

Wonder of Wonders

While watching one of Tom Hanks' seemingly forgotten movies, I began to think upon the novelty of the one hit wonder (the countless musical groups that have the distinction of having one major song and then disappearing into obscurity). [That Thing You Do](#) dramatizes one such group: The Wonders (catchy name, eh?). The film follows the group and its manager Mr. White (played by Hanks who also wrote and directed the movie) formed during the 1960s at the onset of the British invasion. The cast also includes Tom Everett Scott (who bears an uncanny resemblance to Mr. Hanks) as the drummer Guy, Johnathon Schaech as the moody lead singer Jimmy, and Steve Zahn as the "ladies man" guitarist Lenny. Liv Tyler is also featured as Jimmy's girlfriend Faye. The band records one catchy tune (fittingly entitled, "That Thing You Do"), tours it on the county fair circuit, and eventually hits the big time on an Ed Sullivan-esque variety show. However, Mr. White also gets the group a gig "appearing" in a low budget beach movie as Captain Geech and the Shrimp Shack Shooters.

There have been several groups to have one song make a huge splash only to see that group slip into oblivion soon after. How about "Pac-Man Fever" by Buckner and Garcia? Or "Somebody's Watchin' Me" by Michael Jackson wannabe Rockwell (who just happened to be the son of Motown founder Barry Gordy, Jr.). "Mickey" by Toni Basil; Nena's "99 Red Balloons". OR more recently, "Who Let the Dogs Out" by the marvelous Baha Men. Or "Tubthumping" by that group of groups Chumbawumba. Wow.... the most recent examples I can think of are at least 10 years old. OHOH0H0H0H.... how could I possibly forget "Ice, Ice Baby?" Now THAT is a one-hit wonder (a wonder anyone ever listened to it). Or my personal favorite "Disco Duck" by DJ turned weekly countdown king, Rick Dees. Surely brought a quick death to the Disco craze. And let us not forget the best group ever to lip-sync a note (or not) Milli Vanilli.

Curses... Foiled Again

On Monday in a very small rural community in Ohio (approximately 60 miles west of Toledo), a very intelligent individual attempted to rob a small bank in broad daylight while several people looked on. It seems that the would-be robber got out of his vehicle with a heavy coat, pulled on a ski mask, and got his weapon from the back seat. Some of the employees saw the suspicious gentleman and ran out of the bank. A chase involving townspeople ensued. Apparently, the perpetrator did not know the area very well as he was forced to turn his car around and re-enter the village.

[Residents near Ohio-Ind. line help snag bank robbery suspect](#)

I'm not sure if this is normal behavior for a bank robber. It would look awfully suspicious to me if a man put on a ski-mask, a heavy coat, and produced a gun from the back of his car in the middle of a 60 degree sunny day. Maybe, he was TRYING to make it on a broadcast of "World's Smartest(?) Criminals." At least the man was intelligent enough to attempt the robbery on a Monday. On Friday, the street is generally populated by patrolmen who enjoy lunch at the local steakhouse. OOPS.... I hope I did not give any bright ideas.

Save Me From Reality

I know that the transplanting of television series from one country to another is nothing new. However, I just found out today that one of the most popular reality series is not

actually American based. Apparently, "Survivor" is a Swedish import (based on the series "Expedition Robinson" from the classic novel *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe) and had its initial run in 1997 before becoming Americanized and thus creating yet another series that needs no writers nor professional actors. Only people crazy enough to eat live scorpions, brains, intestines and attempt dangerous stunts. How many seasons has this been on the air and how many versions on how many different continents? If Jeff Probst took his teams to Antarctica, I would possibly watch. However, it seems you have to be placed in a more tropical locale to survive.

Whatever happened to the plot-driven series of the past? It seems that for every "The Office" there is another hideous flesh-peddling "Bachelor" (which is not available on DVD, thank you very much) which at times seems reminiscent of the by-gone nighttime soaps of the 80s that were full of catfights, padded dresses, and rich, boozing business people. "Three's Company," "[All in the Family](#)," and "[Too Close for Comfort](#)" are three shows from the past that were based on shows from other countries that are not reality based. But, I guess as long as producers find it more economical to keep rolling out new and improved reality series they will continue.

