

By the WAY #2

by W. Andrew York
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Well, here's the second "By the WAY" (BTW) to appear in *TAP*. I appreciate all the folks who've let me know that they're glad I'm back in the pubbing game - and the individuals who've enthusiastically joined 'By Popular Demand' (BPD), thanks. The more the merrier for a game like this, so if you're not already playing, feel free to join us. Also, I've changed the deadline to match Jim's - giving a few extra days for your entry. And, please, the more commentary the better - who better to explain what you were thinking when you were coming up with your answers.

For now, no one's asked for another game and there's been no objection to running the BPD game every issue of BTW. So, we'll go with that for this run of the game. I welcome any suggestions for future games - whether they are 'all player' or for a limited number. Any Acquire players looking for a game or frustrated railroad moguls wanting to via over the map in *Empire Builder*?

I'm finishing this up after returning from the local IMAX theater to preview the new "Roving Mars" movie. Beautiful planet and an excellent movie about the two work horses on planet (Spirit and Opportunity). They are still going strong many multiples of their planned lifetimes. This is a prime example of NASA doing something right - well, not only right, but amazingly right. How often do you hear of something lasting significantly beyond their expected life cycle? And these puppies have exceeded their life span many times over and have accomplished more than anyone dreamed of before they launched.

And, speaking of success, look at Voyager I and II launched in 1977. The Voyagers were planned to last until Saturn in 1980. However, due to foresight by the scientists involved and robust construction, they are still sending data and revealing the secrets of the universe nearly ten times their expected life span. Voyager 1 recently passed the termination shock, heading towards heliopause in 10 years where it will leave the last vestige of the solar system and truly enter interstellar space. Assuming we continue to fund the \$4.5 million a year to keep the program active, Earth's first ambassador to the stars will send back what it finds. [Information from *National Geographic* (Feb 06)]

One can only hope the recently launched Pluto probe will be as successful as these two programs!

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Feature: You go to the Alamo Drafthouse to watch movies while having dinner and a beer?

The Drafthouse is a significant twist on the usual movie experience. The first Alamo Drafthouse (www.drafthouse.com) opened in 1997 in downtown Austin. Situated on the second floor of a building in the warehouse district, there was room for one screen. They added a kitchen, a beer & wine license and a concept was launched. Showing art and classic movies, other older releases and holding special events coupled with dinner it became a success. Now, there are three Austin multiplexes showing a mix of first release movies, along with showings that harken back to the original theater (still in business). Plus, there is a Drafthouse in San Antonio and soon one in Katy (outside Houston).

The one showing that I was at that typifies the Alamo concept was a screening of "The Wild Bunch" with a themed dinner of four courses with paired wine. If you've seen Rachel Ray's "Tasty Travel" episode featuring Austin, they filmed the Alamo Drafthouse during this event (yes, if you are quick-eyed, I can be seen very briefly on the left side in some of the interior bits). Before the movie, they did "Videoke" -

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basically, karaoke and slapstick amateur acting to a classic video clip on the screen. The results can be quite hilarious, though it is easy to get off-track as you're trying to lip sync the dialogue while acting out the scene.

Other recent showing includes all of the extended movies from the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy in a row with a day's worth of hobbit meals - yes, that includes second breakfast and elevenses - spaced throughout the roughly twelve hours. For the opening week of "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe", they had a wardrobe mockup leading to a lamppost that folks could choose to go through and, along with their usual menu, offered dishes mentioned in the book (yep, one dessert option was Turkish Delight). Other times, they've showed movies with a dinner scene and served that dinner to the audience or they've taken the movie's theme to create a dinner, such as a spicy feast for the movie "Some Like It Hot".

One added bonus to attending a movie here, no annoying commercials before the screening beyond some promotion of future special events and the expected previews of upcoming movies. They encourage folks to come early and eat before the movie and have a roughly 45 minute preshow that includes clips from old TV shows and movies that are often selected to match the movie. For instance, the Narnia preshow included sketches that used characters from the books, variety show take-offs and such. The best preshow bit I've seen was before "Serenity". From what I was told, one of the Chinese relatives of the Drafthouse was filmed teaching the audience how to swear in Chinese (the actors in the movie and the original TV show usually swear in Chinese). Absolutely hilarious, even the gentleman had difficulty in keeping a straight face on camera.

