Quite simply incredible

Disney & Pixar's *The Incredibles* is incredigreat - for an animated film

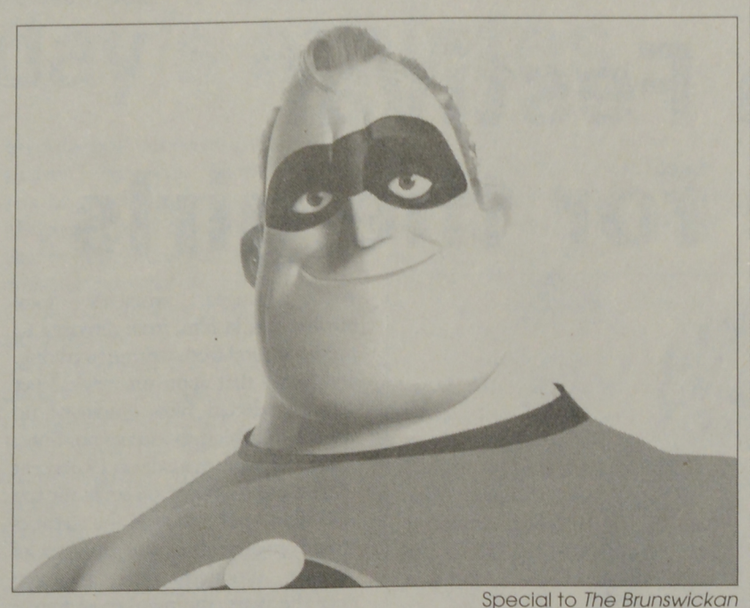
by Dave Arthurs

Grade: A

The Incredibles marks a departure from Pixar's previous efforts.

It's not about toys, bugs, monsters, or fish. For the first time, Pixar is tackling a movie all about people, and there's an extra P in the rating to reflect this.

Gone is the G-rated cuddliness of the wonderful *Finding Nemo*. Instead, we have a witty, action-packed movie from writer/director Brad Bird. In his capable hands, The Incredibles flies into sometimes darker territory, but always stays on course with its insightful observations on modern family life.



Special to *The Brunswickan*

In Disney/Pixar's *The Incredibles*, Mr. Incredible (Craig T. Nelson) is a good patriarch and a hero of our time.

Our story begins in the halcyon days of yesteryear when dauntless superheroes patrolled the villainous nights, defending humble citizens from criminal plots. Chief among these champions was Mr. Incredible (the sincere Craig T. Nelson), a flightless Superman boasting incredistrength and nigh-invicibility. His only weakness was his love of Elastigirl (the earthy Holly Hunter)... and litigious civilians.

Just days after tying the knot with Elastigirl, Mr. Incredible and superheroes everywhere were sued out of existence by disaffected rescuees who either didn't want to be saved or who were hurt in the process.

The government stepped in with a Superhero Relocation Program as a final act of goodwill for these displaced do-gooders. They are warned never to use their superpowers again and forced to live just like everyone else.

Fast-forward 15 years. Mr. Incredible (having assumed his secret identity Bob Parr) is fighting a losing battle against a mid-life crisis.

He fits into family life with Elastigirl (now Helen Parr) and his three kids as poorly as his ever-expanding gut fits into his pleated pants.

Instead of fighting criminal masterminds, he fights traffic jams on his way to a nine to five job where he stuffs his giant, trapezoidal frame into a tiny cubicle.

Mr. Incredible's government-mandated life has become incredibland.

Don't worry, though. His monotony might be self-consuming, but the depiction of all this on the big screen is remarkably clever and funny.

The movie acts as three different parodies: first, a parody of superhero archetypes; second, a parody of family sitcom life; and third – once the action kicks in – a parody of spy movies.

It seems that Bob Parr hasn't entirely given up his superhero past. He and his buddy Frozone, aka Lucius Best (the dynamic Samuel Jackson) sneak out on "bowling nights" where they listen to a police scanner for daring-do opportunities.

These exploits are soon noticed by a mysterious organization and Mr. Incredible is recruited once again to save the world.