Big Papi's Curse

There have been several rivalries among sports teams over the years ([Ohio State/Michigan](#), [Chicago Bears/Green Bay Packers](#), and [Chicago Cubs/St. Louis Cardinals](#) to name a few). However, one of the most celebrated rivalries in all of sports is the extreme battle between the [New York Yankees](#) and the [Boston Red Sox](#). It dates back to 1920 when the Red Sox sold one of the

most famous sluggers of all time, Babe Ruth, to the Yankees. From 1920-2004, the team from Bean Town was unable to win the World Series. Many 'Sox fans jokingly blame the deal; however, there were several more radical followers who faithfully curse the day the Babe put on the pinstripes. In order to curse the new Yankee Stadium, a Red Sox fanatic working as a construction worker, buried a David Ortiz jersey at the site. Although the jersey has since been unearthed and is going to be auctioned off for charity, I say **FIRE THE BUMB!!!!**

[The Big Dig: The Yanks Uncover a Red Sox Jersey](#)

Ironically, the curse seems to have worked **IN REVERSE**. Big Papi has batted an embarrassing .070 hitting just 1-for-29 since April 2. Hopefully, recovering the jersey will not have a positive impact on Ortiz' average.

Who's Got Even More Talent?

So.... yet another reality show has come and gone.... this one lasted only one episode and for good reason. "Secret Talents of the Star" **attempted** to pit stars from various outlets against each other in order to show their dreams beyond what they have already accomplished. Haven't enough celebrities attempted to go beyond their day jobs and persue other avenues. Michael Jordan retired from basketball (the first time) to persue a second career as a major league baseball player.

While he was on the television series "[Moonlighting](#)," Bruce Willis recorded a rather forgettable album entitled "The Return of Bruno." Whoever Bruno is and from where he returned is a question better left unanswered. A good thing Mr. Willis stuck with his acting gig and action films such as the [Die](#)

Hard quadrilogy.

In the category of should have known better, George Takei tried his hand at country singing on the celebrity reality showcase. The actor who played Mr. Sulu on [Star Trek](#) obviously failed to hear his captain's rendition of "Rocket Man" which may or may not have been one of William Shatner's many attempts at self-parody.

I am sure there must be a few examples of performers who found limited success in more than one outlet. Anyone care to share any or name other attempts? Was it Garth Brooks who tried to go from country superstar to Major League baseball player... even creating a new persona to do so?

Fire... Bon Fire

A new hilarious episode of "The Office" was on tonight. I am now watching reruns on Tuesday nights and decided to see if I could follow the new episodes as well. Happily enough, I enjoyed the new episode tremendously. Tonight's episode featured the absolute worst dinner party you can imagine. Michael even had to stage a revolt to his superiors in order to get Jim and Pam and another couple I am not familiar with to come to his and Jan's place. Apparently, none of Michael's "friends" were too keen on going. Poor Dwight was the only person in the office who wanted to attend and was not invited.

The party featured a tour of Jan and Michael's abode. Bon fire scented candles, anyone? And Michael's mini-plasma screen television hanging near his multiple (?) Dundee trophies... both of which he is exceedingly proud. The party kicked into high gear with a game that resembled charades but the performer was able to speak.

By the end of the party, there was a party crasher and his “date”, domestic squabbling, and enough staring to make anyone think that the worst party they have ever been to was 1000% better. That is what make “The Office” one of the funniest shows on television. The writers take a horrible situation and exaggerate it to the point where it becomes hilarious.

Crossing the Big Pond

Planning a trip to London? Let me be your guide to the best the West End has to offer in theatre. Already there are the Broadway hits [Wicked](#), [Phantom of the Opera](#) (ok, ok, it was in London first), and the just opened [Jersey Boys](#). However, there are several productions which have not yet made the leap over to the U.S.

