under investigation. A car stolen during the Dec. 18 incident has not been recovered.

Lawyer Joe Maloney, who lives in the home on Chaucer that was robbed, said he and his housemates have become more careful about locking their doors since the incident. "I'm a little com- passeive," he said. Before the rob- bery, they generally didn't lock the doors when they were home. He said students who live in the house in previous years had left the door open all night during periods of no weather.

"I was surprised to see the amount of students who leave their doors open at their houses, and the traffic in and out of their houses at 1 and 2 in the morning," investigator K.J. McMurtry said. But he said neither Perry nor Lewis was probably inten- tionally victimizing students. "That just happened to be the area [Perry] was working in — he wasn't targeting students," McMurtry said.

Former students sentenced for theft

by Olivia Allison

Former Rice seniors Francisco Padua and Scott Byer received four years deferred adjudication and 30 days in Harris County Jail following guilty pleas to charges of robbery.

The students were arrested Sept. 29 outside a self-storage facility with about $15,725 of property stolen from Rice, Padua, Byer and Christian "Book" Padway, who had been previously arrested Sept. 18 for burglary of a computer monitor from the Humanities Building.

Byer and Padua also admitted to the theft of six projectors, and Un- iversity Police Chief Bill Taylor esti- mated that the two were responsible for more than $600,000 worth of com- puters, televisions, furniture and computer equipment.

Martinez, who was also tried Tuesday, agreed to two years de-ferred adjudication but received no jail sentence for plea of guilty to the charge of burglary of the Hu- manities Building.

Deferred adjudication is a form of probation. If the subject does not commit another crime within the set period, there will be a trial, and the subject’s permanent record will reveal that he pleaded guilty or “no con- test” in a felony charge but was not guilty. If the subject violates the terms of the deferred adjudication, he will be sentenced for the original crime and tried for any subsequent crimes.

Padua and Byer will not be incar- cerated until May 10 because they are taking courses this spring at the University of Houston.

Judge Ted Poe also sentenced Padua and Byer to 10 hours of com- munity service per month until they have each served 240 hours, and the two will not be allowed to leave Harris County without permission for the duration of their term of deferred adjudication. They must each serve at least six months of the penalty in jail, and that he wouldn’t have foreseen that the students were responsible for the theft.

James A. Baker III’s keynote address began the “Time and the Presidency” exhibit Wednesday night. The exhibit in Baker Hall features photographs of 51 presidents from Time magazine and will continue through Jan. 31.

SpeECHES KICK OFF ‘TIME’ EXHIBIT

by Mark Berenson

Washington contributing editor also spoke.

Baker gave examples of new pol- icies in Washington, including the politicizing of the criminal justice system, the criminalizing of the po- litical system, the nastiness of the confirmation process and the cul- tural election cycle.

“The day after the election is uniformly seen as the first day of the next presidential cycle,” Baker said.

Baker said the most egregious example of the lack of civility in pol- icies is the development of “goofy” politics, in which everyone looks for a political system, the nastiness of the confirmation process and the cul-

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Send us your letters, tell us about your news
With the new semester, we'd like to remind all our readers about our policies concerning letters and news tips. The Thresher makes an effort to print all letters related to Rice or the Rice community when they are submitted before the Monday 6 p.m. deadline. The letters to the editor section is a forum for a variety of opinions. For example, we often print letters critical of the Thresher; in fact, we usually run them first. We would never refuse to print a letter because it attacked us.

And, the Thresher never modifies a letter's meaning. Though we do edit letters for style, grammar, spelling and length, we are extraordinarily careful to preserve their meaning. Changing a letter writer's meaning to probably the greatest ethical error an opinion editor could make.

We prefer for letters to be short, preferably under 250 words. If you have something longer to say, your thoughts may be appropriate for the opinion column. If you'd like to write a column, you should talk to Opinion Editor Mike Näpel (dougbus@rice.edu) or Editor in Chief Brian Stoler (brian@rice.edu).

Though people ask to have their names withheld often, we rarely print anonymous letters. While we won't print your name without your permission, we believe that letter writers, in all but the most extraordinary of circumstances, should stand up for what they have to say.

We encourage people to send ideas for news stories. Tips can be phoned into (713) 348-4801 or sent to theshresher@rice.edu. If you know about something exciting going on around campus, or if you're part of an organization doing something newsworthy, let us know. We can't accept articles written about organizations by members of that group. If you would like to write up a press release to give us the information you think is important, that's great—we welcome releases, especially if they include important information like dates, times and contact information.

We can't guarantee that we'll agree with you about what's newsworthy, but we're always open to suggestions. And, public relations is all about sending out a million press releases—sometimes you hit and sometimes you miss.

So, if you have an opinion about something going on at Rice, or the Thresher, send us a letter. Do you have a burning news tip? Let us know. We can't know what you think unless you tell us.

We worry that today's wars are increasingly targeted those who do not fight. But war has always gone after civilians: from Kosovo refugees in 1999, to the massacre of villagers by American GIs in My Lai in 1968, and all the way back to the second century B.C., when Rome placidly shot into Carthage's soil to starve its people for their enmity during the Punic Wars.