Of course, with the important family themes, there's no way he'll end up facing the baddies alone.

His wife Elastigirl and their two school-aged children Violet (the endearing Sarah Vowell) and Dash (the energetic Spencer Fox) come to the rescue when it seems that all hope is lost. And we're better for it too. Not only do these characters flesh out the themes of the movie, they're also well-designed, well-acted, and thoroughly enjoyable. There's such a feeling of community on screen as you watch the family members look out for each other. We learn that Mr. Incredible's kryptonite may be his family, but they're also the source of his greatest strength. Together, the Incredibles are unstoppable.

And that's the way I feel about the movie too. The movie is all-in-all unstoppable.

If it has one kryptonite, it might be the music. When it's used, it's used to great effect, but I found it to be used too sparingly throughout the movie. There's a bit too much silence for my liking.

Thankfully, the silence is overshadowed by striking visuals and lots of humour.

The Incredibles stands nigh-invicible and rivals *Shrek 2* as this year's best animated feature. Here's hoping Pixar can live up to their legacy with next year's *Cars*. Either way, whatever Mr. Bird delivers next is sure to be a

It's all about life

Alfie remake every bit as affecting as its lead actor

by Ike Ogosi

Grade: B

Alfie is a timid but ultimately sad and effective film.

A remake of a classic Michael Caine film (the second in two years following 2003's dull *Italian Job*), it lands a few steps down from the original but finds its own footing.

This is primarily due to Jude Law's energetic portrayal of the titular playboy whose life of carefree pleasure and excitement spirals downward after one bad mistake too many.

The movie breaks the 'fourth wall,' allowing Alfie to communicate directly with the audience, even in the company of others. This is more refreshing than traditional voice-over narration, and yanks us into the movie and the world of its central character.

Alfie works as a limo driver in Manhattan and commutes on a scooter, and these working-class sensibilities combined with charm and a refined taste for wine and Armani (not to mention his Cockney accent) make him a package not to be refused by women of any class or standing. But his gluttonous lifestyle blinds him to knowing when to draw the line.

He has a good thing in the form of single mother Julie (Marisa Tomei) but sees her for her warm bed, good food and easy companionship. In his attempt to reconcile his best friend Marlon (a feloniously and chronically underused Omar Epps) with his girl Lonette (Nia Long) he ends up sleeping with her, with the half-hearted logic that it will help her overcome Marlon's philandering.

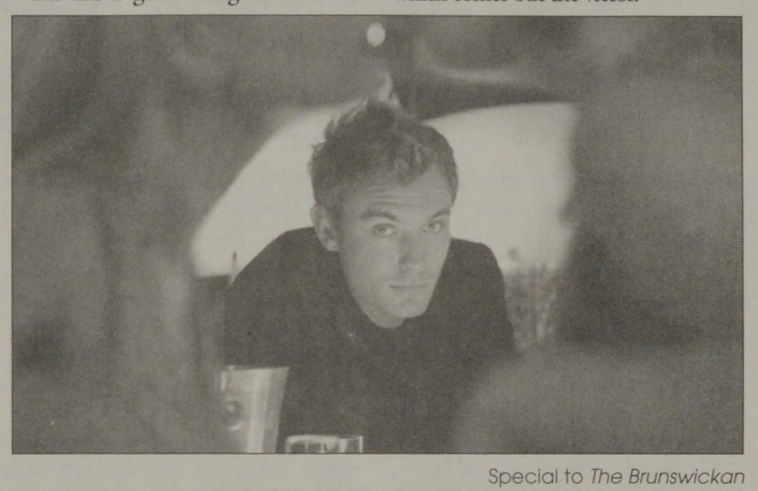
It works - at least until she comes back bearing more than bad news.

Losing Julie and the friendships of Marlon and Lonette triggers a psychological "defect" in his performance that can best be likened to the agony of a craftsman suddenly losing both hands.

But Alfie's troubles are only beginning, as a medical scare and bouts of loneliness and heartbreak – given and received – test his sanity.

