Seven Days...
Friday, April 12
The Moody Blues at Footlight Theatre in South Hadly, MA
The Beta Band at the Northampton Theatre in Northampton
Pat McGee Band at Avalon in Boston
Rocking Horse Winner at McGee’s in West Hartford
Sunday, April 14
Ani DiFranco at John M. Green Hall in Northampton
Big Head Todd & The Monsters at Pearl Street in Northampton

Spring weather exposes campus

MUSIC
White Ladder
David Gray
http://www.fansonly.com

Most athletic websites suck. Their stuff is bush-league. It’s like stepping up to the plate with some white rawlings spikes and some two-and-one socks. We need fansonly.com!

Mike Maron ’05

BOOK
Erasure
By Perrcival Everett
“It’s funny and controversial- a good read.”
— Meghan Reilly ’05

MOVIE
I Am Sam
Starring Sean Penn
“Me and my friends were passing around tis-sues the entire time. See this movie if you like to cry.”
— Catherine Borelli ’05

FEATURES
Fans Only
http://www.fansonly.com

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FEATURES EDITOR EMERITUS
BY TIM O’CONNOR
“Panic Room” one of the best thrillers of the past decade

By Tim O’Connor
Features Editor Emeritus

― Panic Room “marks something of a departure for “Fight Club” and “Seven” director David Fincher. His distinct visual trademarks are easily visible throughout, yet he reigns in his tendency to, at times, go off the deep end with manic flair in his characters’ and treatment of sub- ject matter. Personally, I don’t consider this a flaw – I enjoyed the kitschy surrealism of his earlier works. However, “Panic Room,” with its definite sense of place, calls for something a bit more restrained, and Fincher answers the call nicely. His direction sits atop the many plusses of this expertly crafted thriller, among them fully-realized characters, a well-written screen- play, plenty of tense moments and twists, a brooding atmospheric score from composer Howard Shore, and several imaginative situ- ations.

The film opens with a recently- divorced Meg Altman (Jodie Foster) house-hunting with her stub- bled daughter Sarah (Kristen Stewart). They’re given a tour of a four-story Manhattan “townstone” (described as a cross between a townhouse and a brownstone by the realtor), recently vacated after the death of its owner. Fincher uses the tour as a means of meticulously es- tablishing the layout of the house—no detail is overlooked. Of course, the most striking detail is the hid- den panic room of the title, a self- contained shelter containing surveil- lance monitors, a separate phone line, its own air supply, and cases of survival gear. Thick steel doors, sealed from the inside, pro- tect the occupants. Meg discovers it after noticing an inconsistency in her bedroom wall; a rather ominous representation of the former occupant’s extreme paranoia.

As mother and daughter sleep away their first night in the house, a trio of intruders manages to get into the house. They include Burnham (Forest Whitaker), a security company technician, Raoul (Dwight Yoakam), a masked hoodlum with a nonchalant creepiness, and Junior (Jared Leto), the nervous leader. Their objective: a hidden, three million dollar stash, which Junior knows about, since he’s a relative of the former occupant. He proceeds along Burnham to get past the intri- cate security systems, and Raoul for some added muscle.

Unfortunately, the three would- be thieves believed the house was empty — it seems Meg and Sarah moved in early. Junior wants to capture and restrain the houses occupants, by force if nec- essary. Raoul agrees, but Burn- ham, despite his criminal leanings, is appalled at such an idea. He doesn’t want to hurt anyone, even if it means giving up the fortune. While the three argue, Meg be- comes aware of the presence of these uninvited guests. Before the criminals can react, Meg grabs her daughter and flees into the panic room.

What follows is a struggle for survival and a contest of wits. It seems that the money the criminals are after is hidden in the panic room itself, and Junior is deter- mined not to leave empty handed. Meg has to find a way to somehow communicate for help, while at the same time trying to fend off the at- tempts of the criminals to breach their small, secure space.

Fincher and screenwriter David Koepp have created an exceptional thriller here, truly one of the best in recent memory. The film is a tour de force, a suspense thriller here, truly one of the best in recent memory. The film lets the audience breathe. Once Meg and Sarah lock themselves in the room, the thrills begin and don’t abate til the credits roll. This is one suspense / thriller that’s truly deserving to have the description “white-knuckle tension.” The di- rector’s knack for interesting, origi- nal visuals helps to fill the movie with many creative scenarios. One of my favorites is when the women hear a knocking coming from outside. Fincher zooms into the wall, where we see tiny flecks of concrete being disturbed by a dis- tinct pounding, and they realize that it’s their neighbors. Another clever scene is when a unequil neigh- bor someone across the street with a flashlight through a tiny ventilation pipe.

Koepp’s screenplay continuously- builds dramatic tension, which Fincher incorporates skill- fully and intelligently into the film. Coups twists can sometimes bog down a script, but Fincher makes it ridiculous than clever (a problem I had with David Mamet’s “Heist”). However, every little trick here is perfectly in place, and not one feels forced.

Indeed, despite one particularly absurd sequence involving an at- tempt to force the panic room occu- pants out using a propane tank, Fincher manages to keep much of the movie grounded in realism and logic. It makes for a much more ef- fective and riveting thriller, since the danger seems all-the-more real in context.

“Panic Room” also succeeds in the area of characters. Each is wonderfully realized and devel- oped, from the charming turn of the screenwriter and a slew of great performances. Jodie Foster proves her abilities once again in portraying the emo- tionally drained yet determined character of Meg. Whitaker, Leto and Yokam give arguably the most interesting performances in the film. They’re not just simply invaders. They’re fully realized people with their own personalities and motivations. Each of these actors plays their roles so well, that others very well, and their interactions make for some of the film’s most memorable (and amusing) moments.

While certainly more gruesome and dark-toned, “Panic Room” hearkens back to the expert craft of Alfred Hitchcock. It’s the first truly great film of 2002, and is argu- ably one of best suspense / thrillers of the past several years—”Memento” and “The Usual Suspects” best it.

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FEATURES
Spring weather exposes campus

Passing Parade, page 12
in the air, brought to us by the end of winter? The same warmth that
relished the snow on our exhibition sculptures has uncovered
the rest of the campus, from Freshman Field to Wheeler Brook.
All signs of men and women for others have, no doubt,
bemoaned this seasonal change, which has taken from us the joy of
the winter time, the excitement of the Kimball-tray sled, the in-
tentional comedy of Physical Plant’s little mini-dump-truck clearing
away the snow missed as much as it is on

Major Frost, page 12

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away their first night in the house, a trio of intruders manages to get into
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9 / 10

Joey while munching on his Lower Kimball Eskimo pie. “When I was afraid that my Soca professor wouldn’t accept an extension on my paper without a good reason, I just looked at the igloo and realized: with faith, any man’s job is possible. When I fretted about the steam rising from the hood of my car uncustomed to winter driving, I thought it was overheating, but I thought of the igloo and remembered: just because it’s giving off smoke doesn’t mean it’s warm. And its very functional construction, a memorial to our ability to better our campus by building a public sculpture that is headful, non-of-fensive, and useful. Just like those naked women.