The National Pan-Hellenic Council held a Fall Recruitment session last Thursday at the Instructional Center. The information session was followed by a step show that included several performances.

By Kimberly Rieck
Senior Staff Writer

Rating: PG-13

Starting Reese Witherspoon, Josh Lucas, Patrick Dempsey, Candice Bergen, Ethan Embry, Fred Ward

Director: Andy Tennant
Length: 1 hour 42 minutes

The old storyline of a rich boy who falls in love with a girl that his mother disapproves of has been used time and time again in romantic comedies. Generally the girl wins over the mother in the end and the two live happily ever after.

However, in the case of Sweet Home Alabama, the movie that you think you’re going to face in the beginning is completely different from the one it turns out to be. But there are several twists and turns along the way in this adorably entertaining romantic comedy.

The premise of the story is that Melanie Carmichael (Reese Witherspoon) came to New York City from Alabama several years ago to become a fashion designer. Along the way, she finds a famous designer to mentor her and her career kicks off.

But there are several occasions where the movie turns along in the wrong way, she does not take the proposal in an important way, she does not take the newswell. Kate is not the typical overbearing mother of the romantic hero. She is the mayor of New York City. She doesn’t care about her son marrying someone wealthy as much as she cares about him marrying someone with the “right political connections.”

While she laments the news of her son’s engagement, she recalls the time when her son was dating someone from California and what a great match it would have been because of “all the electoral votes.” She wants Andrew to become the next President of the United States and in her eyes he can’t do that by marrying a Southern debutante turned fashion designer.

Bergen has become the standard for the outspoken, disappointing material figure after playing Kate and a similar role in Miss Congeniality.

Surprisingly (unless you saw the previews) Melanie doesn’t need to worry about Kate as much as she needs to worry about her hidden past. Melanie Carmichael is really Melanie Smoother, a married woman from a trailer park in a small Alabama town where the only entertainment is a country bar and the annual earthball festival. It is a bit unrealistic that Melanie could have hidden her past from the dozens of fashion reporters, a powerful political figure, and her fiancé.

Melanie goes home to get a secret divorce from Jake Perry (Josh Lucas), the childhood sweetheart she married at 18. The movie’s funniest scenes are the ones where the petite Witherspoon stands up to the over six foot Lucas to demand a divorce.

She plays the snooty fashionetta to the tilt. Witherspoon definitely perfected her comedic skills in Legally Blonde. Even when Melanie is at her worst, she still comes off as endearing and vulnerable.

Lucas is hilarious in his star-making turn as the country boy determined not to let the “snooty Yankees” get her way. Lucas adds depth and character to Jake and prevents him from coming off as just another redhead.

The role is a departure for Lucas, who typically has played the villains in his previous roles in movies such as The Deep End and A Beautiful Mind. However, Lucas pulls it off well with his charm and witty humor. His character has a lot of potential futures of times past: “Here’s to the future that was / Everything you thought it’d be / But was it anything you thought of?”

Joplin’s band also doesn’t fear treading over worn paths on a few songs. “What gets in me? / Must be you,” Joplin buzzes on “Must Be You,” the first track on The Future That Was. As simple as the chorus reads, the group’s namesake pulls it off well. Mr. Joplin’s vocals are undeniably the main asset for the band on this album. “Listening,” the highlight tune on The Future That Was, finds the front man emotionally strained in one of the better non-love ballads written in recent years.

At times the group provides a refreshing change to the normal songwriting of the alternative rock genre. Joplin’s lyrics don’t delve into any particularly deep topics, but he brings some thoughtful ideas to the table. In the bluesy-bluesy “The Future That Was,” Joplin salutes the potential futures of times past: “Here’s to the future that was / Everything you thought it’d be / But was it anything you thought of?”

Sweet Home Alabama is a romantic comedy with a few twists...
Josh Lucas tries his hand at comedy

By Kimberly Rieck
Senior Staff Writer

While the first thing that may get your attention when you notice Josh Lucas in Sweet Home Alabama is his striking blue eyes, the thing that will hold your attention is his wit, charm, and talent.

Lucas does not fit the stereotypical mold for young Hollywood actors. He is someone who prefers a naturally scruffy look with cotton button-down shirts and the quietness of hanging out with his friends by a campfire rather than attending glamorous premiers in designer clothes.

Raised by political activists, Lucas was born in Arkansas but moved over thirty times throughout his childhood before settling in a small town outside of Seattle, Washington at age 13.

"Acting is an incredibly unstable life that you have to change and transform consistently to make a living in new environments and with new people," he said. "You have to learn something for a period of five to six months and then you move on."

"As a young child, when I was thirteen or fourteen years old, I didn't have any idea about acting. I knew nothing about it; no one in my life was an actor. But the high school drama program was pretty amazing and it was kind of cool at my school to do it where at other schools it was considered nerdy. So I got involved and I instantly realized it was intimate and this is who I am and I just knew it provided the chaos that I needed on a day-by-day basis: the chaos, transformations, and transitions," Lucas said.

