Babel portrays communication across cultures

By Daniel Griffin
Contributing Writer

Films that weave parallel narratives are becoming increasingly common each year, with 2005 bringing us Syriana and Crash, among others. Babel joins that group this year, as it uses a similar technique to a new and fascinating degree. Babel follows the same parallel narrative style that The Fountain follows and it seems to indicate the popularity of these evolving techniques in modern film.

But make no mistake, neither film resembles the other. Furthermore, in modern film, popularity of this evolving technique is on the increase. In modern film, 2005 brought Babel us each year, with 2005 bringing in the Moroccan desert, a Moroccan family living in the same place, a Mexican nanny attempting to attend a wedding across the Mexican border and a Japanese girl trying to fit in with her peers.

The plot and connections between the narratives are tied up neatly throughout the course of the film, with no loose ends or ambiguity at its conclusion. Yet Babel sets itself apart from other films that might appear to fit the same mold. The clarity with which Inarritu fits his plot lines together is a mere clue for the real essence of this film. The plot is easily comprehensible because it acts as a backdrop to the actual direction of Babel.

Those familiar with the biblical tale of the Tower of Babel will immediately recognize what the film takes place in the world of Ivalice, a land teetering on the brink of war between its two great states, the western state of Rozarria and the eastern state of Archadia. Caught in the middle is the kingdom of Dalmasca, which is trying in vain to repel the Archadian Empire’s advance. After Dalmasca falls to Archadian occupation, enter the story’s main character Vaan, an Aladdin-like hero who takes pleasure in stealing from the Imperial troops. He hatches a bold plan to break into the Imperial palace and steal several treasures which rightfully belong to the Dalmascans. Unfortunately a group of rebel Dalmascans and a “Spy pirate,” named Bathier have business at the palace as well, thrusting Vaan into an adventure that he would never have imagined.

The story is told through the use of voice-overs, in-game events, standard text boxes and beautifully rendered, full-motion video scenes. The game also brings back the use of various kinds of melee and ranged weapons as well as magic and summoned creatures in order to fight enemies in the game. In addition, there is a decent sound track, though it is not quite as memorable as those of other Final Fantasy titles. Of course, it is the new features that Final Fantasy XII brings to the series that will have diehard fans wondering if this installment is truly the last title from Square-Enix’s Final Fantasy series, Final Fantasy XII, is the last title from Square-Enix’s long running series that will be on the Playstation 2 (PS2) game console. Some say that this marks the end of the PS2’s era, especially with the PlayStation 3 being released today. I had concerns that Final Fantasy XII was over-hyped, but this iteration of the Final Fantasy truly embodies the spirit of the series.

The world of Final Fantasy XII will be familiar to fans and players of Final Fantasy Tactics. The story begins as a busy, broke college student, I know first-hand the difficulties of coming by a nutritious meal. Last night, as I was sitting at my desk munching on pizza for the seventh day in a row, I realized that it was time to actually cook something. Thankfully, I recently received a copy of the Food Network’s newest cookbook, How to Boil Water: Life Beyond Takeout. The book is chock full of information for even the most amateur cook.

There are tons of tasty recipes ranging from the simplest of sandwiches to impressive entrees like “Sesame Tofu Stirfry” and “Maple-Roasted Butternut Squash.” The recipes are great because they don’t assume that the reader has ever stepped within a 10 foot radius of a kitchen. Basic cooking techniques are clearly explained, and colorful photographs and diagrams add to the mix. The result is a book full of delicious recipes, both traditional and more eclectic, that do not feel the least bit intimidating.

Despite being the fifth book from the Food Network, How to Boil Water is the first in the collection that is specifically aimed at the beginning chef according to Katherine Alford, Test Kitchen Director for the Food Network. “We always have to a range from easy to more sophisticated. This is really how to boil water, how to hold your knife. When we talked about working on the book it was intended for the starting cook-- somebody who wanted to get in the kitchen. Mostly that is younger people” said Alford.

With helpful tips added to the bottoms of pages, and colorful charts and diagrams explaining everything from how a cork screw works to how to cook vegetables, the book is able to cover all of the basics necessary for even the most amateur cook. How to Boil Water: Life Beyond Takeout, provides many recipes for the average chef, which includes meals from burgers to toast.
**NOTEWORTHY**

**Piano marks return of 80s musician**

Rockabilly’s Romweber releases new album

By Mallory Velten
Contributing Writer

It would be cliché to say that Dexter Romweber’s album *Piano* is not your ordinary classical music CD. Still, it is not typical for an acclaimed musician of the rock-and-roll genre, one who has played as a member of Flat Duo Jets and released nine rock albums, to suddenly switch to piano playing—but that is what Romweber has done with the release of *Piano* this year.