The Drafthouse also takes movies on the road. They have an inflatable screen and portable sound system. One time the movie "Goonies" was shown inside a local cave, along with themed food. Other times, they've screened movies in/near the location it was shot. A number of screenings include directors, producers and/or actors doing a Q&A afterwards. For instance, when Wil Wheaton was in town for a convention, they screened "Stand by Me".

Then, there are the events that garner a bit more attention. Currently, along with the Austin Film Society, they are screening a mini-retrospective of Werner Herzog films. Annually Harry Knowles (aintitcoolnews.com) hosts a 24-hour 'Butt-Numb-A-Thon' where, if you leave the theater, you can't return. This is a screening of an unannounced slate of movies that, one year, included an appearance by Mel Gibson showing an advanced screening of "The Passion of the Christ". Also, Quentin Tarantino every couple of years hosts a week or so of original prints of movies from his private collection. One bit coming up is the annual festival of animation called "Spike and Mike's Sick and Twisted Show" with "some cartoons...too depraved even for adult swim." From what little I've seen at previews, that's very true!

Overall, this is a movie theater concept that breaks the usual multiplex mold of herding people into movies, charging exorbitant prices for crappy food and bombarding them with revenue generating advertisement. Given the choice, I'll almost always go to one of the Drafthouses to see a first run movie rather than a megaplex (especially as my Austin Film Society membership allows me a \$6 ticket price all the time). And, I always keep my eye out for the upcoming special events - right now, they include a "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" sing-along, a showing of "Pee-Wee's Big Adventure" that includes prizes for the best Pee-Wee imitators and free admission on Mondays to see A&E's "Rollergirls" (filmed in Austin).

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Review: "The Producers" - my latest trip to the Alamo Drafthouse was to see this movie. This time, no themed food, just the usual menu. I had the pulled pork sandwich with side salad (sesame garlic dressing) and potato salad. The folks I was with split a queso and chips with me. The movie \$6, with dinner and tip coming in at \$12. Not bad and I was stuffed!

As for the movie, definitely a Mel Brooks late '60s production. His brand of humor and slapstick from that time clearly came through. Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick were obviously comfortable with their roles and delivered text book performances - which was unfortunate. At times, especially in scenes that

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appeared completely blocked from the Broadway production, they seemed to be going through the motions rather than giving a fresh performance. Other times, when the shoot was on location (such as at the Central Park fountain), the performance had more vitality and the actors seemed to enjoy it more.

That being said, the movie was very funny and quite enjoyable. Will Ferrell, an actor I generally skip, did an excellent job - stealing any scene he was in. And, I was surprised at Uma Thurman performance, she's another actor I don't choose to watch.

A good movie to enjoy with a bunch of friends. Loads of laughs, the chemistry between Lane and Broderic is very evident and it will be a Brook's classic. Watch the background, the movie posters in the office are hilarious and, yes, he really did look like the Chrysler Building.

BTW - did anyone else think "Touch Me, Feel Me" was Marion Ross?

Observation: Why would a grocer sell 2 - 12 oz bottles of mustard at 69¢ each while selling a 24 oz bottle of the exact same mustard at \$1.50?

Playlist for this issue: Reba's "Parenting With Puppets" episode; Meatloaf - "Bat Out Of Hell II"; Toby Keith "Pull My Chain"; Trish Murphy "Crooked Mile"; Montgomery Gentry "You Do Your Thing"; Smallville's "Reckoning" episode

Coming up Next Time: My trip to Chicago for dinner.

=====GAME SECTION=====

BY POPULAR DEMAND

The goal is to pick something that fits the category and will be the "most popular" answer. You score points based on the number of entries that match yours. For example, if the category is "Cats" and the responses were 7 for Persian, 3 for Calico and 1 for Siamese, everyone who said Persian would get 7 points, Calico 3 and the lone Siamese would score 1 point. The cumulative total over 10 rounds will determine the overall winner. Anyone may enter at any point, starting with an equivalent point total of the lowest cumulative score from the previous round. If a person misses a round, they'll receive the minimum score from the round added to their cumulative total. And, if you want to submit some commentary with your answers, feel free to.