There is the Andrew Lloyd Webber produced revival of *The Sound of Music*. Apparently, Lord Lloyd Webber cannot produce anything new on his own that is capable of making money so he must revive not only his past successes but also breathe new life into other’s works as well (whatever happened to his planned sequel to *Phantom*?). There is also a revival of Webber’s [Joseph....](#). In a bit of “American Idol” meets musical theatre, the Joseph for this production was chosen on a reality television show. In 2007, the new Broadway cast of [Grease](#) was chosen in this way on a series called “Grease: You’re the One that I Want.” Not a very original title.

There is also a new musical version of the classic novel and movie [Gone with the Wind](#). The Trevor Nunn directed production stars [Darius Danesh](#) as Rhett Butler. Darius was seen on “Pop Idol” which is the British phenomenon that inspired “American Idol.” I wonder if the judges told him that he was “too

theatrical” as Simon Cowell has been known to tell American contestants.

Perhaps the strangest if not the most ambitious show of all is the staging of J.R.R. Tolkien’s [*Lord of the Rings*](#) trilogy. It took three films of nearly three hours each to scratch the surface of the novels. I’m sure Rings purists are left wanting after only one 3 hour musical.

So.... if you are in West End or are planning a trip over the Atlantic, consider taking in one or more of these stage hits. Of course many times, today’s hits of London become tomorrow’s Broadway blockbusters and vice versa.

Ordinary People

One of my favorite quotes has always been one for which I have no idea for whom credit should go: “Heroes are ordinary people who make bad decisions at good moments.” Surely with my wide-ranging blog someone must have a good idea from what source this comes from. I have thought long and hard for several years and have come up with nada.

Today, I was fortunate to attend a memorial service for a man who could be seen as a hero in the eyes of many in the very small community I was raised in. I know of at least one individual who considered Mr. Peverly their personal hero, my Uncle Bob.

The memorial service was a bit unusual. The atmosphere was very light and dare I say, fun. The Elementary School gymnasium was adorned with pictures of high school sports teams, trophies, and a batting cage. Over the speakers, music from the 1950s played (“Yakety-Yak,” “Rock Around the Clock,”

etc.) Far from the slow, sober music one might expect for a funeral.

Mr. Peverly taught high school math from 1956-1988. He was perhaps better known as the coach of baseball, basketball, and cross country. Unfortunately, he retired from teaching one year before I entered high school. I did however have him as a substitute for French class; which he told us he knew absolutely nothing about. A good thing for him it was mid-term exam day.

Mr. Peverly and my uncle have had a very long, interesting relationship. My Grandfather Swary passed away when Uncle Bob was 15 years old... years before either of my older brothers were born and before my parents were married. Being the youngest of 3 (and the only boy), Bob needed the guidance of a male figure. Because he saw in Bob someone who was more inclined toward sports than classroom studies, Mr. Peverly took him under his wing and nurtured him into the man he is today.

As one of the three speakers at the service, Uncle Bob told one very interesting story from his youth (one my entire family knows by memory). It seems that during his senior year, the varsity baseball team lost the Regional finals game 2-1. That night, Uncle Bob and some teammates decided to go and "Break some training rules." They went out and got drunk. The next day, Robert was called to Coach Peverly's office where he was asked (with his mother beside him) if he indeed did "break training." Since Coach was one of the few people he could not lie to, Bob confessed. Punishment included sitting out the rest of the season (there were still regular season games left to be played) and being ineligible for MVP honors (for which he was sure to win and was even scouted by the KC Royals ballteam). Years later, Coach Peverly went to Uncle Bob's house with the MVP award.

Everyone has a hero who they either looked up to in their

youth or someone they continue to look to for inspiration. It was very comforting to see someone I have grown to respect give tribute to one of his heroes.

And to prove I do have some prowess in math Mr. Peverly taught math for 32 years at one school. If only he had stayed another 4 years. He must have known there was another Shaffer boy coming and ran.