Romweber has been on the music scene since the mid 1980s, where he started in the duo Flat Duo Jets, which played mostly in the rockabilly style. Romweber, whose origins lie in the South, is a combination of rock, country, blues and bluegrass. Critics praised the Flat Duo Jets for their versatility and uniqueness. After fifteen years, Flat Duo Jets disbanded, and Romweber continued his solo career, albeit a rather obscure one.

He has returned somewhat to the public light with his latest album, *Blues That Define My Soul*. Still, nothing in his professional background provides any hints to why Romweber has switched to pianism.

The music on *Piano* is not really classical, although Romweber claims his muses were Chopin, Beethoven, Mozart and Bach. Although the album is not reminiscent of any great classical work, it does have moments that call you into the kind of contentment only achieved by listening to fine music.

*Piano* is one of those albums that you can hit play and not think about it until suddenly the music stops. It is just so relaxing that you do not have to think about anything; just turn it on and enjoy the smooth ride. While the album’s histrionics of true genius, at time it sounds as if Romweber is making up the songs as he goes along. Still, it usually sounds okay, just a tad weird. Some of the tracks start off strong, full of passion and promise, only to wind down into nothing much. It is almost as if Romweber had a dream about the song, woke up and wrote it down, but forgot the ending and just muddled something together. It seems strange, after listening to the entire album, to flip over the case and see the elaborate names of the songs—“Midnight Falling Through the Sky,” “To Think We Made It This Far,” “Russian Winter” and “Staff Seen Through Armor” are just a few examples.

Although the music is good, none of the titles are truly representative of the songs. *Piano* is a mellow-sounding album, so the dramatic song names seem especially ill-fitted.

What is really amusing is despite the fancy song titles, the name of the album is simply *Piano*. Whatever kind of music fan you are, I recommend purchasing *Piano*, if only to listen to while you study. Its originality and smoothness make for a pleasant ride; even if you think it is boring, it might just lull you softly to sleep.

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**Cook’s notes from *How to Boil Water***

You can freeze cookie dough to make ahead; Put the sheet with the raw balls of dough into the freezer for an hour, then transfer the balls to plastic bags and freeze for up to two months, baking them straight from the freezer (in the oven or toaster oven) whenever you want them.

If you only have one baking sheet, let it cool completely between batches.

Put brownies or cookies in tightly sealed containers after they’ve cooled completely. Keep a piece of bread in the container if you’re storing soft cookies; keeps them moist and chewy.

Many tips such as these chocolate-chip cookie notes, are included in the new cookbook *How To Boil Water: Life Beyond Takeout*.
Elite Beat Agents saves the day

By Nathan Garcia
Contributing Writer

Just when it seems all hope is lost, this team of slick-suited secret agents with smooth moves arrives to give a morale boost to whoever is in a rut. Through the power of music and dance these men can turn certain defeat into glorious victory. More than simply a fighting force, F.B.I, CIA and MIB combined, the Elite Beat Agents are now at the service of anyone who wants a little US realness.

Elite Beat Agents is a unique and fun rhythm-action game developed by N intendendo. The player controls a group of agents, each one representing a different level of difficulty, and searches the globe for distressed emigres. Each story unfolds in a colorful comic-book style and after the stage is set, the Agents arrive on the scene.

This game was originally released in Japan as One! Take Two! Take Our! (Translation: Go! Fight! Cheer Squad!) which featured a group of stern-faced, tough looking Japanese cheerleaders with very similar game play. Thanks to the Internet, we were later told about the game, which went around to the US this that was an enjoyable game to play and could be picked up by anyone due to almost no language barrier. People that never played at all got around to the US that this was an enjoyable game and could be picked up by anyone due to almost no language barrier.

Officially licensed titles were released with the corresponding circle outlines it, matching the beat of the song. There are also parts where a ball rolls along a path and the player must keep contact on the ball until the end of the path. Finally, potentially the most energetic play mechanic, the player must spin a wheel until the meter in the background reaches the top. Points are awarded based on how closely one outlines it, matching the beat of the song. There are also parts where a ball rolls along a path and the player must keep contact on the ball until the end of the path. Finally, potentially the most energetic play mechanic, the player must spin a wheel until the meter in the background reaches the top. Points are awarded based on how close the taps match to the beat of the song and bonuses are awarded for successfully completing a phrase. Overall, the game play is really well done by stringing together multiple successful hits in a combo.