After he moved to New York City fifteen years ago to try his hand at acting professionally, he sought the help of Lilene Mansell, a famous dialect coach, to remove his Southern accent. He spent two years with her to make his voice as generic American-sounding as possible.

Lucas struggled for years to earn a living as an actor. "I barely made a living for 15 years. You can make a lot of money, but if you’re doing movies you really want to do, then you’re not," said Lucas.

The early part of his career included guest parts on the television shows Life Goes On and Parker Lewis Can’t Lose, ironic for a man who

See Lucas, page 24

8 Femmes a French mystery

By Ananya Paul
Contributing Writer

Rating: R
Starring: Catherine Deneuve, Isabelle Huppert, Emmanuelle Beart, Fanny Ardant
Director: François Ozon
Length: 1 hour 43 minutes

A French film with English subtitles simply cannot be stereotyped into any genre. Each segment of the movie has its own significant role in this film of acts. Of course, on the surface, there is an Agatha Christie aspect: pleasant, nostalgic, and yet mysterious. One may also find the setting quite appropriate for a mystery: a 50s chateau in France, with a gigantic staircase that one may associate with Hitchcock. At some points, the movie is like a parody of mystery movies; other times it’s just dawdling through time purposely trying to bore the viewer.

François Ozon, the director, has definitely diversified the themes in this movie. Throughout the course of the movie, there was lust, revenge, theft, incest and, of course, murder. The choreography at times is outlandish in the sense that each woman—and there are eight of them—have a song in the movie where they give a synopsis of their lives. These moments make the movie into a lighthearted comedy.

The major plot of the movie revolves around a man who is the husband of the household. The man of the house has been murdered—stabbed in the middle of the night. A knife was planted by one of these eight women. With this main plot in mind, the movie follows the interrogations, suspicions, and consents. With each woman being suspected, the character of each woman is discovered. All the scandal, thefts, tricks and revenges are forcefully uncovered leaving no innocence in any one of them. Each woman has her own story to tell, making a tapestry of wounds and despair for the murdered man.

Loyalty to family is analyzed in this movie to the fullest. Behind this concept, Ozon reveals the lies which each one has hid for many decades. One significant fact not previously mentioned is that all these women are related. They include the wife of the man who’s been murdered, his two daughters, his two maids, his sister, the wife’s sister and his mother. All of them are introduced at the beginning of the movie, and, as anticipated, the faults of each character will be exposed throughout the film.

For entertainment purposes, a large group of people where each one of the viewers picks one of the characters as suspects is a way to make this movie more satisfying. The movie, at almost two hours, is definitely not concise. Ironically, the climax of the movie is at the end instead of the middle, which makes the middle portion of 8 Femmes dry. The conclusion is definitely this movie’s strength, where the mystery of the murdered man is uncovered.

Amid the numerous acts, where each act reveals the tornaments and the female anguish, this is a theatrical yet whimsical film.

Verdict: A mystery to die for!
**Alabama**

divorce, Melanie succeeds in an
novely, producing a film with
new attitude and mannerisms.
Melanie has to choose between the
Two as much as she has to decide
between Andrew and Jake.
While the film does have its pre-
dictable moments, there are several
twists and turns in the plot that will
leave the audience guessing. Also,
twists and turns in the plot that will
leave the audience guessing. Also,

**Joplin**

Joplin's stingy eerily similar of Shawn
Mullin's "Lullaby" (which isn't a
far stretch, considering Mullin's
helped produce "Useful Music.")
Throughout the tune, they fall back
on chipper acoustic riffs and an un-
healthy dose of "na na na" before the
band recovers. Fortunately, this
first single is not so disparate as to
take away from the album's appeal.
While there's no arguing that
Joplin is the backbone of the group,
The Future That Was is the fact that the Josh
Joplin Group remains signed to an
independent label. Not present on
this record are the usual indications
of an indie band, although the song
line-up lacks the cohesion that most
major label bands try to implement.
Instead, this setup perhaps unin-
tentionally allows for many of the
album's songs to shine on their own
merits. With *The Future That Was*,
Josh Joplin Group establishes itself as
a talented rock band definitely
ready to be heard.

Verdict: A witty rock album that
shouldn't disappoint.
Lucas from page 21 grew up without a television and to this day does not own one (although he does own a DVD player now).


For the film *Sweet Home Alabama*, Lucas had to learn how to speak like a southerner again after living in New York City for many years. Both Reese Witherspoon and Lucas are native Southerners; Witherspoon is from Nashville, Tennessee.

“It was a very strange coincidence because I'm sitting there one day with Reese waiting to meet the dialect coach, [and] in walks Lilene with all of the notes from ten years earlier.” Mansell taught Lucas how to speak with a southern accent again and get his “y'all back.”

Lucas said he had the most fun he has ever had on a movie set during the making of *Sweet Home Alabama*. “I had my brother with me the whole time. It was amazing. We played banjo every night. It was one of those weird movies where everyone would come to the house and drink and play banjo and play music,” he said.

