

What Can We Learn From *Survivor*?



The TV series *Survivor* is not so much a TV game as it is a laboratory experiment to confirm many forms of psychological and social behaviour when "normal" people are subjected to physical and mental stress.

The Edmonton Chinese Lions Club (ECLC) is honoured to invite Yau-Man Chan, the popular *Survivor Fiji* contestant, to Edmonton to give a talk on "What can we learn from Survivor?" in support of the Youth Emergency Shelter Society (YESS).

The talk is a layman's view, with insider knowledge of how the nastiness of contestants is a mirror on our society.

Date: Saturday, Oct. 20th 2007

Time: 2pm-5pm (Show 1)
7pm-10pm (Show 2)

Place: South Learning Center
NAIT Main Campus,
11762-106 St

Price: \$25

To purchase tickets online, please go to:

www.edmontonchineselionsclub.org

www.yess.org



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Wild reined in by Penn's directing

filmreview

Into the Wild

Now Playing
Directed by Sean Penn
Starring Emile Hirsch and Jena Malone

SEAN STEELS
Arts & Entertainment Writer

It's always tough translating a book into a movie. It's even harder when the book's about an obscure, 23-year-old survivalist fanatic.

Into the Wild is the story of Christopher McCandless (Emile Hirsch) and his trek as alter-ego Alexander Supertramp into the Alaskan wilderness. The concept seems easy to dismiss—just another plodding, man-meets-wilderness survival movie—but the film is something much different than its picturesque, mountain-gazing previews suggest. The plot follows a scruffy, backpack-toting Hirsch for two years while he tramps across America and Mexico toward his great Alaskan adventure, but the story is about a young man unable to face his parents or the obligations of our contemporary materialistic lifestyle. His obsession

drives him past the fringes of civilization, over its edge and beyond.

The romantic notion of being able to cut oneself off from society and live off of nature, away from material obsession and the worries of modern lifestyle, is something everyone secretly thinks about at one point or another, and the whimsical sensibility provides an attachment to McCandless, despite his unwillingness to compromise his staunch beliefs and love those around him. This same romantic ideal is what launched *Fight Club* into the cultural spotlight.

At times the film drags—it has a run time of 140 minutes—but Sean Penn's direction and a powerful story keep things moving along at a fair clip. He uses intimate close-ups, breathtaking slow motion shots, and a candid focus on Hirsch's neurotic idiosyncrasies to dive deep into the transient world of Supertramp.

Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam fame contributes his first solo album as the movie's soundtrack, with the uplifting and folkie tunes giving the film a rustic charm. Narrating the whole story is the voice of McCandless' sister Carine (Jena Malone). She recounts, in poignant and elegant prose, her memories of her brother, gradually providing insights into his motivation: a

lust for the truth and disgust with the combative and fictitious relationship between his unflinching father and tight-lipped mother.

These flashbacks, commentaries, and well-written tunes are gracefully edited into his story of adventure, turning it into an impressive audio-visual collage.

Much of the film's appeal comes from a strict fidelity to the book, written by Jon Krakauer, and the inspiring true story of McCandless—but something also has to be said of Hirsch's performance. He plays his role with charismatic conviction; his unpredictable playfulness salvaging some of *Into the Wild*'s more boring scenes, while his psychotic outbursts ratchet up the tension. He cut off 41lbs for the job, and the result is a terrifying reality to his character's ghastly descent into starvation.

There's just one nagging problem with *Into the Wild*: the plausibility concerning Emile Hirsch's reflective chompers. There's no way that anyone can keep a pearly white grin through two years of homeless meandering—unless, of course, he picked up the newest edition of *Oral Hygiene for the Alaskan Bushman* along with his copy of *Edible Plants*.

Phoenix's performance wins the day

Though there's little dialogue to speak of, *We Own the Night*'s cast still stands out

filmreview

We Own the Night

Now Playing
Written and directed by James Gray
Starring Joaquin Phoenix, Mark Wahlberg, Robert Duval, and Eva Mendes

MEGAN KINGDON
Arts & Entertainment Writer

If you've seen the trailers for *We Own the Night* and it doesn't seem all that appealing, don't disregard it completely—the trailers really don't do the film justice. At first glance, the movie seems to be just another take on the prodigal son, with one son managing a bar and dabbling in drugs, the other following in the footsteps of the father and becoming a police officer.

But whoever made the trailer seems to have focused solely on the first 20 minutes, as *We Own the Night* is less a run-of-the-mill cop drama and more

along the lines of *Goodfellas* meets *The Departed*.

Joaquin Phoenix plays Bobby Green, a manager at a Brooklyn night club circa 1988. As the brother of newly promoted Captain Joseph Grusinsky (Mark Wahlberg) and son of Police Chief Albert Grusinsky (Robert Duval), Bobby goes by his mother's surname in an attempt to keep his questionable business associates from finding out about his law-enforcing family. However, as much as he tries to keep his two worlds separate, a chain of events is set into motion which makes this impossible.

There's surprisingly little dialogue in the film, so a lot rests on the actors' interpretations, and they don't disappoint. Phoenix gives a wonderful performance as a man caught in the middle of a drug war he was desperately trying to stay out of. It was easy to become very emotionally invested in his character, and judging by the gasps and whispers of "Oh My God ..." throughout the theatre, many felt the same.

In the beginning, it would seem like Wahlberg had been type-cast after his

Academy Award nomination for his role in *The Departed*. From time to time, his character of Joseph Grusinsky seems very reminiscent of that film's Sean Dignam. However, in keeping with one of the film's most appealing qualities, just when you think you have him figured out, he changes.

Perhaps the most endearing quality of the film is that as much as it seems it should fall flat, it doesn't. The plot is slow at times, but there's always just enough going on to keep you interested. The slower sections are a nice change from the fast-paced, in-your-face action and ever-present plot twists. There are also six or seven places where it seems like the end but isn't, but this is neither annoying nor distracting.

But above all, *We Own the Night* taps into the heart of dramas. A lot of films dealing with similar plots have a lot of action at the cost of character development, but not *We Own the Night*: the movie has action, family values, and evolution. The sympathetic characters make for a very human take on the inhuman world of '80s drug wars.