It makes sense, then. Those who wage war look for efficient ways to win. Why be more efficient than by pounding the softest, most vulnerable sections of the enemy? Rape, massacres—were not regrettable by-products of the fighting.
The positive side of being uncertain

I am one of the worst offenders when I ask the question—Are you not supposed to ask a graduating senior what his plans are? 

"So, what are you planning for the future? graduation? internship? travel? graduate school?" 

So, what are you planning for the future? graduation? internship? travel? graduate school? 

No matter how politely I ask, I felt like an intruder—stepping into someone else's room when the door was closed. 

As a friend said to me, it's like we're not allowed to ask about our futures longer through graduate or professional school. 

For four years—give or take—we have been the ones in the limelight; shrouded from reality by sturdy hedges and an abundance of free beer. In four short months we will have left the cocoon, haven, forced into gainful employment, although some of us will pre-cocoon before us. But the world longer through graduate or professional school. 

Frankly, I am at something of a loss. Despite the fact that my law school applications are in and every day a plethora of charming postcards clutter my mailbox, listing in excruciating detail every piece of exasperating work I have to do before I can go home. 

I feel like a graduate student in a graduate school, and I am supposed to ask a graduating senior what his plans are? graduation? internship? travel? graduate school? 

The positive side of being uncertain, I think, is realizing that I am a culture if I don't know exactly what I want to do, and that that is alright. 

I have noticed a trend in my life and in the life of the group around me. Everyone is on a never-ending search for their calling. They all want to do something big. 

Some of us know exactly what we want to do, and that is wonderful. But for those of us who are in the middle of the road, it is going to take a lot of time before we figure out what our futures and reaching into decisions because we feel time is running out, it is time to take a step back. 

In all of our planning we cannot lose sight of how young we are and how much there is to try and explore in the world. In time to find our passion and follow it. 

If you have ever heard Elizabeth Alexander, my English teacher, say, "I've lost enough of the world," I have no idea what she means. 

For most of the fall, I filled out law school applications blindly. Understand, the Supreme Court justified its decision by relying on the general unrest of the public. Well, OK, it is. But rarely is it as catastrophically entertaining as the effect with which it was. 

Self-doubt and the belief that a guaranteed future is somehow better than the arbitrary, logical step to a life of financial stability have been1,2 told me to self-doubt and the belief that a guaranteed future is somehow better than the arbitrary, logical step to a life of financial stability have been1,2

For Bush's sake and for ours, I hope so. 

Michael Nalepa is opinion editor and a Lovett College senior.
Interim judicial programs dean named

Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Department Chair Ron Sax takes over as interim assistant dean for Student Judicial Programs this semester. Patricia Bass, who normally holds the position, is on a Fulbright scholarship to South Africa to study rock art. Bass originally planned to return this semester, but she extended her scholarship until July. History Professor Alice Matsuyoshi will hold the position on an interim basis from January 2001 until last semester.

Sass, who has taught at Rice for 42 years, served as master of Hamren College from 1966-96. He was the second master of the college.

Sass said he doesn't expect the job to be a large time commitment, "On the other hand, I'll do what it takes," he said. "If everybody be themselves, it'll be happy.

The assistant dean for Student Judicial Programs supervises the student judicial process and oversees University Court and Honor Council cases. The assistant dean acts as a mediator and information source for students about the process. In some cases, the dean also hears cases and metes out punishment.

— Elizabeth Jardine

General counsel hired

Richard Zansitis, who is currently serving as counsel at Bucknell University, will become the new general counsel on March 1. He replaces Shirley Redwine (Jones '86), who retired at the end of December.

Zansitis said he was motivated to apply for the job because it sounded exciting and because he had heard wonderful things about Rice.

"It's a very exciting place—one of the top universities in the country and it has a lot of great faculty, students and staff," Zansitis said. "I'm looking forward to getting to know Houston and Texas."

Zansitis is impressed by Rice's legal department, as well as Redwine's work.

"Rice has a really good legal department and I am really looking forward to working with the people in the department. They have been warm and welcoming," Zansitis said.

"Rice has one of the top counsel jobs at a university in the country."

"This job at Rice is a dream job. It's a great place to work with a fantastic faculty and student body."

Zansitis will join two associate general counsels, Carlos Garcia and Joe Davidson (Lovelot '70). Zansitis will be moving to Houston with his wife Suzanne, a health law attorney, and their two golden retrievers.

— Rachael枣庄

Gaming convention to be held this weekend

Students whose first week of classes have them seeking an escape from reality may find it at OwCon, a gaming, fantasy and science-fiction convention this weekend.

Physics graduate student Michael Casavant, who is directing OwCon this year, said that the schedule includes role-play games, tactical simulation games, and live-action role-playing games. "There will also be movie rooms, fantasy and sci-fi rooms, an anime room, and maybe an action/horror room," Casavant said. Several companies in the gaming industry will also be represented.

