

Napster acquired by BMG; music lovers to pay fee

By Lia Glavin
Contributing Reviewer

With the creation of the Napster Music Community, it seemed paying for music had become a thing of the past. However, the thousands of songs that are available to individuals (primarily college students) for free Internet downloading through Napster's hugely popular music server will soon only be accessible for a monthly fee.

This change is a result of Napster's recent alliance with the Bertelsmann AG group, the parent company of BMG music.

The alliance was announced in October at a press conference with Napster founder Shawn Fanning and the CEOs of

both Bertelsmann and Napster praising the combination by saying that the alliance was paving a new way for Internet music services.

"We were unable to gain cooperation from major recording companies," Fanning said at the press conference. "Bertelsmann will help us reach an acceptable solution with the labels and publishers."

According to the Bertelsmann Web site, once Napster implements its new membership service, BMG will withdraw its lawsuit against Napster and make its music catalogue available to the service. BMG was one of the many groups that unsuccessfully tried to shut down Napster earlier in the year because of so-called "piracy" of music.

One organization that is still suing Napster is the Recording Industry Association of America, which released a statement saying that Napster was enabling

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Shannon Beamer
Freshman

and encouraging the illegal copying and distribution of copyrighted music. Napster's goal was to figure out the best way to structure enhanced membership and try to gain acceptance from the major recording and publishing companies after the lawsuit.

"For a small membership fee we feel that we can facilitate an enhanced service that you'll find even more valuable and that will allow us to generate revenues to be able to make payments to artists and

songwriters for music files that our users share with each other," Hank Barry, Napster's CEO, said at the press conference. "I expect that the company will charge a monthly membership fee of \$4.95 for the service."

"I think it is the only option that Napster has," junior Stewart Bracken said.

Recently, in the first instance of a record company teaming up with Napster, BMG artist Dave Matthews Band released their newest single on Napster. Though some may complain that paying for Napster is unfair after the service has been free of charge for so long, a small monthly fee may be acceptable to other students who are used to having hundreds of songs at their fingertips.

"I think it would be fair to have a charge for Napster because the musicians have worked their entire lives to get where they are," freshman Wes Sherman said.

The membership charge will be insti-

tuted once Bertelsmann and Napster work together to form the details of the new membership service.

Students already using Napster will be able to choose whether or not to pay and continue using the service or lose their access to the MP3 files, the format of downloaded songs.

"I wouldn't be happy about paying a monthly fee for Napster but it would be fine as long as I could keep downloading as many songs as I want," freshman Shannon Beamer said.

"It's not as good as free but I don't really mind," junior Jeff Cole said.

Another plus for the membership fee would be the funds going to the recording labels and artists such as Metallica, who took a strong stand against Napster after its creation.

Metallica and other artists claimed that fans must pay for musicians to receive royalties.

Year's Best

Continued from Page B5

and moving film demonstrates the complex bond existing between a brother and sister, even into adulthood. Laura Linney delivers a knock out performance that with any justice should garner her some Oscar notice. Costar Mark Ruffalo comes from nowhere as her underachieving brother to steal the film with a textured performance that could be the launch of a stellar career. Keep this film in mind when filling out those Oscar betting pools.

Nurse Betty. Having seen the remarkably well-made, yet remarkably despicable *In the Company of Men*, I was concerned that writer/director Neil LaBute might lack what the rest of us refer to as a heart. Not to worry. This, LaBute's third and best film, is a quirky, imaginative, unpredictable, modern day fairy tale that demonstrates not only his uncanny knack for dark comedy, but also for a whimsy and poignant movie. The film also features a touching, zany, award-worthy performance from Renée Zellweger.

Cast Away. Although detractors expressed a curious dissatisfaction with a supposedly lackluster ending, no one could find fault in the film's groundbreaking island scenes. A film that spends over an hour examining a lone character interacting with nothing more than a volleyball and the elements is not something one would normally associate with a mainstream Hollywood production. Director Robert Zemeckis teams with Tom Hanks, however, in a courageous effort that results in one of the year's most powerful films.

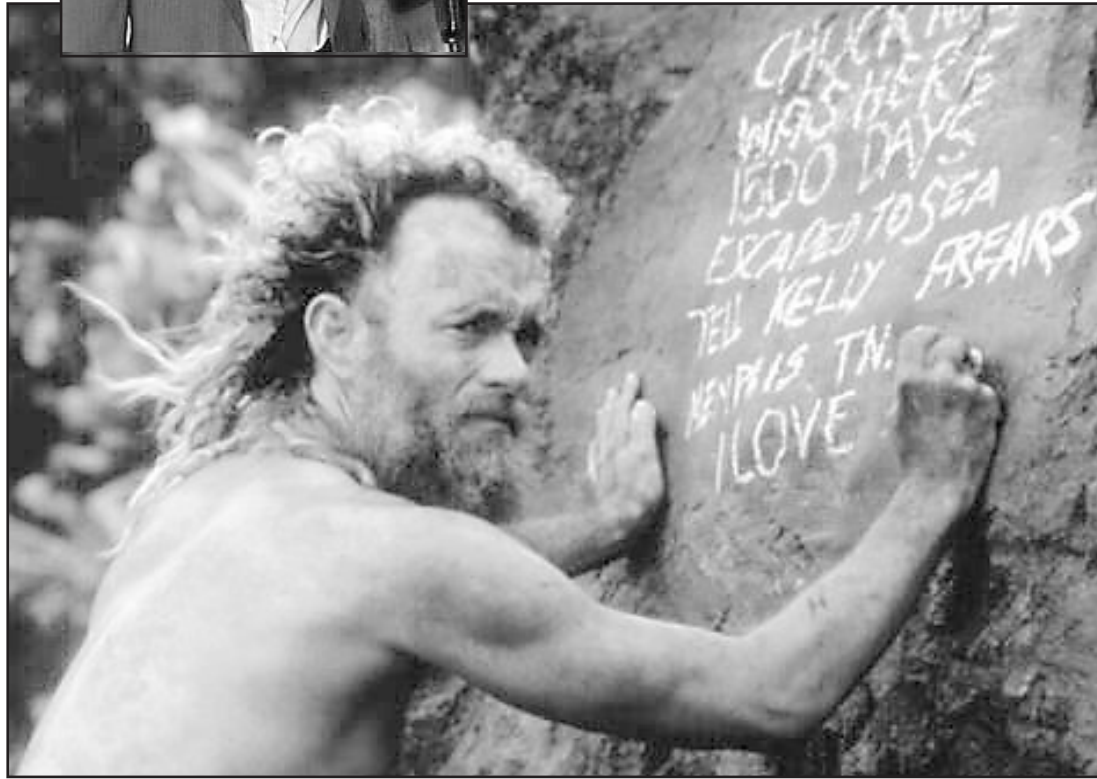
Chicken Run. They're smart. They're brave. They're feathery. More importantly, however, they're funny. In bringing the claymation master Nick Park to the big screen, this hit film introduces America to one of the true creative minds in modern film. It does so in memorable fashion, spoofing such classics as *The Great Escape* and *Stalag 17*, and providing simultaneous laughs for children and adults. This may be the most fun you have at a theater this year.

