

AROUNDTOWN

Little Big Planet creates gigantic experience

W Rexly Penaflores
Managing Editor

When the Playstation 3 (PS3) hit store shelves two years ago, one of the games that was featured in ads as a Playstation franchise was *Little Big Planet* (*LBP*). However, gamers waited two long years for the *LBP*'s appearance.

LBP finally has arrived on the PS3, and it is considered one of the best games of 2008. With enjoyable levels, a plethora of downloadable content and an immense amount of materials for creating levels, *LBP* is sure to astound gamers worldwide.

The main character is a little tiny figure named Sackboy who saves the world by defeating the Collector who has taken prisoners from different parts of the world. Along the way, Sackboy receives help from many different characters and is challenged by numerous obstacles in each level such as burning logs, spiked creatures and numerous traps. The main story is long and is bound to keep players hooked to the game, but the real fun begins when the player creates their own level.

The slogan of *LBP* is "Play, Create, Share." The slogan addresses the three main things of *LBP*: the story levels, the creation of new levels by the player and the chance to publish

a gamer's own level online for the whole world to play. The "Create" part of the *LBP* slogan is the epitome of the game. In the Create Level mode, the level possibilities are only limited to the player's imagination. The level can be as

complicated as the story levels or as simple as a car race between two players. The materials for level creation are found all over the story levels and the players has to accumulate as many materials as they can in order for their level to be very complex. The objects in the game also act the way that they should in real life. For example, if a ball is placed in the middle of the level, it must be attached to a string on a ceiling in order for it to stay afloat otherwise, gravity will act and cause the ball to fall down. Players can also use their current materials to create new objects that can be published and shared through the *LBP* online community. While players may think that a car race between two players might be a simple



level, the creating process is quite lengthy. This reviewer found himself spending a few hours creating just one level in which the player had to go up a ramp and through a crevice to find treasure.

As for the online aspect of the game, the experience is amazing. The levels created by other players really show off how creative people can be with the materials given in the Create Level mode. Playing online is essential in *LBP* because there are some sections in the story line that require two or more players to reach a certain goal. Based on the number of players needed to reach a certain area, the process could make players frustrated or very happy.

If finishing the story or making new levels make players very boring, there are also trophies that can be collected. Similar to Microsoft's XBOX 360 achievement program, trophies are certain missions that players can get by completing certain goals. An example is the

trophy called Just Beginning, which is achieved by completing the main story line. There are 48 trophies overall, and they are bound to keep players interested in the game.

The game may look flawless, but there are minute errors in the game. A main element of the gameplay is jumping from place to place. The height of the jump can be increased by how hard the player presses the X button. Sometimes, the character might not be able to reach places that should be reachable no matter how hard the button is pressed. There are also times when the game freezes and the console has to be restarted.

In a *West Word* interview with Media Molecule, the game's production team, they were blown away by the creativity of the created levels. Asked about what would be the next step for the production team, they said, "We want to nurture the community, add extra tools, and generally unleash the creative sack person that lives in everyone." *LBP* has raised the level of creative gameplay and it will be a timeless classic for every hardcore gamer.

Little Big Planet



PS3

Downtown Owl wins over reader with style and characters

W Naomi Prale
Around Town Editor

The state of North Dakota is filled with rural towns where the nearest grocery store is 10 miles away. In Chuck Klosterman's *Downtown Owl*, the town of Owl, ND, Klosterman writes great line after great line, allowing the reader to visualize a town where the evening commute takes 18 seconds.

Klosterman's tale is a collection of ever-changing characters, scenes and formats. The story revolves around three dissimilar characters living in very similar environments, each dealing with his/her life until all three of them are connected with similar troubles, in a

fierce North Dakota blizzard.

The characters are involved in interesting plots that tell readers completely different stories every chapter. Klosterman uses a round robin style, and alternates talking about the characters.

Each character gets roughly a third of the book to tell about his/her own story of his/her in downtown Owl. Mitch is a third-string quarterback on the high school football team, with a deep grudge against his English teacher/coach. Horace is 73 and a widower, has lived most of his life in Owl and enjoys spending his afternoon with his cronies at the local diner, drinking coffee. Julia has just moved to Owl, a recent college graduate about to teach history, and has a hard time adjusting to small town

life.

As the story unfolds, the characters find themselves recounting past experiences (Horace), falling in love (Julia), and imagining a famous brawl between two classmates along with how to murder a high school teacher (Mitch). One of the best chapters of this book is an account from Mitch. As he listens to his English teacher talk about the book *1984*—the book is set during the 1983-84 school year—he questions the strong thematic elements of this book and how these themes connect to the extramarital affairs that his teacher hides from his wife

and how these themes connect to the rest of Mitch's life.