The convention begins at 6 p.m. today and runs until 6 p.m. Sunday. Activities will take place in the Student Center during its operating hours and there will be 24-hour gaming in Seawall Hall. The Alliance, a science-fiction, gaming and fantasy club, organizes OwCon.

"We'll have games to appeal to just about anybody with any level of interest or involvement," Casavant said. "We'll have games that you can sit down and play without any prior knowledge whatsoever. We'll have other games that are a little more complicated."

He also said he wants this to be an event for the Houston and Rice gaming communities: "I want to strengthen our local community network," Casavant said. "I want to help the merchants get the exposure that they need. And I really want to introduce people, not only to gaming, but new games as well."

Casavant said he expects hundreds of people to attend OwCon, including Rice alumni who were involved in the convention's early years in 1998.

"Gaming is like weightlifting for the mind," Casavant said.

Tickets to the convention may be purchased at the door. A weekend pass costs $16 for students and $20 for non-students. One-day passes may be purchased for $8. Prizes will be awarded to winners of the games.

— Susan Abramski

RAD classes scheduled for spring semester

The Rice University Police Department will be offering two new classes this spring semester. The classes will be held in the evenings, and they are underwritten by Rice Police.

The course is for women affiliated with Rice: students, faculty, staff, spouses and dependent children.

Evening classes will be offered Feb. 12-26. The second and third rounds of the class will be offered in March and April.

"These women may also take a version of the class for credit in the Criminal Justice Administration Program. That course is offered Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7-9 p.m."

Many people know about the portion of the course focusing on techniques to physically fight off an attacker, but that is only about half of the class," said Sgt. Jan Baylor, the RUPD program coordinator. "The remainder of the time is dedicated to aspects of safety prevention such as safe driving and safety while walking and jogging.

The course aims to "establish personal awareness of risk factors and how to react to those risks, how to be aware of what's going on around you," Baylor said.

The week-long training session culminates with a simulation against an instructor.

"Everything they've learned they get to apply," she said. "They get to feel what it's like to hit somebody, see what's effective and what's not.""Director of Student Activities Mona Hidalgo took the class after starting the Women's Resource Center. She was impressed not only by the class, but also by the instructors.

"They just really care about keeping the Rice women safe and giving the women the edge they might need in the fourth-largest city in the country," Hidalgo, a Harvard College graduate and University of Texas presidential associate, said. "I left more empowered."

Baylor stressed that the course is not physically demanding.

"All of the techniques and tactics are no-class based, not strength-based," he said. "We've had people with physical impairments... take this class," Baylor said.

More information, as well as the dates and registration form, is available at http://rupd.rice.edu/empic."

— Rachael枣庄

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CREDIT SUISSE | FIRST BOSTON
Baker: Political parties have been damaged by ‘gotcha’ tactics

"Demonizing your opponent is deemed a tactic that is analyzed on effectiveness," Baker said.

"It is unfortunate that the press doesn’t resist," he said. "In fact, it helps it. It likes the outrageous things."

"It is kind of desperation." During the question and answer session that followed, Baker said he thought that the system worked.

"You are almost guilty until proven innocent if you take a high-level office in Washington," Baker said.

"Clinton is trying to raise his personal position in the last weeks of office," said Baker. "It is kind of desperation."

"I can already detect differences in Washington. ... !" Sidey concluded by saying he was optimistic about the new administration and the change of attitude in Washington. "I can already detect differences in Washington. "I" the person at the top changes, then that makes a difference," Sidey said.

Wednesday’s presentation was the keynote event of the photo exhibit "Time and the Presidency," which features pictures of the 13 presidents from Franklin Delano Roosevelt to Bill Clinton, including this one of John F. Kennedy. The images, taken by Time magazine photographers, capture a wide range of events in each presidency including professional scenes and personal moments. The exhibit also includes some of the issues of Time with cover photos of presidents. Accompanying each president’s display are comments by Hugh Sidey, Time's Washington bureau chief from 1967-79. The exhibit has previously been displayed at 4 presidential libraries. The exhibit is on display in Baker Hall through Jan. 31.

Rev. William A. Lawson
Pastor

Since arriving in Texas after earning multiple degrees in sociology, divinity, and theology and completing doctoral studies in ethics and society, Rev. William “Bill” Lawson has made significant contributions to the spiritual and social needs of the Houston community. Founder of the Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, he was instrumental in the creation of the Pre-College Center at Texas Southern University and in the establishment of the Black Studies program at the University of Houston.

Rev. Lawson’s community and social action ministries are vast and diverse. In 1965, he organized PUSH, which gave impetus to the desegregation of schools in Houston. He later organized and sponsored the area’s largest and most productive Boy Scouts program. Troop 242 claims more than 92 Eagle Scouts. And in 1988, he conceived and orchestrated the lalous Initiative, which involved churches and synagogues in meeting the needs of Houston’s homeless and jobless. The program is now spearheaded by the United Way.

