

ARTS  LIFE

PREVIEW

THE GAZETTE | MONTREAL | FRIDAY, JULY 15, 2005 | SECTION EDITOR: MARK TREMBLAY | 514 987 2560 | mtremblay@thegazette.canwest.com

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Love rears its ugly head in *Wedding Crashers*, a raggedly amusing romantic comedy, D5

AnnaSophia Robb is bright, beautiful and Johnny Depp's co-star. She's also 11, D12

JUST FOR LAUGHS

Our goy Woody Allen



BILL BROWNSTEIN
ON SCOTT FAULCONBRIDGE

He is among the brightest and funniest comics on this entire continent.

Comedy has rarely been accused of being an educational tool. But Scott Faulconbridge might soon shatter that myth. Faulconbridge never fails to learn ... er ... teach us fascinating stuff. On porpoises, for example.

"Did you know that four per cent of a male porpoise's mass consists of his testicles?" asks the cerebral Montreal wit. "And that's in cold water." Pause. "In cold water, I have a vagina!"

Thanks for sharing, Scott. To his credit, though, Faulconbridge has never been shy about sharing his shortcomings, physically, mentally or spiritually. All of which explains why he is not only among the brightest but also among the funniest comics on this entire continent.

He's been called a goy Woody Allen – when the latter was actually funny – for his dry, droll, often self-effacing insights on the human condition. He, too, has made an art form of mining his neuroses. This conversation between Faulconbridge and his friend Steve, after having spotted a bear while camping, sums it all up: "Do you think we can outrun the bear?" Steve asks him. "I don't have to outrun the bear; I just have to outrun you," Faulconbridge replies. "And that's one race I'm going to win."

If you have yet to catch him unwind, you've missed out on a local babbling treasure. Take heart, though: Faulconbridge will be almost impossible to miss for anyone taking in Just for Laughs. He appears at the Comedyworks, tonight through Sunday. He moves over to Club Soda, Monday through Wednesday at 7 p.m., to perform in LaughRodisiacs: The Relationships Show. He then hangs around Club Soda on Wednesday for a 9:30 p.m. Bubbling With Laughter gig. It's back to the Comedyworks to do the Best of the Fest, Thursday at 8:30 p.m. On Friday, he'll join Dame Edna for the gala at Théâtre St. Denis. And just to ensure he won't sleep, he treks out to a date at Bourbon St. West, Saturday at 8 p.m.

Please see BROWNSTEIN, Page D11

Take the twisted fairy tale of Roald Dahl, sprinkle in Tim Burton's surreal dreamscapes and add a dash of Johnny Depp's malevolent whimsy. Stir vigorously. Enjoy

A dark, bittersweet treat



COURTESY OF WARNER BROS.

Chocolate waterfalls and candy-cane trees abound in Willie Wonka's chocolate factory.

JAY STONE
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

★★★★

Starring: Johnny Depp, Freddy Highmore

Playing at: Angrignon, Cavendish, Colossus, Côte des Neiges, Deux Montagnes, Kirkland, Lacordaire, Marché Centrale, Paramount, Sources, Sphèretch and Taschereau cinemas.

Parents' guide: quirky situations, action, mild language.

There is a malevolent whimsy at work in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, a dark and suspicious heart under the luridly coloured candy and capriciously inventive machinery of the factory where a boy-man named Willie Wonka (the custom-designed Johnny Depp) has created a world of chocolate waterfalls and candy-cane trees that are a child's delight. At least they would be if the children weren't constantly being drowned in rivers of liquid chocolate or being thrown down the garbage chute by obsessive squirrels, each greedy boy and girl a victim of his or her own shortcomings.

It's a deliciously dark cruelty, as bittersweet as the best candy bars, and it comes from several experts in the field: Roald Dahl, who wrote the



COURTESY OF WARNER BROTHERS

Charlie is the lucky winner of a factory tour.

twisted children's classic on which it is based; Tim Burton, whose surreal imagination is ideal for such subversive material; and Depp himself, Burton's unlikely Everyman and a performer with an Actor's Studio whimsy all his own. In his bucket-cut bangs, long velvet overcoats, saucer-sized sunglasses and a pale skin tinged slightly indigo, Depp has created a hero who is a combination of Pee-wee Herman and Michael Jackson with a dash, if the Web sites are correct, of Marilyn Manson. It's awfully close to precious, and there are moments when you're not sure you if you want to laugh or punch someone in the nose.

This, then, is not your father's Willy Wonka, a slightly more enigmatic character created by Gene Wilder in the 1971 version of this story.

That was a rough-edged, low-tech film whose special effects, production design and all-around weirdness weren't anywhere near the level of the new version.

Please see CHOCOLATE, Page D4





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