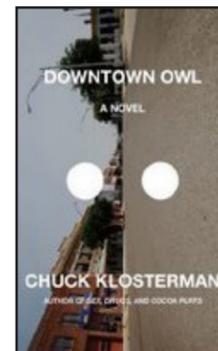
Another strong chapter involves a conversation Horace has with friends that relates to a true account, the incident of Gordon Khal, an anti-Semitic North Dakotan who refuses to pay his taxes or to support the U.S. government. Klosterman takes one incident and masterfully connects it to everyone in the town, establishing himself as a persuasive writer.

The novel relates that Khal is notorious because he spent a large portion of his life evading the federal government, and in the massive shootout that accompanied his capture, Khal escaped from the authorities and was never seen again. Khal's aversion to federal authority is of great interest to North Dakotans. Some of Horace's companions agree with Khal's actions, feeling that farmers had been tricked by the government during times of prosperity and eventually went bankrupt.

The writing style of *Downtown Owl* spends less time on the plot itself, and concentrates more on the descriptions of the characters and setting. Klosterman creates complex descriptions that do not necessarily provide vivid details, but fill up most of the novel. Readers learn more about the characters than the plot, and this creates a good if not better understanding of the novel than if Klosterman had spent his time writing about the plot.

Klosterman's first novel uses many ingredients in order to create a story that tells people what it means to be normal. In a normal small town, the events surrounding everyone's life create the unique feelings that readers take from this story.

The novel makes an important point of how a person's destiny is to go nowhere, because in the end, the characters end up accomplishing nothing. *Downtown Owl* is a celebration of the lives of people that usually go uncelebrated, creating a novel that is more about characters and personalities than about plot.



Bland plot can't match up to Bond's performance

W Hillary Lindwall
News/Wire Editor

Although the newest James Bond story, *Quantum of Solace*, was expected to entertain viewers just as these films have in the past, the latest 007 flick has failed to carry on the success of its predecessor, *Casino Royale*. Director Marc Forster, who did not direct *Casino Royale*, falls short of producing an instant classic.

Quantum of Solace immediately begins right where *Casino Royale* left off. After being betrayed by Vesper, the woman he loved in the previous film, James Bond (Daniel Craig) has difficulty keeping his current mission completely professional.

Bond captures Mr. White (Jesper Christensen), his enemy from *Casino Royale*, and questions him with M (Judi Dench), the director of British intelligence (MI6). It is revealed that the organization who blackmailed Vesper in order to steal Bond's casino winnings in the previous film is more dangerous and potent than previously expected.

Bond's mission leads him to many areas of the world including Haiti, Italy, Austria, and South America. While in Haiti, Bond meets Camille (Olga Kurylenko), a woman who leads 007 to Dominic Greene (Mathieu Amalric).

This major player in the secret criminal organization from *Casino Royale* known as Quantum conspires to control the water supply of Bolivia by forging deals with Bolivian General Medrano (Joaquín Cosío).

Although the film does not disappoint in terms of action, the plot is not visible in the film at all. It seems as though many events occur that are strung together without

a discernible story line. Although writers attempt to connect *Casino Royale* and *Quantum of Solace*, the product is confusing rather than clever, which makes the movie less enjoyable.

Although the Daniel Craig as James Bond films came out nearly two years apart, the viewer is expected to remember exactly what happened in the previous film.

This reviewer saw both films and was confused by the attempted tie-ins rather than intellectually stimulated. Along with the nonsensical requirement for previous knowledge, the title of the film seems completely unconnected to the storyline. Although the secret organization is known as Quantum, this is not clearly revealed in the film and the only visible connection to the word "solace" is the fact that a lot of action occurs in the desert.

Additionally, because the movie consists of a series of seemingly unconnected events, this reviewer thought that the entire story would come

together near the end of the film. However, nothing is explained, which left this reviewer feeling perplexed.

Despite the confusing nature of the script, the actors do a good job of conveying their characters. Daniel Craig carries over his successful Bond role from the previous film and the new characters are also believable.

In addition to good acting, the music of the film increases the intensity of the action and creates a mysterious mood at times.

Overall, *Quantum of Solace* will not disappoint Bond fans in terms of acting, cinematography and style, and the action scenes are exciting and well-staged. However, the lack of a cogent plot causes the film to fall flat.

If more had been explained, the film may have been salvaged, but the story line goes nowhere, so neither does the movie as a whole.

Future James Bond films should focus a little more on plot and less on explosions.