Rev. Lawson is an active member of the Houston Job Training Partnerships Administration, the Unity National Bank board of directors, the Commission on Mental Health for Children and Their Families, and the United Way board of directors, among others.
The Baker Institute is pleased to announce the availability of new student internships for the spring and summer 2001 semesters. These internships involve assisting Baker Institute fellows and Rice faculty on Institute studies, public policy research, and special projects. An economics or political science background is a plus. Workload may involve up to 10 hours per week. Each internship carries a cash award of $500. This is not a salaried position. Interested Rice students should supply the following to the Baker Institute as soon as possible:

- Letter of application, including areas of public policy interest
- Resume
- Current transcript
- Letter of recommendation

Information should be addressed to:
Baker Institute Internship Committee
Baker Institute, MS-40

Hurry, applications are now being accepted. Please specify the semester, spring or summer, for which you are applying. Decisions will be made as soon as possible. For more information contact Dr. Richard Stoll at x4683 or stoll@ruf.rice.edu.

The following incidents were reported to the University Police for the period Jan. 11-17.

- **Residential Colleges**
  - Hanszen College
    - Jan. 14 Bicycle stolen.
  - Sid Richardson College
    - Jan. 15 Bicycle stolen.
  - Jan. 16 Report of suspicious male wandering around west stairwell. Subject ran during officer's questioning and was apprehended at College Way between Sewall Hall and Rayzor Hall. The subject was carrying burglary tools and was arrested for evading arrest, issued a criminal trespass warning and transported to Harris County Jail.

- **Academic Buildings**
  - Space Science Building
    - Jan. 16 Report of suspicious male wandering around west stairwell. Subject ran during officer's questioning and was apprehended at College Way between Sewall Hall and Rayzor Hall. The subject was carrying burglary tools and was arrested for evading arrest, issued a criminal trespass warning and transported to Harris County Jail.

- **Other Buildings**
  - Greenbriar Building
    - Jan. 12 Staff member reported two wallets stolen the previous day. One wallet found without cash.
  - East Stadium Lot
    - Jan. 11 Report of minor accident between Rice Delivery Services vehicle and another vehicle.
  - Entrance 2
    - Jan. 17 Officer observed three suspicious males near entrance, one of whom was urinating in public view. A officer stopped the subjects and ran checks on all. One had an outstanding warrant for theft. The subject was taken into custody and transported to Harris County Jail for extradition to Nueces County. The other two males were released.

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**THEFTS, from Page 1**

wouldn’t have been inappropriate if they had gotten a more severe sentence,” Chief prosecutor for the district attorney’s office Vanessa Velasquez, who took over the case from Assistant District Attorney Jay Jackson two weeks ago, said she believed the sentence was fair.

“As it was, they already got expelled, their futures are essentially ruined,” she said. “They’re young, and for the rest of their lives, they’re going to have to explain how in the hell they got probation for burglary of a building, coupled with the fact that they lost the ability to get a degree from one of the best universities, if not the best university, in the state of Texas.”

Velasquez said she offered the three subjects deferred adjudication for their guilty pleas, and the judge then imposed other conditions on their sentence. Velasquez said she met with Rice Associate General Counsel Carlos Garcia in order to ensure the university’s support for the plea bargaining process.

Paula and Byer will meet with Poe again Jan. 30, when he will give them their community service assignment. At this time, they will also finalize the terms of the deferred adjudication, and the sentence will begin.

**POLICE BLOTTER**

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The insides of Rayzor Hall have been removed as a part of the $6.9 million renovation of the building. When it reopens by the end of 2001, Rayzor will be the home for foreign language instruction and study at Rice, housing the French Studies, Hispanic and Classical Studies, and German and Slavic Studies Departments, as well as the Center for the Study of Languages and the Asian Studies Program.

Campus under construction

Rayzor Hall

Martel College, Rice's ninth residential college, will house 232 students, two resident associates and one visiting faculty member. The college, which is planned to open in January 2002, will share a new common kitchen/servery with neighboring Brown and Jones Colleges.

Wiess College

The new Wiess College lies between the current Wiess building and Hanszen College, in an area that was formerly a parking lot. Wiessmen and women will move in fall 2002. A new common kitchen will connect the new Wiess Commons and the new Hanszen Commons.

Jones School

After $69 million and two and a half years of construction, the new Jesse H. Jones Graduate School of Management complex will open near the end of 2002. Underneath the new building will be a 687-space, inventory parking garage.

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**NOV 22**

**Ulysses wanders Mississippi in ‘O Brother’**

Angela Zanella

**THE REVENDER STAFF**

**Sing me a song, and through me review the film of the Coen brothers and of George Clooney, who hath brought the tale of a man of skill, cunning and versatility.**


The film follows three fugitives who escape from the county jail and Filtering the story for period or the myth, and the resolution scenes seem a little contrived as the Coens try to stay true to Homer and incorporate all of the characters.

The three fugitives desperately seek transportation, cash, clothing and Ulysses' favorite brand of hair pomade.

But a lot of the fun of O Brother is in its fresh take on the story and in scoring some of the many subtle reverences to Homer.