Hungry As The Wolf Felt When He Met Red-Riding Hood

In 1949, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II brought to the Broadway stage what would be their third musical blockbuster, [*South Pacific*](#). It tells the tale of Ensign Nellie Forbush, a “Cockeyed Optimist”-ic Naval nurse from Little Rock, stationed on a remote Pacific island, who falls in love with a worldly French planter. This type of interracial pairing was extremely controversial for a show in the 1940s. Even more so was the introduction of Emile de Becque’s two Polynesian children. After learning of the children, Nellie vows to “Wash that Man Right Out of Her Hair.”

A secondary plot revolves around the romance between Lt. Joseph Cable and a mute Polynesian native. The plots are brought together when de Becque and Cable are called upon to go on a dangerous mission which leads to tragedy.

The theme of racial prejudice is explored throughout the show and no more so than in the song “You’ve Got to be Carefully Taught.” Because of its biting commentary on prejudice, Rodgers and Hammerstein were encouraged to take the song out of the show to which they both responded that there would be

no show without it.

South Pacific opened at the Majestic Theatre on Broadway April 7, 1949 (40 years ago, today) and had a run of 1,925 performances. It was the recipient of 9 Tony Awards (including all 4 of the major acting trophies). It also received the prestigious 1950 Pulitzer Prize for Drama (one of only 7 musicals to have done so). Most of the songs have become standards: "Some Enchanted Evening," "Younger than Springtime," "Bali Hai," and "There is Nothing like a Dame" (a rousing chorus number led by the great character Luthor Billis and his chorus of Seabees). The [movie](#) was released in theatres in 1958 as well as a [televised version](#) in 2001 starring an out-of-place Glenn Close who is much too old to play a young, naive Naval nurse. Ironically, it is the only major Rodgers and Hammerstein show to have never been revived on Broadway until it recently opened at the [Vivian Beaumont Theatre](#).

ADDENDUM: Any errors in mathematics are solely the responsibility of the blogger. He takes full responsibility for his ignorance and hopes that his brilliance does not become the topic for a post on another site. Unless it is by his own doing.

Munk-ey See, Munk-ey Do

In 1958, a struggling songwriter experimented with a recording device by speeding up the audio-track of a recording producing a squeaky, high-pitched, comical tone. Thus, Ross Bagdasarian created David Seville and the Chipmunks with the song "Witch Doctor." The unique sound was an instant sensation and led to multiple Grammy award winning albums, several cartoon series, and the 2007 live-action/CGI feature [Alvin and the Chipmunks](#).

In the film, Jason Lee plays Dave whose life is turned completely upside down when he becomes the reluctant guardian of the trio of talking, singing rodents (call me mean if you must but yes indeed they are rodents). Alvin (Justin Long) is the mischievous leader of the three. Simon (Matthew Gray Gubler) is the intellectual, bespecaled middle sibling. Rounding out the threesome, Theodore (pop singer Jesse McCartney) is the chubby, emotional young one. In one day, the brothers cause Dave to lose his job at an ad agency, wreck his house, and ruin his date with his ex-girlfriend. Yet, when he hears the chipmunks sing Dave thinks that his dreams of becoming a successful songwriter just fell into his lap. He writes for the group "The Chipmunk Song (Please Christmas Don't Be Late)."

Upon hearing the novelty piece, a greedy, selfish record company owner sets out to control the group. "Uncle" Ian (David Cross) lavishes the boys with fancy toys, video games, cool clothes, and almost more food than Theodore can stuff into his enormous cheeks. Eventually, the villain drives a wedge between the chipmunks and Dave which leads the brothers to walk out and move in with the slimeball. Eventually, Ian's true motivation emerges as he leads the group on a taxing tour schedule, leaving no time to be boys.

The live-action Alvin and the Chipmunks *is fun for children and mildly entertaining for older people. Personally, I would rather enjoy the animated adventures of Alvin, Simon, and Theodore. Also, the hip-hop version of "Witch Doctor" was just not good. However, I did enjoy the up-tempo version of "The Chipmunk Song."*