

Kissing and telling for the first time

The OC's Rachel Bilson chats with the Gateway about her role as a temptress in upcoming movie *The Last Kiss*, her fabulous co-star Zach Braff and how the film has given her a chance try new things

Movie Preview: *The Last Kiss*

Starring Rachel Bilson, Zach Braff, Blythe Danner and Tom Wilkinson
Directed by Tony Goldwyn
Opens 15 September
Empire Theatres

ELIZABETH VAIL
Arts & Entertainment Staff



Upon visiting the official website for the upcoming film *The Last Kiss*, one is confronted by the question: "We all make choices. What's yours?" Apparently, this query plays a large role in the creation of the movie—which is based on a series of pointed, careful choices, and their subsequent effects.

Of course, one of those decisions was when Lakeshore Entertainment's Tom Rosenberg and Gary Lucchesi saw *L'Ultimo Bacio*—a 2001 Italian film that won five Davids (the Italian equivalent of the Oscar)—and became profoundly affected by the tale of four men in their 30s reluctant to start wrestling with the responsibilities of adulthood. However, Rosenberg and Lucchesi weren't the only ones to be touched by this poignant film. Rachel Bilson, better known for her work on the hit television series *The OC*, resolved to star in the film because she was equally influenced by the original.

"I saw [*L'Ultimo Bacio*], and I just thought it was a beautiful piece," Bilson says in a phone interview. "[I knew] that to be able to be part of it would be such an honor, as well as to work with these amazing actors and recreate this beautiful film."

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Die-Nasty gets high on theatre, veggie juice

Die-Nasty Soap-A-Thon

Starring Ron Pederson, Jeff Haslam, Leona Brausen, David Belke, Mark Meer and Davina Stewart
15-17 September
Varscona Theatre

MATT FREHNER
Editor-in-Chief

Those who say that performance is like a drug are usually referring to the adrenaline rush or to its addictive quality. Mark Meer, though, has something a bit more specific in mind when discussing the annual *Die-Nasty* improv marathon.

"The Soap-A-Thon itself is intense," says Meer, a 14-year veteran of the 53-hour spectacle. "It's like a vision quest, really—akin to an acid trip for the performers."

"It's the edge of madness," he continues. "When I say it's like an acid trip, I mean very *much* like an acid trip, including hallucinations and wild mood swings. The first few years I did it, near the end, I'd start to get slight spatial hallucinations about the relationships of objects in space—things looked further away or closer than they were. You could watch the drapes start to move if you stared at them for too long."

Like many actors' not-quite-sane ideas, the improv marathon arose

from a little bit of theatre bravado. "It was an idea that was inspired by the *Guinness Book of World Records*," Meer explains. "Because of all that record breaking and pole-sitting and what-not, we decided to do an improv endurance test. The first year it was 48 hours. For the first five years we added an hour every year, but then we got up to 53 and it's hovered there since."

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Now in its 14th year, the Soap-A-Thon always marks the beginning of the new season of *Die-Nasty*. Each year, the marathon revolves around a different story: this time, it's a wedding between the offspring of two influential families.

And, just in case two-plus days of continuous improvisation might become a bit dull, Meer and company will also be hosting a number of "specialty hours," one of which is the "hours of gratuitous nudity." The catch, according to Meer, is that the

nudity must be platonic.

"The performers are under no obligation to remove any clothes. But, if the mood strikes you, then that's the time to do it," Meer explains. "One caveat is that all the nudity in that shift be completely non-sexual. It would be shopping with no pants, or, for some reason, finding an excuse to remove your clothing in the middle of scene, but not in a sexual context."

Another theme hour will be the gift unwrapping: audience members are encouraged to bring their own gifts for the happy couple.

"Bring wrapped wedding gifts, and they'll be put aside for the gift-opening noon on Sunday," Meer says. "We'll welcome anything—we're not registered anywhere."

Though the show is one continuous wedding story, with intricate plots and subplots, as well as dozens of characters, the entire run is improvised. As such, the best characters are often completely unplanned as well.

"When you're staying up for 53 hours, you need supplies, like lozenges and such," Meer remarks. "One year I was in the drug store buying some, and there was this rubber [Halloween] mask that I thought looked hilarious. So I grabbed it, and I ended up playing this character—the Lava Monster—in one scene, thinking that'll be all the use the rubber mask gets. I ended up



liking him so much that I played the character for 36 hours. In a rubber Halloween mask."

Mask-sweat aside, when on stage for such an extended period, there are certain obvious health concerns. According to Meer, who's made it all the way through ten Soap-A-Thons, the most important thing is to keep hydrated.

"Don't rely on caffeine," he says. "You can have it near the end, but if you rely on it too soon, you're going to crash. Vegetable juices are good, because they aren't too sugary."

"Besides the sleep deprivation, and your body shutting down, the rest is all fun—it's really one of the most intense and cool improv experiences that you can have as a performer."