If the story is not the traditional Odyssey, Clooney is certainly not a traditional Odysseus. Although he is still the classic braggart and consining trickster, Ulysses McGill is also a perpetual loser and a complete pretender. He tries to appear smarter than he really is, which is easy around Pete and Delmer but succeeds, making him more than just a stupid sidekick. Trotto is just Pete, partly because his character is not as defined as Delmar or Ulysses. The supporting cast is good as politicians and monsters, with Goodman's Cyclops standing out.

The episode plot of O Brother is held together by the music. From the opening invocation to the final cajoling belly-laugh, the film is filled with enough songs to classify it as a musical. The superb period soundtrack includes the singing of the Soggy Bottom Boys, a band of grinding grungers, a group of cabinet makers, a man with a sign that says "You Are My Sunshine" near the end.

While O Brother, Where Art Thou? may have some low points, it is a delightful and enjoyable trip down an old, classic story. Ethan and Joel Coen take a familiar myth and weave it almost seamlessly into the mythos. The result is buoyant and inventive with both the Coens and Clooney at their best.

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**Solid performances all around in Raimi’s thriller ‘The Gift’**

Dalton Tomlin

**RICE COFFEEHOUSE POETRY SLAM**

If you’re an aspiring poet or just want to watch a performance, hear over at the Student Center for the Coffeehouse’s second Poetry Slam. Contestants should bring three pieces and they can compete to win $100. Sign up and open mic from 5:30 to 8. Competition begins at 9 p.m. For more info, contact Latavia at lyricism@rice.edu.

The script was written by Billy Bob Thornton and Tom Eyen, who have collaborated before on such films as One False Move. While it’s far from perfect, it gives a smart, creative glimpse at small-town southern life, much like Thornton’s Oscar-winning Sling Blade, but with a supernatural twist.

From the beginning it’s clear what the “gift” is: Annie Wilson (Priscilla Clarkson), a widowed mother of three, hitchhikes for her advice even though it’s seen as an un-Christian practice. She soon befriends her new son’s principal, Wayne Collins (Greg Kinnear), who somehow engages to a much younger Jessica King (John Goodman). When Jessica mysteriously disappears, it’s up to a paranoid southern town of scars looking for expert cinematography, editing and a bare minimum of costly special effects.

The most intriguing is auto mechanic Buddy Cole (the underrated Greg Kinnear), who has engineers mental problems stemming from child abuse. He frequently comes to Annie for help, even though a psychocritics would be more appropriates.

And then there’s Reeves’ role as the dangerous redneck Tom Eversey. Reeves is not much that’s surprising or original about his character — racist, wife-beater, adulterer, etc. Reeves is appearing because he gets the job done. Unlike in The Devil’s Advocate, he carries a Southern accent throughout (and, he has less screen time here).

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Mamet scores hit with Hollywood satire 'State and Main'

Robert Reichle

The multitalented David Mamet is an absolute master of the English language. His plays and films have included thrillers, dramas and crime movies, but nothing in an satire as when he turns his pen toward satirical comedy.

The frantic director of the big-budget ride.

Mamet last tried his hand at comedy with his screenplay for the prophetic Wag the Dog, and with his new ensemble comedy State and Main, he achieves the same level of smart humor as in his earlier work.

State and Main depicts the arrival of a movie production team in the sleepy town of Waterford, Vt., and the insanity that ensues from the collision between Hollywood and small-town values. The setup might sound predictable, but the cast of ruthless characters makes for an entertaining, unpredictable ride.

Walt Price (William H. Macy), the frantic director of the big-budget period film The Old Mill, has just moved the shooting location of his film to Waterford due to an unexplained catastrophe in the last day of filming. He tries to shoot on time. As he attempts to get production rolling, he has to negotiate with startle Claire Wellesley (Sarah Jessica Parker), who wants to renge on her agreement to do a nude scene, while at the same time keeping in Check Bob Barrenger (Alec Baldwin), the film’s supernaturall actor whom hobby is 14-year-old girls.

Walt and his producer Marty Rozen (David Paymer) also squander every extra cent out of their budget in order to appease the locals’ newfound appetite for stardom, and in time they fall victim to the machinations of the mayor’s wife (Patti LuPone), a local politician (Clark Gregg) and an underage waitress who knows opportunity when she sees it (Jula Silvis).

While the Hollywood expatriates play out their cutthroat battle against the once-calm locals in what could have stood on its own as a superb satire of Hollywood, there’s also a tender love story playing out. Screenwriter Joe White (Philip Seymour Hoffman, the caretaker in Magnolia) is feeling jaded about the Hollywood process until he finds a kindred spirit in Ann (Rebecca Pidgeon), a local bookstore owner.

Hoffman simply steals the movie as the nice-guy screenwriter — here’s hoping we see more of him in the future.

Their budding relationship looks brighter and brighter until the insanity of the film shoot interrupts their lives, and Joe is faced with a moral dilemma in the midst of the flagrantly immoral production community.