Quantum of Solace



Directed by Marc Forster

Downtown Owl



Chuck Klosterman

WestWord

Ruined pulls on audience's heartstrings

W Uzma Ahmad
Editorials Editor

Currently playing at the Goodman Theatre, *Ruined* sheds light on present day life in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a nation being torn apart by a bloody civil war. Inspired by the stories of brave women of the Congo, the play offers the audience insight on the harsh lifestyles of the inhabitants of a small mining town in this country.

Throughout the course of the play, the plot solely takes place at a locally acclaimed bar. The bar is owned by Mama Nadi (Sadie Arrika Ekulona), a savvy businesswoman who provides her customers with everything from cold beer, warm meals, live music and dancing, to the company of women.

The story begins when Christian (Russell G. Jones), a local trader, arrives at Mama Nadi's bar with a supply of goods that includes drinks, food and two refugee girls who were abandoned by their families after being brutally raped by local militia.

Despite the fact that one of the girls, Sophie (Condola Phyleia Rashad), is "ruined"—her genitals destroyed by sexual assaulters—Mama Nadi reluctantly takes in both women, adding them to her prostitutes and waitresses.

The girls continue to live under Mama Nadi's care, attending to militia soldiers and rich foreigners who frequently visit the bar and its "services." Commander Osembenga (Kevin Mambo), the harsh leader of the rebel

militia force also pays routine visits to the bar, receiving V.I.P. service due to his high social status.

Trouble disrupts the bar's extravagant nightlife when opposing militia start attending the bar, causing outside politics to infiltrate the peace and excitement of Mama Nadi's hospitality.

When a hostile soldier, Fortune (Chiké Johnson), ends up the bar's door, searching for his lost wife, matters only become more complicated. These encounters, combined with the emotional conflicts of the Mama Nadi's girls as they journey through a male-dominated society, lead up to a twisted and heart-tugging climax.

Since the play entirely takes place in a bar, the stage setup is rather simple. Yet, it involves significant, creative touches that set a comfortable mood for the audience.

One side of the stage consists of a bar counter against a wall with stools, drinks, and a few touches to give off the impression of African culture. At the edge of the wall is a doorway that clearly leads to the girls' sleeping quarters.

Between scenes, this wall is rotated to reveal this inside bedroom. On the other end of the stage is the bar's entrance; the doorway creates

a space between two palm trees. The rest of the stage is the actual bar, consisting of a pool table and chairs, with palm trees in the background to

Occasionally, acting performances were a bit over exaggerated and cliché. Johnson (Fortune) would overemphasize his emotions during his attempts to find his lost wife, resulting in exaggerated acting. However, the actresses Rashad (Sophie) and Ekulona (Mama Nadi) were able to embody their characters emotionally, resulting in extremely dynamic performances that captured the hearts of the audience.

The performers also adopted central African accents which were believable and added reality to the stage.

Ruined offers a unique story filled with emotion and intellect. Vibrant stage activity and engaging actor performances allow the audience to analyze critically the conditions of the war-ridden Congo.

Ruined runs through Dec. 7 at the Goodman Theatre, located at 170 North Dearborn Street in Chicago. For tickets and more information, call 312.443.3800 or visit GoodmanTheatre.org.



Photo courtesy Goodman Theater

add the feeling of a forest atmosphere.

Although the play is not a musical, live singing by the bar prostitutes is involved as part of the bar's nightlife. Live music, consisting of authentic African drums and the guitar are also part of the bar's performances. This clever setup truly presents a bar atmosphere and distracts the audience from the sometimes slow-moving plot.



Wannabe America's Next Top Model is a waste of viewer's time

W Sarah Espinosa
Sports Editor

Reality television just needs to go away. The new show *Stylista* on the CW network proves just that. The show, which features 11 hopeful amateur designers fighting for a junior editor position at the high fashion magazine *ELLE*, leaves the viewer concluding that the show lacks originality.

The main criticism of the show is that it is virtually identical to Tyra Banks' *America's Next Top Model (ANTM)* except that the main goal is different. That is to be expected, as the program has the same executive producers as *ANTM*.

The show is all about drama, including manipulating, lying, cheating, backstabbing and the rest of the whole nine yards. Executive producer Banks clearly is starting to run out of good ideas for television.

Every week, the scenario is the same, with



contestants performing a challenge on teams that change from week to week. The challenges vary from designing a photo essay for a certain

style, to making outfits for models in a small fashion show. At least the challenges actually allow the contestants to display their skills to their advantage or disadvantage as the case may be. Even the first assistant's task—serving Slowey breakfast—challenges the contestants to select and present the food in a pleasing manner. Although fashion sense and design aesthetic are more subjective, the wannabes are tested on information that any aspiring fashion editor should know.