NOTE: I always acknowledge an Email submission. If you've sent something in and don't hear back from me after a couple of days, send again or check with Jim. I let him know if I expect to be away from the computer for any extended period of time.

Round One Category – Movies

Round One Results:

- 01) Favorite Sci-Fi Movie: "Star Wars" 9, "Forbidden Planet" 1, "2001" 1
- 02) Favorite Adventure Movie: "Raiders of the Lost Ark" 9, "North by Northwest" 1, "Indiana Jones" 1
- 03) Favorite "Chick" Flick: "When Harry Met Sally" 2, "Sleepless in Seattle" 1, "Thelma & Louise" 1, "Steel Magnolias" 1, "The Sound of Music" 1, "The Wedding Singer" 1, "Annette Goes To The Beach" 1, "Bridget Jones Diary" 1, "Chicken Run" 1, "None" 1
- 04) Favorite Fantasy Movie: "Fellowship of the Ring" 6, "Return of the King" 2, "Miracle on 34th St." 1, "Harry Potter" 1, "Princess Bride" 1
- 05) Favorite Western: "Unforgiven" 2, "High Noon" 2, "Dances with Wolves" 1, "True Grit" 1, "Magnificent Seven" 1, "The Good, The Bad & The Ugly" 1, "Tombstone" 1, "Blazing Saddles" 1, "Stagecoach" 1

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<<By Popular Demand continued>>

Individual Scores:

01) Jamie McQuinn:	Star Wars, Raiders, Harry & Sally, Fellowship, High Noon	= 0 + 28 = 28
02) Doug Kent:	Star Wars, Raiders, Thelma & Louise, Fellowship, Unforgiven	= 0 + 27 = 27
Steve Koehler:	Star Wars, Raiders, Wedding Singer, Fellowship, Unforgiven	= 0 + 27 = 27
Christopher Janik:	Star Wars, Raiders, Harry & Sally, Fellowship, Tombstone	= 0 + 27 = 27
05) Nathan Simmons:	Star Wars, Raiders, Steel Magnolias, Fellowship, True Grit	= 0 + 26 = 26
06) Edi Birsan:	Star Wars, Raiders, Sleepless, Return, Magnificent Seven	= 0 + 22 = 22
07) Fred Davis:	Star Wars, Raiders, none, Miracle, High Noon	= 0 + 21 = 21
Brendan Whyte:	Star Wars, Raiders, Chick Run, Princess Bride, Blazing Saddle	= 0 + 21
= 21		
09) Tom Howell:	2001, Raiders, Annette, Fellowship, Good/Bad/Ugly	= 0 + 18 = 18
10) Jim Burgess:	Star Wars, Ind Jones, Bridget Jone's, Harry Potter, Stagecoach	= 0 + 13 = 13
11) Kevin Wilson:	Forbidden Planet, NxNW, Sound of Music, Return, Dances	= 0 + 6 = 6

Best possible score: 28. Best score achieved: 28 by **Jamie!**

WAY's Commentary:

General: I was expecting a much wider spread of movie choices. That three of the categories had very clear cut winners definitely was surprising to me. Also surprising is that many of the movies mentioned aren't current blockbusters, but truly are classics that retain their appeal across generations.

01) Well, it appears the first Star Wars movie to come out is still well thought of - even nearly 30 years after it was released. Fortunately, no one tried to differentiate between the original release and Lucas's editing for the rerelease. My choice would have been a movie that still captures my interest - "The Andromeda Strain". Others high on my list are "The Omega Man", the original "Planet of the Apes" and "Wrath of Khan".

02) The first Indiana Jones adventure grabbed the top spot and would have been my top choice, though "Top Gun" would have been a close contender.

03) Only one common choice here, making this the toughest category to figure out what others would choose. I don't know what I would have chosen, though "Memoirs of a Geisha" (which I just saw) would have been on my mind. Maybe "Fried Green Tomatoes" or, in recent release, "Pride & Prejudice" might have been the pick. I didn't even think of "When Harry Met Sally" which is the epitome of a chick flick.

04) LOTR having top billing isn't really surprising, but that most folks thought the first installment was the best is. I would have expected more of a split between the first and third movies. That being said, my choice would have been "Fellowship".

05) This was the other tough category - there are a lot of choices, even if you skip over the vast numbers of spaghetti westerns and those churned out of the studio mills as fast as they could film them. All of the ones mentioned are excellent choices. As the last one I saw was the "Wild Bunch", I'd probably have chosen that.