“I very much learned that from Russell Crowe and Sean Penn and those guys. When they make movies, they do them with the cast and they do them like a family,” Lucas said.

On the set, Lucas learned a lot from his co-stars, particularly Witherspoon. “She’s an incredibly consummate professional. She comes to work and she knows her job in- and out. She knows her script like it’s the back of her hand, and she knows comedy like it’s her own fingers. She just has this sense of what she does. It really becomes about trusting her instincts as much or more than mine,” Lucas said. “It’s not a bad thing to come to work and make out with Reese.”

He also extols the virtues of his co-stars including Ethan Embry. “[Ethan]’s insane, he’s so insane. He’s truly mad and playful and just brings such an incredible energy to the movie. He’s such a great guy,” said Lucas.

Although Lucas is looking forward to a salary boost and moving out of his 400 square foot apartment in New York City, he’s not looking forward to the additional publicity and adulation from the many fans he is bound to attract.

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“It’s not who I am. I am so private. I have a really small private life with a tight group of friends. I know my life is about to change drastically. It’s just a part of something I now have to do in order to do the kinds of movies I want to do. I’m terrified of it honestly,” Lucas said.

“I’m not looking for it. I know so many people where it’s what they want but it’s not what I want,” he said.

“I’ll be fine with it. What I’m doing right now is wandering through the city as much as I possibly can because I know it’s not going to be easy later and it’s already not easy.”

Judging by his performance in *Sweet Home Alabama* and his upcoming role in the big budget film *The Incredible Hulk*, Lucas may have no choice but to get used to the additional fame and publicity, but at least he may get to move out of his small apartment and into a more appropriate pad.
What is it about coffee shops that inspire unchecked pretension in customers? I am a coffee-drinking fiend, I must say, so I am guilty of the same, but nonetheless, I don’t understand the phenomenon. I’ve been particularly mindful of this recently, because I’ve been spending a lot more time in the coffee world, now that I’ve found a coffee shop with excellent coffee and a wireless network.

The pretentious experience begins the moment you enter the line. For some reason, ordering coffee is like buying a luxury car or a high-end computer system. It seems as though the coffee craze has gotten progressively more snobby ever since Seattle started outsourcing in the early 90s. Now, a typical order at Starbucks can’t be spoken on one breath. “I’d like a nonfat, half-caf latte with Equal and a hint of cinnamon.”

This raises my next question. Good giggly wiggly! Why can’t coffee shops refer to their coffee sizes as small, medium, and large? Most coffee shops have things like moderate, filling, and epic, or crush, wave, and cataclysm. My coffee shop will probably name things small, medium, and large, but if I find that societal coffee pressures prevent me from using a real sizing scheme, then I’m going to name mine Elvis Stoloik, Elvis Costello and The Kings. If my coffee shop probably name things small, medium, and large, but if I find that societal coffee pressures prevent me from using a real sizing scheme, then I’m going to name mine Elvis Stoloik, Elvis Costello and The Kings.

However, it’s really not the ordering that baffles me anymore. By the time I was a junior in high school, I had come to accept the fact that you endure as you stand in line waiting for your cup of false sophistication.

Nowadays, the thing that really blows my mind is the coffee shop fivesome more interesting than the alpha male is his sole competitor.

This gent would argue that Hitler was a good man committed to reducing global population growth, that global warming provides Canadians year-round sunbathing, and that a Big Mac a day will make you a well-balanced cetacean if any of those would underpin the alpha male’s stance.

The competition is bold, and not afraid of a fight. When the competition is ready to usurp the alpha male’s power, battle cries can be heard throughout the coffee shop, even over the medley of Billie Holiday and The Ramones. “Postmodernism is the only true art. It allows people to have a progressive and unbiased view of all media.”

“Nonsense! Postmodernism provides unlimited hacks a forum in which to mainstream urrupp for fun and profit!”

The Two Women: Women have one distinct advantage in life over men. They do not feel an overwhelming urge to make asses of themselves in public just to make a point that no one could really care about to begin with.

This advantage allows them to make the coffee outing all the more enjoyable for all of the bystanders. These two women, through their wily charms, casually egg the guys on until they are explosive balls of rage, shouting pseudo-intellectual malarkey at the tops of their lungs.

Oh, and on a personal note, the Two Bits Man always enjoys watching the two women more than he likes watching the alpha male or the competition.

The Fifth Wheel: The Two Bits man isn’t actually sure how this guy fits in. He sits there quietly sipping his double espresso, not adding in any way whatsoever to the conversation.

Perhaps he’s there for plucky comic relief. Perhaps he’s less intelligent than the rest of them. Most likely, the others thought it might be fun to be charitable and participate in the National Association for Shy People’s “Rent a Wallflower” drive.

More and more, I see a fivesome like this popping up at coffee houses around town. Though I do enjoy a good intellectual conversation from time to time, I much prefer making a coffee outing all the more interesting than the alpha male is his sole competitor.

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