Mamet, who also directed State and Main, exploits a smart, passive humor in his script’s excellent dialogue. Despite the in-your-face outrageousness of the film crew, the movie’s humor is very laid-back, and it relies more on quirky timing and character traits than on outright laughs.

Viewers looking for quick, easy laughs might be disappointed by the gradual pace of the film, and at times the movie goes for too long without a humorous payoff.

Every single member of the large cast does an outstanding job. Baldwin and Parker play off conventional superstar stereotypes without coming across as cardboard cutouts. Hoffman simply steals the movie as the nice-guy screenwriter — here’s hoping we see more of him in the future.

Mamet has good chemistry with Pidgeon, who also delivers an excellent performance. Pidgeon is the sort of actress who same viewers will love and others will hate. After being entranced by her in Mamet’s 1997 film The Spanish Prisoner, I’ve been convinced that she’s a capable actress; others might violently disagree.

Macy, while enjoyable to watch, was a bit miscast as the boorish director, but he makes the most of it.

Audiences tend to split in opinion over Pidgeon, then the entire Grand Canyon separates opinions on Mamet. If you’re unfamiliar with his work, a better introduction might be The Spanish Prisoner, a brilliant Hitchcockian thriller.

While State and Main is a funny movie, I wouldn’t call it hilarious or historical. Its subtle satire is definitely entertaining and worth seeing, but don’t go into the theater expecting the next There’s Something About Mary.

Supporting characters come and go, without development, and the film itself seems obsessed with being about tone, not about specific character, and Coppola successfully builds a haunting, aching atmosphere that stays with the viewer long after a viewing.

On the DVD, the menu selection screens are well done, and the theme of the movie, but the offerings contained within are slightly subpar. The "making of" documentary is especially disappointing — it appears to have been shot on a home video camera, and it’s even more devoid of detail than most flabby documentaries of its kind. And when you take into account the fact that Coppola grew up in a family of filmmakers, its vacuousness and amateur appearance are even harder to ignore.

The inclusion of an music video "Playground Love" is bizarre in a way that’s appropriate for the film, and the music itself is meaningful. There are no noticeable differences in the digital transfer, and the sound of the film’s color does, however, overall the film itself is still impressive. Anyone who thinks that good movies came out last year will be pleasantly surprised.

— Robert Reichle

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The Virgin Suicides
Better Ingredients.
Better Pizza.

The Virgin Suicides, Sofia Coppola's directorial debut, was one of 2000's real gems that many viewers overlooked. As the daughter of Francis Ford Coppola, the pressure was on Sofia to make an outstanding movie, and she did all that and more — her adapted screenplay and direction made this film one of my favorites of 2000.

The Virgin Suicides tells the story of the beautiful Lisbon sisters and the neighborhood boys who worship them from afar in 1970s Michigan. The film is less about suicide than it is about love, sexuality and obsession. Kirsten Dunst gives a beguiling performance as Lux Lisbon, especially during scenesopposite Josh Hartnett as Trip Fontaine. Lux's determined suitor.

Kathleen Turner and James Woods also give outstanding performances as the girls' restrictive parents.

The Virgin Suicides
DVD Extras
(out of five)
(out of five)

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For more information contact:
Career Services Center at 713/348-4055
or email Heidi Glantzberg at heidilee@rice.edu
Stealing a road win is tough in the Jungle

A recent unscientific poll conducted by The Sporting News asked 75 Division I men's basketball coaches where they would place to play a game.

And the winner is ... Autry Court.

That's right, our very own Autry Court received nine percent of the vote. No other venue received more than four percent.

I bet you this is going to be another column pleading that we change the name — because if I'm wrong, a new gym would be great. I would jump up and down and start dancing cartwheels if I woke up tomorrow to the announcement that Rice was going to start construction on a new arena for our basketball and volleyball teams.

But that's not going to happen, at least for a few years. President Gillis has publicly stated that although plans for a new gym are in the works, no construction projects will begin until after the completion of the $100 million Fondren library project.

Anyway, my initial reaction to the poll was anger and frustration. Was I wearing rose-colored glasses in what I had always perceived as a quaint, "old-school" gym full of history and character?

Then it hit me. Maybe I should examine the details of this poll.

The poll asks coaches to name the worst place to play basketball. I wonder what that question means as asking for the worst place, in terms of facility. But maybe some interpreted the question as asking for the worst place in the context of a home basketball arena. Probably it's a combination of both.

I tend to lean toward the combination view. While I believe that our opponents might view Autry Court as a "dinky gym," it is The Sporting News called it, I also believe that opposing teams simply don't like playing the Owls on their home turf.

Although our crowds aren't huge, they are enthusiastic. Add to that the presence of the Basketball Owl Band playing just a few feet from the opposing bench during timeouts. And there is the blue "curtain of doom" located behind the south basket which our opponents must play just a few feet from the opposing bench during timeouts.

The question was "name the worst place to play." I believe that our opponents might view Autry Court as the worst place to play. Autry Court definitely provides our basketball teams with a great home court advantage: Throwing out last year's injury-ridden Owls, this year's men's team is riding a 17-3 record at home during the past three and a half years.