Player Commentary:

01) **[Fred]** I'd also give a vote for "The Day The Earth Stood Still," but I'm older than most of you guys, so I don't think this would have gotten many votes. **[WAY]** That's the way to play the game - what will be the guess of most of the other folks playing. **[Jamie]** I find I - III to be abominations. **[WAY]** Well, they are better than a lot of the 'B' movies of the '50s. However, they don't compare to the original three. **[Jim-Bob]** I'm going to try for the Generic for the big score. **[WAY]** and it worked! **[Brendan]** the first and the best

02) **[Jim-Bob]** ditto... and keep in the Spielberg/Lucas **[WAY]** unfortunately, this could have been any of the movies and you needed to specify one in a multi-film series. **[Brendan]** Dah-de-dahdah, dah de DAH...

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- 03) **[Fred]** Sorry, but not familiar with this category. **[WAY]** For the most part, these are films that women would be interested in but men would generally skip - unless going to see it with their wife/girlfriend/etc. **[Edi]** hm,m,mmmm “Tower of Screaming Virgins... no... “Deep Throat”... hmmm... I suspect that those are not what is called chick flicks these days. **[WAY]** All I’ll say is “no comment”. **[Jim-Bob]** Brokeback Mountain probably will be a higher scoring chance, but my chick (i.e. my wife) doesn’t want to see this at all!! **[WAY]** I saw it last night with a few friends (both male and female). Very excellent movie, but it wasn’t a winner in this game. **[Brendan]** I haven’t seen Chicken Little yet, and am not sure I want to...
- 04) **[Jim-Bob]** again, going generic, Witch/Lion/Wardrobe might win, but it shouldn’t. **[WAY]** I actually found the Narnia movie quite enjoyable and basically faithful to the books. But, you were the only Potter fan. **[Brendan]** Lord of the Rings was ok, but a tad too violent for me, and it played with the original story too much.
- 05) **[Doug]** But I almost put “The Good, The Bad & The Ugly or “The Magnificent 7”. **[WAY]** In this case, any of those three choices would have given the exact same result for you. But, I’m sure Steve appreciates the extra point the match for “Unforgiven” gave him. **[Jim-Bob]** Gotta go old here...if Brokeback Mountain wins here I’ll kick myself. **[WAY]** most everyone went with the older, classic westerns. **[Brendan]** The only mainstream movie to use the ‘n’ word and get away with it. And of course there’s the baked beans scene... **[WAY]** and the less said about that scene the better!

General Player Commentary:

[Tom] So, you didn’t pick a category that made for difficult choices, here. There was a French series, three movies, if memory serves (which it increasingly doesn’t), the middle one titled “Manon of the Spring”. Also “Chariots of Fire. There’s others, but you get my drift, I’m sure. What would be the category that these fit into? That would make for difficult decisions. **[WAY]** From what I can find in my library, “Manon” is the sequel to “Jean de Florette”. I can’t find reference to a third film. They are an adaptation of a Marcal Pagnol novel . Based on the description, they (and “Chariots”) could fall into a category ‘Period (or Historical) Movies’ or possibly ‘Inspirational Movies’. “Chariots” could fit many more ‘Biographical Movies’ or ‘True Life Movies’. Hmmm, maybe a category of ‘Olympic Movies’ where “Chariots” could contend with the recently released “Munich” and the notorious “Olympia” for top choice.

[Kevin] Tough topic for a start in a new subzine. I don’t think there will be that many matches if folks answer truly rather than trying to guess what others will answer. I’m going to answer truly, rather than guess, and see how the chips fall. **[WAY]** I usually choose “my” answer rather than the answer I think others will choose - quite often with similar results you had this time. However, the game is guessing what is the most popular answer from the playing field.

Round Two Category – Magazines

- 01) Favorite News Magazine
- 02) Favorite Magazine for Women
- 03) Favorite Tabloid
- 04) Favorite Magazine for Men
- 05) Favorite Scientific/Educational Magazine

Submit Email entries to wandrew88 of gmail.com or by mail to W Andrew York; POB 201117; Austin TX 78720-1117

Deadline is: March 11, 2006 at high noon Central Time