The “Elite-O-Meter” keeps track of the performance throughout the stage. It constantly changes, and only hitting the beats correctly will give the player the meter drop faster and it empires completely, the game is over. The more stress is put on the system, the more points are rewarded at certain points in the song with an accompanying cut scene indicating the success or failure of the person involved.

It sounds fairly simple, but the game play can be very addicting. The difficulty curve starts out as forgiving, but later levels will test the ability to hit rapid notes and maintain synchromed bears. A wide variety of songs should please just about everyone, from Deep Purple and The Jackson 5 to Sum 41 and Destiny’s Child.

There isn’t much of an overall story, but the individual stages tell a tale of their own. The replay value is very high as well. 19 different songs at four difficulty levels allow for improved scores on each stage can generate a lot of play time.

A wide variety of songs should please just about everyone, from Deep Purple and the Jackson 5 to Sum 41 and Destiny’s Child.

Fantasy from page 17

worth the money.
The battle system has changed from that of previous games. In this game your party is lined up against the enemy, to a more free-roaming style of combat that is reminiscent of modern role-playing games such as World of Warcraft or Guild Wars.

This feature makes it easier to avoid encountering enemies if you are simply trying to get from point A to point B without being harassed.

Characters gain status, points, experience skills, spells and weapons expertise using the License Board, which is similar to that found in Final Fantasy X. The License Board differs from the Sphere Grid in that every character starts at the same status and level, giving the player complete control over the development of each party member.

In addition, newly-acquired skills, spells and weapons cannot be used until the appropriate license is obtained.

Combat with enemies in Final Fantasy X also is interestingly hands-off affair, due to the new "Gambit System," a feature new to the series. Gambits are essentially commands that can be programmed for party members that will allow them to react however the player wants given a certain situation.

For example, a gambit can be created so that healers in a party will automatically restore a character’s health if drops below 50 percent.

Square-Enix has learned from their mistakes; most notably, the line string is intriguing and complex, characters are more complex than in former Final Fantasy games.

Using gambits for combat is straingous to use but rewarding since it can remove some of the rigors of combat against some lesser enemies. Final Fantasy X also features a large assortment of mini-games and side quests that will keep any player at their PS2 for hours.

Characters are more complex than in former Final Fantasy games.

The disbanding, of course, was a result of the high demand that lead singer Brad Nowell suffered in 1996 just before the release of the band’s self-titled album, which would eventually be released and would enjoy great success after the Long Beach, Ca.-based band spent many years playing locally.

The rest of the band continued to play in various forms, but without Nowell’s death, Sublime was gone and so was any chance for their newly-broadened fan base to see the band live.

Unless you lived in Southern California in the early 1990s and happened to catch them during one of their now-legendary live shows then, it was not going to happen. Obviously that has not changed and never will, but this is where Badfish comes into the equation.

The Sublime tribute band, named after one of their songs, travels around the country and simulates the live experience for everyone who did not get a chance to experience the band at their last performance in 1996, according to my inside source (me shooting the breeze with the merchandise guy while waiting for his next performance of “Here I Go Again” and “When Way”), but also many of the more hard-core and obscure Sublime fans who happen to happen upon you that you do not get on the radio.

This exposes the audience to music from a band that they have never heard before, in addition to being the kind of show Sublime put on.

Fantasy from page 17

Badfish entertains former Sublime fans

By Craig Tabita
Contributing Writer

Sublime was a unique band with a special appeal to music listeners. Take a trip in your car and turn on your favorite rock station, and chances are you will hear at least one of their tracks once or twice.

Not bad for the ska/punk/reggae-fused act that sold just one major record more than ten years ago before they disbanded.

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This exposes the audience to music from a band that they have never heard before, in addition to being the kind of show Sublime put on.
Two Bits laments lack of Wikipedia credibility and the approaching release of Wii.

Not too long ago I put out a plea for someone to write an article about me on Wikipedia! No fewer than three people informed me that someone by the name of “Campeau” was nice enough to fulfill my request, but the article was immediately deleted because I’m “not notable enough” or some nonsense like that. I’d put Wikipedia “on notice” like my (notable) contemporary Stephen Colbert, but I depend on them to pass my classes. Surely I’m more important than at least one of the Pokémon?

Anyway, back to the topic at hand.