In one challenge, it is downright shameful the way some of the competitors can't tell an empire waist from a high-waisted pant, a pleat

from a dart or a pintuck from shearing. Even more embarrassing: many of the competitors neglect to consult the fashion dictionaries available on their desks.

The show is so bland that it doesn't even have the typical love-to-hate characters (see: Omarosa, *The Apprentice*), nor does it have any problems that one would find remotely interesting. It is dull with stupid cat fights. When contestants get eliminated, there is usually no specific reason besides the fact that their team lost. Slowey just says, "You're not the right fit. Please pack up your desk and go."

The missing oomph in the show makes it seem to last longer than its 8-8:30 p.m. slot on Wednesday.

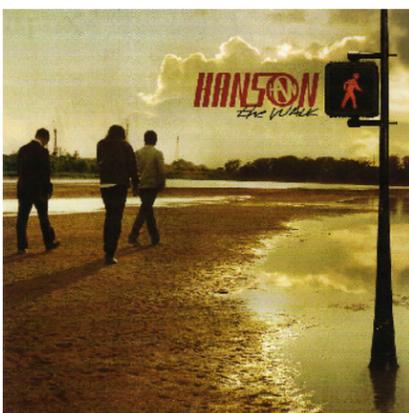


Hanson grows up to amaze concert goers and create new sounds for everyone to enjoy

W Bridget Van Der Bosch
Staff Writer

Thinking about Hanson without automatically bursting in one's personal rendition of "Mmmmbop" might be difficult. After seeing the teenyboppers-turned-20-somethings on The Walk Tour singing about politics and international issues, this reviewer will no longer have any problems seeing past the mistakes Hanson had made as young boys.

The once blond, long-haired, bubble gum pop group Hanson, known for their helium harmonies on their debut album *Middle*



of *Nowhere*, took the House of Blues (HOB) by storm Nov. 4.

Walking into the stifling room with mostly female fans of all ages crammed wall-to-wall was quite overwhelming. It was surprising to see how many people still supported the brothers even after their long hiatus to create their own record company, 3CG, named for their pre-*Middle of Nowhere*, independent release, *3 Car Garage*.

Hanson began the set with "Something Going Round," off the band's newest album *Walk*. The people in the crowd responded well, singing and dancing along. Taylor's punchy piano and Zac's muscular drumming, matched with their newly profound lyrics, really kicked off the night. Concentrating early on the new CD

Walk, the band roused the crowd as they tore into "Great Divide." The song's lyrics are touching, explaining how we can save the world if everyone could just work together, the perfect introduction for the siblings' new social awareness.

After finishing the song, the brothers Hanson talked about their latest philanthropic effort, a collaboration with Tom's Shoes. Tom's Shoes is a footwear company with which Hanson has partnered to make sure that children in need are adequately shod. For every pair bought, Tom's Shoes will donate shoes to a child somewhere in the world who cannot afford to purchase their own.

After playing a few more songs from *Walk*, Hanson delighted the crowd with "Crazy Beautiful" from *This Time Around*. Because the majority of the crowd was female, this upbeat love song was a hit.

The night wound down with acoustic versions of familiar numbers from *Middle of Nowhere*, "A Minute Without You" and "Where's the Love," tunes that primed the crowd for the song

they most wanted to hear, and they waited in delirious anticipation of the tune that started it all. The first chords of "Mmmmbop" sent crowd wild. With their now-lower-pitched voices, mixing with a richer acoustic sound, the band's biggest hit single seemed much more meaningful and a lot less bubble gum. Lighters and cell phones were immediately brandished, in a *Purple Rain*-inspired homage to Hanson.

Hanson left the stage, with the crowd cheering continuously for an encore after an amazing performance, and the boys did not disappoint, returning to cover the Police hit "Message in a Bottle," which everyone loved.

Overall, Hanson put on an amazing show, proving to the public that they are much better than the disposable pop group everyone thought they were.



AROUNDTOWN

Restaurant isn't worth expensive price

W Suhail Ansari
World Editor

The recently opened Al Primo Canto restaurant attempts to bring a *galeria*, or an eatery that specializes in roasted meats like ones found in Southern Brazil, to the Edgebrook neighborhood, adjacent to Lincolnwood.

This is a perfect location for those students who wish for a nice—partially formal—night out, right after they receive their paycheck/allowance.

The restaurant is located next to an empty retail space, so the entrance is confusing, but the nice staff will probably help one open the double doors. Once inside, the obstacle to get inside seems well worth it.

Al Primo Canto is breathtakingly well put together. This reviewer was transported from a cold Tuesday night in Chicago to a small, warm



and cozy Brazilian village *galeria*.