Honorable mentions include *Erin Brockovich*, *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?*, *Gladiator*, *Meet the Parents* and *Billy Elliot*.



Photos courtesy of imdb.com

The leading leading men of 2001... TOP: Phillip Seymour Hoffman plays Lester Bangs in Cameron Crowe's *Almost Famous*. LEFT: Benicio Del Toro works the front lines of the Drug War in Steven Soderbergh's *Traffic*. BELOW: Tom Hanks scowls and battles the elements in Robert Zemeckis' *Cast Away*.



Steve Martin's 'Shopgirl' lacking

By Ethan Dougherty
Contributing Reviewer

"When you work in the glove department at Neiman's, you are selling things that nobody buys anymore." So begins Steve Martin's new novella *Shopgirl* (Hyperion, \$17.95), the story of a Beverly Hills salesclerk named Mirabelle whose tendency toward depression and desperate need for affection drives the story. She embarks on an affair with a slovenly



freelancer followed by a lengthy affair with a lonely billionaire named Ray Parker. Parker is enthralled by Mirabelle's demure personality and strange beauty. She gives him everything that she is because he makes her feel needed. Parker views their relationship as purely sexual and has another affair, breaking Mirabelle's heart and sending her on to her next lover.

As an actor and comedian, Martin showed an almost unequalled comic genius in films like *The Jerk* and *Parenthood*, but, sadly, does not show the same promise as a writer. Actual dialogue doesn't begin until almost page 50 of the book, and even then it is used sparsely. Martin chooses instead to give summaries of the conversations his characters have. This technique is at first interesting, but it often drags the story along, and the loss of dialogue distances the reader from the creative writing process, and Martin's aversion to it makes him seem completely lost behind a typewriter.

The work's plot is also suspect at times. Such a short book has very little room for subplots, and many of those that Martin weaves culminate in dead ends and detract from Mirabelle's inner struggles, which seem to be the focal point of the story. Parker has a date with an older woman, Mirabelle feuds with a coworker, and Mirabelle's first lover finds

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good fortunes. None of these anecdotes add anything to the story as a whole, and they again expose Martin as a fairly amateur writer.

Martin's choice of setting is also questionable. Many parts of the book are aimed at Beverly Hills insiders, a culture that most readers know of only through the fine work of Aaron Spelling and movies starring Eddie Murphy. The ins and outs of shopping at Neiman Marcus and going to art gallery openings aren't easily identifiable, and this problem compounded by Martin's use of references that seem to have come straight out of a country club.

What Martin does do well is capture the emotions of his characters. Mirabelle's neediness and depression is captured so well that the reader can almost be compelled to feel sorry for her. However, Mirabelle repeatedly makes puzzling judgments that make her problems seem like her fault. The male protagonist, Parker, is introduced as a classic male hero sent to lift Mirabelle from her miserable life, but he is later exposed as a weak womanizer. Martin rejects the standard formula of writing likable characters and tying up the story with a happy ending. These reasons alone are enough to make this short read well worth an afternoon's time. It's the antithesis of every overused boy-meets-girl plot that has bored readers for so long, and Martin should be praised for challenging this convention.

Steve Martin may indeed become a fine author. He seems to have a keen understanding of the human heart, and his flawed characters are realistic enough to hold the reader's interest. *Shopgirl* shows marked improvement over his last work, *Pure Drivel*, a collection of humorous essays that was long on drivel and short on humor. Here's hoping that he can learn to tell lit from Shi-nola.



Photo courtesy of www.geocities.com/sunsetstrip

This pie tastes funky!

Formed in 1990, this DC-based ska septet has toured up and down the East Coast and released five full-length albums. Known for their "Maggie Mae" cover, the band has created a totally original sound as well as a loyal following within the ska scene. Lead singer Steve Jackson is backed by Jorge Pezzimenti on bass, Tom Goodin on guitar, Rod Steward on drums, Erick Morgan on keyboards, Alan Makrancy on saxophone, Jeremy Roberts on trombone and Toby Hansen on trumpet. Hear the Pietasters, known for the energy of their live shows, get their groove on at Ziggy's January 19. Doors open at 8 p.m. and the show starts at 10 p.m. Call 748-1064 for tickets or information.