Anyone who doesn’t live in a hole (and even many CS majors who do) are probably aware that Nintendo’s next console is coming out on this Sunday. It’s the…Wii. No, really. If you look it up, you’ll see that I’m not kidding. After a while, wii will get used to the name.

Until then, wii will have to endure the onslaught of wii jokes. Just make sure you don’t laugh so hard that you wii! When I first heard of the name, I thought of the video on allisonblack sheep.com, where the squirrel goes “WHEEEEE!” Then, I broke into song, with a chorus of “Wii are the champions!” The possibilities are endless.

Many gamers will choose to call this new console by its ambiguous codename, the Nintendo Revolution. Seriously, the word Revolution has been oversused. Sure, it’s nice that the Wii accessories are backwards compatible (the first console maker to do this in the history of time), but it’s not exactly what wii should call a revolution.

To have a revolution earn the Two Bits Seal of Approval, it must have at least a thousand bloody (real-life) deaths, or involve the French in some way.

There are other console names wii must also ponder. What the hell is an “Xbox,” anyway? Where did Xbox 2 through Xbox 360 go? What is a “Game-Cube?” Don’t forget about the “Commodore,” a rank between Captain and Rear Admiral in the U.S. Navy that was abolished in 1899. When I think of gaming, I always think of naval history. When I think about it, there have been some wii-ly weird console names over time, and the Wii is hardly the worst.

After having seen Nintendo’s E3 press conference a few months ago (thank you Google Video, those interested should look it up), I have to admit to being impressed. What guy doesn’t want another wii?

The control system wii be intuitive, with their aptly named “wimote” (not kidding on that one).

The wimote even vibrates, and since it’s wireless, you can wii where you want to. Even girls can wii while standing! Wii can just imagine the news article…kind of like the thing about the vibrating broom (thank you, Harry Potter…). Girls were spending a little too much time in their rooms.

Also related to gaming, there were 145 new games released this past week. It takes a while to complete, much less master, just one game. It’s almost as if (a) gaming got more popular or (b) gaming companies don’t think you need to eat. Or go to work. I’m betting on choice b, because aside from Wii’s target market of everyone except those in a permanent coma, gaming companies are selling to the same gamers that were here last week; they were the same gamers that were here last month, and except for that guy in South Korea that died while playing Starcraft nonstop for 50 hours, they are the same gamers that were here last year.

Unrelated to wii-ing, I recently picked up a book on the physics of Star Trek. A professional-type goes on about the feasibility of all those technologies that make Star Trek what it is, such as the warp drive, transporter, holodeck, etc.

Although much scientific discovery has resulted from logical progress, really cool things have originated from the study of the impossible. Most recent examples are 3-D projection, probably because it’ll be a fascinating new way to watch adult entertainment. You know it’s true—without it wii wouldn’t have the internet or HDTV.

The holodeck remains out of reach, but once we master holograms, wii’ll have to take a fresh look at that one. Faster-than-light travel isn’t directly related to porn, and involves the generation of artificial curvature in space-time, so wii probably won’t see that happening in the near future.

For now, wii’ll have to look to the Wii for our entertainment.**

Wii look forward to your new console, Nintendo. I, for one, look forward to our wii-making overloads! I know my readers can’t wait to drink in that smooth, hot wii. *Google “video game death internet cafe” (no quotes) for more on that.*

**The Sony PS3 was technically released today. However, it’s $500 to $600, or if you actually want one this decade, $3000 on eBay. Combined with Sonys’s general ridiculousness,** I think I’ll stick with my $250 Wii, thank you.

***Google “boycott Sony” and you get 85,600 results. Google “boycott Nintendo” and you get an astonishingly high 757 search results. Its true that Sony is bigger than Nintendo, but it’s not that much bigger.****

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**Theme Crossword: Coin Toss**

