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Clif's notes: Former UCO student returning to Edmond

By **Clif' Warren**
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Editor's Note: Each week, Edmond resident Clif' Warren will review films, bring news of the arts to Edmond and update readers of current and former Edmond entertainers on their activities.

Movieland

Nick Hornby, who penned "High Fidelity" and "About A Boy," has at times been described as "the voice of the '60s. Actually not a novelist but one of the premier memoirists who rose to fame during the '90s, he specializes in a warm, humorous narrative style that draws audiences to him because his language, tone and mood make people feel that they have experienced like situations and would have reacted in the exact way and said his very words.

In the winning film "High Fidelity," Director Stephen Frears has John Cusack (Rob} talk directly to the movie audience to express his upset over the departure of his savvy girlfriend Laura. Being an obsessive list maker, Rob's revenge is to say that Laura did not even make his Top Five List of Break Ups.

In a similar way, the directors of "About A Boy," Chris and Paul Weitz (sons of the famous designer John Weitz), allow Hugh Grant (Will Freeman) to dialogue with himself, using voice overs to tell exactly how the newest Hornby age-stalled and obsessive male semi-hero really thinks and feels. The device is both funny and thought provoking.

Although the film is totally British - cast, setting, and feel - the story resonates globally, for it is ultimately about how a rare time period altered post generations. Akin to the 12-year-old boy Marcus (Nicholas Hoult) at the center of "About A Boy," Hornby himself was the product of divorced parents.

The mother in the film, completely molded by '60s' freedoms and creeds, a depressed woman totally out of contact with her child, could well be a play on his own situation.

When Marcus attaches himself to Will as a surrogate father after Will has been proved a fraud by single women parents, whom he was trying to shag, he provides Grant as actor, his perfect set up.

After all, Grant has spent almost his entire film career in assorted roles as the boyish, charming and helpless man who appeals to the child in both sexes.

As the arrested adolescent, clueless, unmarried and incomplete male he defines a couple of generations of guys who best relate as teenagers. There could hardly be a better choice than Grant, and like the other Grant, Cary, he has an acting range of about five viable expressions - the winning smile, the totally confused grin with raised eyebrows, the unamused eye-to-eye understanding, the leave-me-alone smirk, and the let's-get-on-with-it look.

Fortunately, our man doesn't have to relate much to the hippie mom Toni Collette, and lovely Rachel Weisz, (from "The Mummy"), a dazzling single mom with another problem son, is willing to overlook unusual difficulties for handsome Hugh, who lives off his father's music royalties and is happy with his posh pad and special CD collection. Obviously, she sees possible growth where many women before her did not.

Meanwhile, young Hoult turns in the best performance and Hornby's insightful dialogue and keen understanding of some 40 years of postmodern dysfunctional family life command attention.

While "About A Boy" is no bell ringer, it is alive with authentic teenage emotion amid parental miscues and the film makes a pleasant and interesting evening.

The musical stage

"Swinging on a Star," the new Strawhat Theatre show at the University of Central Oklahoma is likely to be unequalled among any other offerings this summer.

Using many of the outstanding songs of Johnny Burke - the consummate film and Broadway show lyricist - in appealingly designed, lighted, and costumed settings that echo five decades of hits, the young UCO performers - Alyssa Baldwin, Jessica Chesbro, Cyndi Steele-Harrod, Brad, Chris and Kendra Campbell Milburn, Abby Redmon, Clark Roberts, Ashley Wood, Brian Hamilton and Jonathan McElroy - are perfect with pitch, tone, delivery, style and spirit.

They present key Burke songs from the 20s like "What's New," then "Pennies From Heaven" and "Annie Doesn't Live Here Anymore" from The Depression"; "One, Two, Buckle Your Shoe" and "An Apple for the Teacher" from New York in the 30s, "Personality," "Polka Dots and Moonbeams," and "Swinging on a Star" from World War II years; "Road to Morocco" and "Going My Way" representing the Paramount Studio years; and, ultimately, classic hits like "But, Beautiful," "Like Someone in Love," "Moonlight Becomes You," "Misty," and "Here's That Rainy Day" - and these are just the highlights.

Music Conductor Lee Rucker's musicians with live, jazzy background accompaniment offer fine backup. Dennis Courtney has directed and choreographed with a great sense of pacing and flair for the emotional rewards of the music. Kay Creed and Carveth Osterhaus deserve plaudits for putting it all together with finesse.

COMING HOME SOON - Greg White, UCO bachelors, and masters in creative studies, spent the last year seeing the world - from the Middle East to Europe and South America - as the featured entertainer on a major cruise ship line.

After starring off Broadway in "Nunsense II" and performing in national tours of "The Will Rogers Follies" and "State Fair" and the Christmas musical "It's A Wonderful Life" in Louisville (many of us would like to see him perform that here), Greg was ready to don those traveling shoes for the global scene.

The good news is, he'll be back this fall to appear in the opening Broadway Tonight series show in October, "Hello, Dolly," as Cornelius (the Michael Crawford role) along with the sensational Carole Cook. He e-mailed friends from Southampton, England, last week that the remainder of the

summer he will be directing at Bucks County, Penn.

Hot summer entertainment

Edmond Library - Tony Hillerman's "The Wailing Wind" (67 copies in circulation, waiting list of 313). For suspense lovers, John Sanford's "Mortal Prey" (84 copies in circulation, waiting list of 136). For historical fantasy fans, Jean Auel's long awaited "Shelters of Stone" (152 copies in circulation, waiting list of 40).

Best of Books - The great Father's Day gift for the intellectual dad is Robert Caro's "Master of the Senate," the third volume in the LBJ biography, covering the years 1949-1960. Receiving critical kudos from politicians of both persuasions, this one weighs in at more than 1,000 pages for \$35. Attracting attention from the literary minded is new author Sue Monk Kidd's "The Secret Life of Bees." Clive Cussler's "Fire Ice" is gaining momentum and there's a run on James Lee Burke's new novel "Jolie Bon's Bounce."

Randy's M&M's - Sizzling CD, the "Spiderman" soundtrack, featuring the "Hero" theme sung by Chad Kroeger of Nickelback and Josey Scott of Saliva and also the song "What We're All About" by Sum 41.

Overheard at Charlotte's Around the Corner: "If that guy made a hole in one, God in heaven is creating even greater miracles.

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