

fringe beat

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Listomaniacal, Film Division

By Josef Woodard, January 10, 2007

NEW YEAR/NEW MUSIC: 2007's live music calendar in town kicks off with a brainy bang tonight and tomorrow (January 11 and 12), as digitized NYC violinist **Todd Reynolds** performs with videographer Luke Dubois at Center Stage. In a program called "Still Life with Mic," we get a blast of experimental but accessible new music with visuals attached and interwoven, courtesy of the provocative **Iridian Arts** series. Reynolds' diverse resume includes work with **Steve Reich**, **Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Project**, **Bang on a Can** and **Ethel**, and his solo projects place him at the juncture of conventional violin virtuosity and laptop-aided sonics and sinuous/cerebral grooves.

LISTOMANIA, CONT.: The hopeless lifer **film critic within** — an obsessive characteristic known to many, whether or not payment is attached to the practice — can't help but fall into roundup mode around the turn of each year. It's a holiday tradition, spilling over into January, as we babble and bicker about our best-of lists and survey the landscape of what was. Was this neurotic condition known in the 19th century? There may be no cure. But it's a relatively harmless affliction, unless arguments come to blows.



Below is a baker's dozen-sized list of the best films of 2006, in the interest of trying to give closure to the year's cinematic fruits. The list is site-specific, only including those films which have shown up in Santa Barbara, which still gets some of the late-breaking, Oscar-timed releases late, being outside the limited release market. Still unseen in this area code at press time, for instance: Clint Eastwood's *Letters from Iwo Jima* and David Lynch's *Inland Empire*.

Of those screened here, *Dreamgirls*, bolstered by the stunning work of Jennifer Hudson, must be the sentimental feelgood flick of the year, despite the weakness and period faux pas of its music, and the goofy-sweet *Nacho Libre* — **Jared (Napoleon Dynamite) Hess'** sophomore charmer — may be the year's guilty pleasure. The slacker Zen-like *Old Joy* is an Oregonian film with hypnotic, eastern sensibilities, and **Mel Gibson's** stirring Mayan action flick *Apocalypto* soared, whatever the transgressions of Gibson, the man. *Little Miss Sunshine* is the year's sleeper sensation, with something for everyone, including sentimental resolutions to wild card situations, and Alan Arkin in pottymouth mode. From the more serious, real world end, Eastwood's *Flags of Our Fathers* (second installment still on its way to Santa Barbara) wrapped WWII lore — and war, generally — in valid question marks and *United 93* introduced the 9/11 subject to cineplexes with unexpected grace, artfulness and taste.

One Cinephile's List: *Little Children* (Todd Field), *Volver* (Pedro Almodovar), *Apocalypto* (Mel Gibson), *Flags of Our Fathers* (Clint Eastwood), *The Departed* (Martin Scorsese), *Factotum* (Bent Hamer), *Nacho Libre* (Jared Hess), *Little Miss Sunshine* (Jonathan Dayton, Valerie Faris), *United 93* (Paul Greengrass), *Tsotsi* (Gavin Hood), *Old Joy* (Kelly Reichardt), *A Scanner Darkly* (Richard Linklater), *Dreamgirls* (Bill Condon).

MEA CULPA: In last week's round-up of the prime CDs of 2006, at least one glaring omission must be corrected: What list worth its salt would be complete without mention of the brilliant example of humane electronica, **Thom Yorke's** *The Eraser* (XL)? Last year, Yorke toured with his band Radiohead and passed through SoCal's urban areas: We dream of the day the band deigns to return to the Santa Barbara Bowl, where their shows a few years ago were among the most memorable in the Bowl's history.

TO-DOINGS: Music of a worldly sort comes to the intimate, inviting [UCSB MultiCultural Center](#) theater this month, starting with a warm wind of "forro" music from Northeastern Brazil, on Friday night. **Rob Curto's Forro For All** is a dance-happy group based around NYC-based accordionist's jazz-spiced variation on the forro tradition. Another calendar marker for so-called "world music" fans is next Thursday (January 18) at the MCC, when **Wang Fei** performs the traditional Chinese Guqin music on the instrument known as the qin.

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