So, the answer is Autry Court. The basketball Owl Band provides our fans with a great home court advantage. Throwing out last year's injury-ridden Owls, this year's men's team is riding a 17-3 record at home during the past three and a half years.

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Men's basketball faces toughest test yet

Ball control a major issue against TCU press with loss of point guard Mance

by Eric Raub

A spring season full of opportunity lies ahead for the men's tennis team. Their biggest problem — and I'm not calling it a problem — is that they have too many quality players to fit into the dual match setting.

IN FOCUS: MEN'S TENNIS

This weekend: Rice hosts 11 regional schools, including fifth-ranked Texas A&M University, in the Rice Indoor Invitational at the Houston Metropolitan Racquet Club today through Sunday.

Up ahead: The Owls will hope to improve upon their 3-2 record when they begin dual match play Jan. 29 by hosting the University of Nebraska.

"We're going to be very, very strong team," junior Richard Barker said. "They're talking about the best team we've had in 10 years. There are some talented players, and if we're playing hard, we should be able to beat them. That's the way all great teams are."

The Owls begin the season playing individually in this weekend's indoor invitational at the Houston Metropolitan Racquet Club.

The tournament, which starts today, will not be easy. Rice will meet two of their biggest obstacles in this weekend's indoor invitational. The Owls will face two teams in six singles matches and three double matches with the goal of earning more points than their opponent. Each singles match counts as one point, and whichever team wins at least two of the three doubles matches earns the team doubles-point.

Even though the Owls play as individuals this weekend, they're already beginning to get a good idea of what their spring season lineup will look like.

In the top three singles spots are sophomore Matthias Mathias and freshmen Richard and William Barker. The freshmen recruits proved themselves in the fall, and along with the improved Mathias, look to provide stiff competition for the other teams from other Eastern Conference programs.

Mathias Mathias has been a little placed by injury," assistant coach Shreem Ladha said. "That's a lot more mature. He handles pressure situations now.

Men's basketball faces toughest test yet

Ball control a major issue against TCU press with loss of point guard Mance

by Ryan Knecht

This week presents the biggest challenge so far this season for the men's basketball team.

Last night, the Owls faced 12-4 Southern Methodist University. The Owls were not available at press time. Tomorrow night, it won't get any easier when Rice plays high-flying Texas Christian University, which is 13-4 and averages a national best 96.9 points per game.

And the Owls have to do it all without the services of starting sophomore point guard Omar Selmi Mance, who suffered injuries to both ankles and will be out for the rest of the season.

May be Autry Court was named the nation's worst place to play partly because of crowding scenes near the opposition's bench. By our floor's hard surface probably contributed to Mance's the third starter in two years Rice has lost due to a leg-related injury.

I've never had any problems like this before, but I'm also in the habit of just playing ball," Mance said. "A lot of people are saying that these floor's hard surfaces, and that may play a role, but this year we've been on there as much, and I did practice last year, and nothing happened like this. I don't want to blame it on that, but it is kind of odd.

The Owls sat in the middle of the Western Athletic Conference standings at 11-2, but stealing a road win in the Metroplex is a tough task. TCU, whose ferocious press can blow a game open in a matter of minutes, leads the WAC in scoring margins and has eight wins of at least 20 points, including an 111-91 victory over Sierra College, which beat Rice 95-59 earlier this season.

"The competition this time of year is greater than what we saw in the early part of the season," head coach Mike Wilks said. "We've got to learn some lessons from the past and embrace the challenge of playing against good competition and playing on the road."
Talented Owls battle for spots in spring lineup

Owls lose Mance for year

Texas Christian University tonight son and 2-1 in WAC play, take on their home court is necessary to defend our home court," sophomore guard Kim Lawson said. "I think we're getting better as a team. We just need to be a little more consistent on the court.

The Lady Owls will also have revenge on their minds. Senior guard LaTonya Sam as their first outing against her old team. Fore last season but Sunday will be the showdown undefeated and last year's regular-season title, last year, they picked up 9-0," Richard said. "But it will be tough offensively. We can take them, but we've got to take it one match at a time and stay grounded.

The Lady Owls, 9-5 on the season and 2-1 in WAC play, take on Texas Christian University tonight at the University on Sunday at Auryn Court.

The Owls won't have much time to rest before the SMU Mustangs come in for their home court in a Lady Owl uniform. Rigg transferred to Rice from SMU before last season due to the presence of Jennifer Rigg on the TCU and SMU.

Rigg sat out last season due to NCAA transfer guidelines.

"It's going to be a really emotional game on Sunday," Tuttle said. "SMU is one of our biggest rivals.

Currently, the Owls sit just behind 4-0 TCU and 3-4 SMU and are fighting with Hawaii at 3-1 in conference action. Nevada fell to fifth place at 2-2 after losing on the road to both TCU and SMU.