The film starts with a bounce of vitality injected by Law, but as things unravel we are left with an energy vacuum that reflects Alfie's anguish. Alfie refuses to acknowledge the demise of all things good to him and Law makes every use of opportunities to smile although there is nothing to smile at before breaking down in sobs of abundant sorrow.

Alfie examines romance and carnal pleasure, depicting the ups and downs of both, but with an ending of sheer melancholy, there is no question as to which comes out the victor.



Special to *The Brunswickan*

Isn't he adorable? Jude Law plays Alfie in the film of the same name, an incurable playboy who meets his match in fate.

MC?'s Ultra Accurate Horoscopes

Scorpio 10/23-11/21
You will receive a mysterious phone call, giving you the details for phase three of the master plan. If only you had the first two phases, you'd be rich.

Sagittarius 11/22-12/21
You will be mildly electrocuted by the government this week. They are testing out some new weapons, and you will be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Capricorn 12/22-1/19
Sneezing will save your life, as you will let out a massive one just in time to move your head out of the way of a stray bullet. Bring a tissue.

Aquarius 1/20-2/18
You will be visited in the dream world by your favourite super-hero/heroine. You will be instructed in the most effective ways to fight crime and how to wash spandex.

Pisces 2/19-3/20
My cat has a message for you, but he doesn't trust me with it. If you want to know the message, send an email to *messagefromcat@yahoo.ca* and he will get back to you.

Aries 3/21-4/19
You will wage war on the people next door. Their house is fortified, so don't underestimate its defences. You will eventually win, with heavy losses.

Taurus 4/20-5/20
You will dance in the streets after losing your stupid job. People will like your dancing so much they will pay you, and you will find this to be your calling.

Gemini 5/21-6/21
You will discover that you are an evil twin, raised in a laboratory and implanted with your good twin's memories as part of a twisted scientific experiment.

Cancer 6/22-7/22
You will go on a spiritual journey, and accidentally end up in Winnipeg. The unholy denizens will feed upon your soul until you escape their clutches.

Leo 7/23-8/22
You will find a new job as a result of a series of strange coincidences. Your journey will start in a public restroom with some inspiring graffiti.

Virgo 8/23-9/22
The end of the world is coming, unless you prevent it by eating English muffins with honey on top. This is the only way it can be saved. It is all up to you.

Libra 9/23-10/22
You will wake up one day this week and no longer be able to see colour. Your fashion sense will be drastically altered for the worse as a result.

A timely bit of theatre drama

New play at Memorial Hall addresses post-election fears

by Alex Pope

If the results of the recent American Presidential election left you feeling a bit paranoid, take heart: at least one industry is reaping the benefits of Bush's repeat offense. Rest assured, the entertainment business now offers everything you need to develop your own opinion while indulging in rampant escapism, the first of these being three performances of *Doppelganger*, a new play by Len Falkenstein, at Memorial Hall this week.

Inspired by recent events in Iraq, notably the hostage-takings that have sparked a dramatic turn in the ongoing conflict, the play follows the introspective journey of Adam Smith, a Canadian oil worker who is taken hostage by insurgents and accused of being an American spy.

Falkenstein describes his work as "a play about how we in the West are complicit with all sorts of unsavoury things that happen on other sides of the world, and about the consequences of not deeply and critically examining our actions."

"I wanted to write a play that imagined what would happen if an ordinary Canadian was one of these people that end up in that horrible situation," says Falkenstein, an experienced playwright with three other original productions under his belt.

In spite of its dark and controversial subject, *Doppelganger* promises to be a fast-paced and entertaining way to spend two hours on a weeknight.

It has been well-received in earlier performances at the Halifax Fringe Festival and Acadia University, and the intensity of the action on stage is complemented with live percussion and projected slide images that lead the audience through Smith's panic, fear, worry, frustration, and eventual absolution.

Featuring performances by UNB Drama students Nicholas Cole, Matthew Spinney, Seann Murray, and Chelsea Seale, the play opens tomorrow and runs until Friday at Memorial Hall. Tickets are $6 for students, $8 for others, and available at the door.

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