

OPENING ACT

by ROB THOMAS

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Lightning strikes, not once but 16 times

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Remember how Mr. Rogers used to sing "I like to take my time, while others like to hurry up, I like to take my time to do it right"? Yeah, there'd be no place for him at the 6th Annual Blitzmania, Mercury Players Theatre's annual attempt to do several seasons' worth of new plays in a 48-hour period.

The deal is that eight local playwrights must come up with new plays in a dusk-till-dawn playwriting frenzy. Then the plays are handed over to local actors, costume designers and a stage crew, who then have eight hours to memorize their lines, get the lighting and staging together and have the plays

ready to go for audiences that night. And they'll do it twice. There are shows (each an eight-pack of plays) scheduled for 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday at the Bartell Theatre, 113 E. Mifflin St. Tickets are \$12 at the door for each, and the Blitzmanias tend to sell out, so get there early.

BOX OFFICE

1. "Star Wars: Episode III — Revenge of the Sith," \$108.4 million.
2. "Monster-In-Law," \$14.3 million.
3. "Kicking & Screaming," \$10.7 million.
4. "Crash," \$5.5 million.
5. "Unleashed," \$4.1 million.
6. "Kingdom of Heaven," \$3.5 million.
7. "House of Wax," \$3.3 million.
8. "The Interpreter," \$2.9 million.
9. "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy," \$2 million.
10. "Mindhunters," \$1 million.

LETTERMAN TOP 10 LIST

Top 10 things you don't want to hear from your prom date:

10. "Wow, 9 months from tonight we'll be parents!"
9. "You're even prettier than you are in your bedroom window."
8. "Is that cologne or beef gravy?"
7. "You're not a cop, are you?"
6. "Instead of a tuxedo, I decided to wear my Obi-Wan Kenobi costume."
5. "Here's our limousine ... ignore the Domino's logo."
4. "Which Debby Boone song is your favorite?"
3. "Good news! I found your finger in the punch bowl."
2. "Would you like to come in and meet my father, North Korean madman Kim Jong Il?"
1. "How cute! We're wearing the same dress!"

Gotta-have-it-list

1. **The ending of "Revenge of the Sith"** — I can forgive all the little missteps George Lucas took in this trilogy (well, except Jar Jar) because of the graceful way he connected the end of this film with the beginning of the original "Star Wars."

2. **"The Green Butchers" on DVD** — This Danish black comedy, about two butcher brothers who make a killing selling a "special" kind of meat, was a big hit at the 2004 Wisconsin Film Festival, but never played in theaters here.

3. **Quentin Tarantino's "CSI"** — Fire ants, exploding guys, buried-alive guys, and the



Binks meets "Butchers."

late Frank Gorshin. Now that's how you do a season finale, kids.

4. **"Louisiana Bayou" by the Dave Matthews Band** — This loose Cajun-style funk-rocker sounds like they had a barbecue and a recording session broke out.

5. **"The Thackery T. Lampstead Pocket Guide to Eccentric and Discredited Diseases"** — Sci-fi authors like Neil Gaiman, Alan Moore and China Mieville wrote this weirdly amusing compendium of fake ailments, such as "reverse Pinocchio syndrome" and "ballistic organ syndrome." Read it and you won't worry so much about that rash on your arm.

Winning pickers will play the park

Fans of bluegrass and old-time country have already had the dates July 29 and July 30 circled on their calendars for a while now. But everyone else who wants to take part in a great summer festival with an amazingly eclectic lineup should get out their red pens, too.

The Sugar Maple Traditional Music Festival will have its sophomore outing at Lake Farm County Park on July 29 and July 30. Four Lakes Traditional Music Collective, which is sponsoring the festival, has announced a partial list of the

local, regional and national performers taking part.

The lineup includes the expected bluegrass (Art Stevenson and Highwater) and Appalachian music (New York's Lonesome Sisters), plus some very different styles of "traditional" music. The Foghorn Stringband and Celtic group Green Tea are set for Friday night, while Saturday will be a smorgasbord of cultures, including polka band Norm Dombrowski & the Happy Notes, Piedmont-style blues musician Charlie Parr and back-porch samba musi-

cian Pagee Gogo.

Advance tickets are \$20 for both days, \$10 for just Friday and \$15 for just Saturday. They're available at the Willy Street Co-op, the Exclusive Company and Spruce Tree Music. For more information on the festival, visit www.sugarmaplefest.org.

There's also a fundraiser for the festival, featuring 2004 festival veterans Devil in a Woodpile along with Hogpile Stompers, at the High Noon Saloon, 701 E. Washington Ave., at 9 p.m. Saturday. Tickets are \$10.