"It's just the same as it was at the start of the year," head coach Cryo McKinney said. "The same five teams will be battling for the WAC title. It will be TCU, SMU, Hawaii, Nevada and us. Hopefully, we'll start playing with some consistency so that we can put ourselves in a position to win the conference title.

ERRATUM

The photograph accompanying the women's basketball article Jan. 16 incorrectly identified Jennifer Rigg on the court in a Lady Owl uniform. Rigg transferred to Rice from SMU before last season but Sunday will be her first outing against her old team.
friday JAN 19

Gamers rejoice! The OWLCON gaming convention, taking place in the Student Center and Sewall Hall, starts today at 6 p.m. and runs continuously until Sunday at 6 p.m. That's a two-nighters, guys. Don't forget to shower. The event is sponsored by the Alliance, a gaming, sci-fi, fantasy and anime club at Rice. A weekend pass is $20, $16 for students. A one-day pass is $14. For details, see http://www.rice.edu/owlcon.

MONDAY JAN 22

"If your vagina could talk, what would it say?" Auditions for Eve Ensler's THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES produced jointly by Weiss and Lovett Colleges, are at 7:30 p.m. tonight and tomorrow in the Lovett Commons.

MEN'S TENNIS takes on Lamar University at 10 a.m. at the John Hess Tennis Stadium, followed by a match against the University of New Orleans at 2:30 p.m.

MEN'S TENNIS hosts the Metropolitan Racquet Club/Rice Invitational at the Houston Metropolitan Racquet Club all day today and tomorrow.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL plays Texas Christian University at 7 p.m. in Autry Court.

Celebrating the new millennium in the building that won't last another decade: Weiss College hosts the FIRST PARTY of the semester from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.

SATURDAY JAN 20

The SWIM TEAM goes up against San Jose State University at 1 p.m. at the Rice Pool.

Jones College student RYAN DOHONEY baritone, gives his senior vocal recital at 5 p.m. in Duncan Recital Hall in Alice Pratt Brown Hall.

sunday JAN 21

The Lady Owls WOMEN'S BASKETBALL team faces off against Southern Methodist University at 2 p.m. at Autry Court.

"If your vagina could talk, what would it say?" Auditions for Eve Ensler's THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES produced jointly by Weiss and Lovett Colleges, are at 7:30 p.m. tonight and tomorrow in the Lovett Commons.
A heartfelt message from the Backpage Admissions Office

With an elite team of 25 BPEs and a helpful squad of 30 pedantic English majors who will quibble over the hyphenation of the word “hard-assed” (they just made us hyphenate it), The Rice Thresher offers an impressive 19/11 ratio of unfunny to funny staff. Working at the Backpage provides an education second to none in the areas of hard-hitting journalism, Big Ass Margarita consumption and the lost art of libel.

The Backpage consistently ranks as one of the last pages in every issue of the Thresher. It stands out as a superb combination of quality and price, with high-caliber humor provided free with your $20,000 donation to the Cashier’s Office.

Another perk of being a BPE is the generous monetary compensation for your hard work. At present, storing away at the Backpage earns you a solid $31 an hour, making it eight times as lucrative as assembling Nikes in a Thailand factory. Four out of five fathers agree that, in their day, that kind of money would buy you a fancy boat ride to Hawaii for a private lap dance with a lively young hula girl. Dirty old bastards.

The following information about the Backpage is intended to help prospective BPEs and their families with the life-changing decision. The Backpage is a challenging, academically rigorous community where innovative dollars burst and scientific breakthroughs occur daily. Your rights join the Backpage are solely your own, but here’s some information to guide you in the application process.

Take a Virtual Tour of BPE Life

The Thresher staff is extremely ethnically diverse. Here Jose explains to us that in his native language, “peligros” means “danger.” Stabilizing cultural exchange is one of the many benefits of being a BPE.

One of the many fringe benefits of being a BPE is the weekend access to James A. Baker’s private car. Take this baby out for a spin, and you are guaranteed to turn heads! Jimbo himself even refers to it as the Ladykiller.

Welcome back.

Class is in session every Thursday night.

Welcome back.

The ‘Bring back OK Cola’ classifieds

Leslie Hodges at (713) 224-7172
during normal business hours.

TUTORS WANTED — Win Tutoring is hiring tutors for all subjects, middle and high school subjects. Earnings up to $35/hour. Transportation necessary. Please call us at (800) 903-3231 or send email to win@wintravel.com.

PART-TIME NANNY needed. Mon.-Fri. 3:45 p.m. Must be good driver and enjoys kids. $10/hour. Interested? Contact Mary at (713) 974-5553.

MISCELLANEOUS

Summer mentorships in Houston, TX. Available for Rice undergraduates interested in developing their leadership capabilities. Program includes a stipend and substantial work. Round one application deadline is Wednesday, January 31. More information at Leadership Rice and see online at http://www.rice.edu/~leadership/summer.html.

ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN civilizations major desperately seeks employment. No task too menial. Help me, for the love of Zeus!

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Average SAT score before cheating

* last semester, we rejected 14 BPE applicants with perfect SAT scores