The stained wood used throughout the design is reminiscent of a warm cup of coffee on a freezing, typical Chicago winter day.

The chairs are designed to evoke a feel of earthiness, combined with a gothic taste; the two influences do not clash, as one would expect. This imposing figure actually blends together with the decorative ceiling, beautifully stained and distressed tables and the coordinated, three-prong forks.

Unfortunately, the food belies the ambiance.

This sit-down restaurant offers two ways to order food: either off the *A la Carte* & Take Out menu or from the *Prix-fixe* menu, which is a set, \$29.95 feast including two *aperitivos* (appetizers), three pastas, a trio of meats and four *acompanamientos* (side dishes). If the latter choice sounds like a lot of food, it is.

If the waiter asks one not to share the feast, ignore him, because one person cannot possibly finish all the dishes in one—or multiple—sittings.

The first course of the *prix-fixe* includes eggplant *caponata*, roasted eggplant with tahini paste prepared like hummus, and *pao de queijo*, or cheese bread. Although the cheese bread is wonderfully soft and cheesy, the eggplant *caponeta* seems like hummus disguised with a fancy name.

The two go on to clash more than Sarah Palin and Joe Biden. While the cheese invokes a more savory taste, the pseudo-hummus tries to bring in a citric undertone, very unsuccessfully. Such an experience is carried into the pasta course.

When designing the menu, the owner probably decided to bombard the patron with amazing dish after dish, and that is what happens... without the amazing part. Three perfect looking plates of pasta arrive warm and fresh to the table.

Now one must remember that these are meant for one patron, and one of those dishes of pasta probably could fill up said patron. Being the curious creature he is, this reviewer decided to try a bit of all three pastas.

The *marinara* is way too suggestive of an

Italian kitchen, and the *aioli* just tastes like pasta and not-so-expensive olive oil, to put it bluntly.

Instead of enjoying all three dishes, the patron might just go for the *funghi*, pasta draped in a mushroom sauce with caramelized shallots, and have the others packed, just to justify the cost.

Now, if one is wondering when this reviewer will get to the meats, what a *galeria* is meant to be about, he should keep in mind that this is exactly what the review himself was thinking.

Finally, after all the fillers, clashing appetizers and pastas, come the meats and side dishes. At this point, it does not even matter what the side dishes are, one just wants to get to the meat of things, literally.

The *cordero*, marinated leg of lamb that is roasted, finally offers something good to the patron. The lamb is roasted to perfection and presents a satisfying mix of spices and savor.

The *maninha*, charcoal grilled beef tenderloin, however, comes off only at average as the dry rub is not enough to satisfy the absence of an accompanying sauce.

The specialty, *galeto al primo canto*, young chicken marinated in an array of spices and slowly roasted, does redeem the restaurant to some extent. This excellent dish gives the patron something for his money as it celebrates the greatness poultry can offer, a savory taste with a more tender meat.

After the grand feast, of which required two waiters for delivery, one can decide to go the extra mile for a desert.

Not surprisingly, desert offered little compensation for the ill defined menu, as it was sloppily prepared.

This reviewer ordered the *tres leches* cake, a cake soaked in tree sweet milks, a seemingly nice and neutral finish to a long meal.

Contrary to the description, part of the top portion of the cake was not entirely soaked in the milk mixture. This reduced the taste of the dessert to day-old cake.

Such a short-coming was not a surprise after the main courses. Again, a flaw emerged in the presentation of the *galeria* idea.

Although the wait staff gives an excellent

performance, it does not make up for the shortcomings of the menu.

Despite the restaurant's nice location, it does not give its "bang for its buck," so to speak.

Although the portions are generous, the large feast is not economical to any student, as it does not appeal to the wallet or the palate.

Al Primo Canto, located at 5414 W. Devon Ave. in Edgebrook, is one place diners should

avoid. In the recent economic downturn, this reviewer would not be surprised to find an empty storefront soon.



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My story

"AT OAKTON, THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE BECOMES WHAT YOU WANT TO MAKE OF IT."

JENNIFER YAZMIN CARRILLO

For Jennifer Carrillo, Oakton Community College is the "reel" deal. A promising filmmaker, Carrillo came to Oakton to complete her first two years and save money before transferring to a four-year college. But Carrillo is making the most of her Oakton experience by going beyond the basic general education courses. She has taken independent study classes tailored to her needs, pursued her interests of film and psychology, and participated in various clubs and organizations. When Carrillo transfers, she will leave with more than just extra credit hours and extra money—she also will take away a fulfilling college experience.

To be continued...



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