*By Robert Zimmerman*  
*United Features Syndicate*

**ACROSS**
1. Dad, to some  
5. Old India title  
10. Beam  
15. At the summit  
19. Iraq neighbor  
21. Line to the audience  
22. Matador’s adversary  
23. Stationery  
25. Crooker or founder  
27. Agreements, in diplomacy  
28. Track event  
30. Sculptor’s tool  
31. Crumbled cheese  
32. Packed cotton  
33. Pretty soon  
34. Hockey’s Bobby  
35. Canada’s Mulroney  
36. Gaze fixedly  
37. Hoarse  
40. Kind of coat  
42. Mont Blanc, e.g.  
43. Novelist O’Flaherty  
44. Cornbread  
45. Yearn  
46. Showy fish  
47. Guitarist Clapton  
48. John Wayne’s “__ Bravo”  
49. Troubled power plant: abbe.  
50. Ominous cloud  
51. Rock’s King  
52. Square and cube  
53. Why?: 2 wds  
54. Donna of fashion  
55. Stein filler  
56. __ Lingus  
57. Tabula __  
58. Bizarre  
60. Saw features  
61. Go astray  
62. __ acids  
63. Treat with boiling water  
64. First-aid supply  
65. Foil  
66. Bunco squad targets  
67. One of the Titans  
68. __ majesty  
69. Israeli port  
70. Book covers  
71. Separately  
72. Encomies  
74. Kiwi’s cousin  
75. Kennedy Library architect  
76. Noggin  
77. Scat’s Fitzgerald  
78. Renown  
79. “__ Resartus” (Carlyle)  
81. Pasta  
82. Half of sechs  
83. Blew one’s cool: 3 wds  
84. __ acids  
85. Prayerful bug  
86. Face to face exams  
87. Plants providing incense  
88. MA college  
89. Dark wood  
90. Photo finish  
91. Stone  
92. Asset holder  
93. Inscribed stone  
94. Razz  
95. Freeze precedent  
96. Book covers  
97. Wendy’s St. Bernard  
98. Not fer  
99. Barrier for sleepwalkers  
100. Gumshoe

**DOWN**
1. Heaps  
2. “We __ in Kansas anymore”  
3. Miss Lupone  
4. Pronghorn  
5. “__ Resartus” (Cadyle)  
6. Palid  
7. Hurries  
8. MA college  
9. Barrier for sleepwalkers  
10. Late-night TV host: 2 wds  
11. Mountain nymph  
12. Lately  
13. Fa follower  
14. Common verse rhythm  
15. Outfit  
16. Wedding event  
17. Bay window  
18. Tom Sawyer’s aunt  
19. Babel  
20. Mine  
21. Passion audience  
22. Matador’s  
23. Stationery adversary  
24. Gateway  
25. Croaker or flounder  
26. Fingerprint feature  
27. Agreements, in diplomacy  
28. Track event  
29. Israeli carrier  
30. Saw features  
31. Crumbled cheese  
32. Steer’s ID  
33. Pretty soon  
34. Hockey’s Bobby  
35. Canada’s Mulroney  
36. Gaze fixedly  
37. Hoarse  
38. Highest point  
39. Help for candidates, at times  
40. Snowstorm residue  
41. Shields tears  
42. Lake near L.A.  
43. Novelist O’Flaherty  
44. Cornbread  
45. Yearn  
46. Shoots the breeze  
47. Guitarist Clapton  
48. John Wayne’s “__ Bravo”  
49. Troubled power plant: abbe.  
50. Ominous cloud  
51. Rock’s King  
52. Square and cube  
53. Why?: 2 wds  
54. Donna of fashion  
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58. Bizarre  
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94. Razz  
95. Freeze precedent  
96. Book covers  
97. Wendy’s St. Bernard  
98. Not fer  
99. Barrier for sleepwalkers  
100. Gumshoe

**Babel**

*from page 17*

is particularly aiming for. The story from the Bible details God’s punishment of mankind for their efforts to reach the heavens by creating many languages to inflict confusion and discord amongst those of the world.

Inarritu presents the varying cultures in precise detail, displaying the inherent differences in the way humans communicate and interact.

The differing languages become only one contributor to the miscommunications between the characters in the film.

As with his previous films, Inarritu’s changes in tone, rather than visible directorial style, are what differentiate each culture and present them in such exquisite detail.

Instead of utilizing different color schemes or camera movements to separate the cultures, he uses a much more subtle technique of allowing the pacing and situational content to shape his subjects, making the differences much more obvious.

Each of the four narratives has its own specific cultural reference: the American alone in the desert pleading for help, the Japanese crowding in every location, the danger of even simple things in the Middle East and Northern Africa, and the Mexican emphasis on families and togetherness.

The most fascinating story is that of the deaf Japanese girl who appears incredibly isolated despite the presence of her deaf peers. Her difficulty in communicating嫌疑, and her resulting anger and loneliness, symbolize the trouble each of us has in relaying our thoughts and feelings to everyone else.

Beneath the thick plot and heavy characters, *Babel* ultimately fascinates as a resounding exposition on human communications, interaction in the modern world.