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A LASTING IMPRESSION

by Edmund Lawler

Andy Neal has enjoyed a long and successful career in business and, more recently, nonprofit management. Along the way, he's always had a keen eye for photography, a passion that struck him like a thunderbolt as a teen.

It was in 2009, when the parent company of his employer – Jaymar-Ruby – declared bankruptcy and began closing its apparel-making plants that Neal finally seized the opportunity to establish himself as a professional photographer.

After graduating from Purdue University in 1981 with a degree in organizational leadership, he raced along the corporate track for Hartmarx Corp., which owned and operated Jaymar-Ruby, maker of

the famous Sansabelt slacks. Its major manufacturing facility was in Michigan City.

As director of retail operations for Chicago-based Hartmarx's 50 outlet stores across the country, Neal was a road warrior, logging thousands of miles a year visiting stores.

And he and his wife, Kathy, a pharmacist, were raising their daughter, Lisa, and son, Derek, at their home in Michigan City. There was precious little time for serious photography. Immediately after Lisa's birth, Neal recalls he was back on the road for eight straight weeks, with only occasional weekend visits home to revel in the joy of his newborn child.

Affable and self-effacing, Neal attributes his love

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In this photo by Andy Neal's daughter, Lisa, the photographer displays his tools of the trade.

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of photography to his maternal grandfather, Roy Wolf, an ironworker from Dayton, a small town southeast of Lafayette, Ind. While at Purdue, Neal worked in a camera shop near the Memorial Union, where he was exposed to the handiwork of professional photographers. But it was his grandfather who had the most profound impact.

“He was a very avid amateur photographer,” Neal says. “Every time my grandfather went on vacation to places like San Diego, Arizona or Oklahoma, he’d bring back hundreds of slides that he would share with me.”

His grandfather lit a flame in Neal that smoldered for nearly 40 years.

Neal’s business travels for Hartmarx often took him to New York City, where he took classes at the renowned New York Institute of Photography. The classes were inspirational, and the feedback from instructors convinced him he could succeed as a photographer.

But his dream had to wait.

Raising two children and his corporate career came first. But when Hartmarx declared bankruptcy in 2009 and began shutting its

plants, Neal decided to seize the moment and hang out his shingle as a professional photographer.

The Jaymar-Ruby plant in the 400 block of Ohio Street may have been closing, leaving about 100 people out of work, but Neal still had a job. Because of his expertise in managing commercial properties and stores for Hartmarx, GE Capital hired him for three years on a contract basis as an asset manager to help sell Hartmarx facilities around the country, including the Michigan City plant.

It was a big job, but his GE Capital schedule was flexible enough for him to launch his side hustle he aptly called “A Lasting Impression.” For his clients, Neal shoots events, landscapes and portraits. It took him about three years to find his financial footing with his new business.

“But after that,” he says, “the word got around.”

The best part of the job was getting to spend time with his beloved dog, Charlie, a German Shepherd and Chow mix, that often accompanied him on assignments. Sadly, Charlie died a year ago after the two spent 12 1/2 years together.

Running his own business at home became ever more alluring as GE Capital made travel essential to the work. Neal was worn out by years of corporate travel, acutely aware of the risk of spending time

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Michigan City's Jaymar-Ruby was the focus of Neal's work life for many years.



To Andy
Muhammad Ali

Neal's portraiture work features the famed heavy-weight boxing champ Muhammad Ali.

in the air. Hartmarx had two corporate planes based in Michigan City to shuttle its executives around the country. He'd flown on the planes many times.

In November 1999, a Hartmarx-owned turboprop crashed in Lake Michigan, shortly after taking off from Meigs Field, the former lakefront airport in Chicago. Killed in the crash were two Hartmarx pilots and Richard Rix, president and CEO of Hartmarx's Trans-Apparel Group sportswear subsidiary based in Michigan City.

The plane left Michigan City earlier that day to take Rix to a Hartmarx meeting in Chicago. The fatal crash occurred that evening when the plane was attempting to take off en route to South Bend, where Rix lived. Neal somberly noted he was friends with all three men who died in the crash.

Neal does some travel for his photography business, but it's mostly local. He knows the territory. As a child, he and his family had an unusual address – the Benton Farm of Indiana State Prison, which has since closed.

His father, Tom Neal, who died in 1999, was superintendent of the farm where trustee inmates of the nearby ISP worked during the day.

"We lived on the prison farm out on Burdick Road just west of County Line Road," he said. "We had a Westville address, a Chesterton phone number, and we went to school in Michigan City."

During his senior year at Rogers High School, the family moved to a different prison farm at 2407 N. County Road 500 West, high on a hill near Pine Lake. Since then, it has operated under several different formats and is currently known as the La Porte Juvenile Correctional Facility, Indiana's only female juvenile correctional center.

Neal had his fill of life on prison farms and chose not to follow his father's footsteps into the correc-

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Continued from Page 3

tional field. Neal's 92-year-old mother, Alyce, continues to live in the LaPorte area.

A pivotal moment in the early days of Neal's photography career occurred in 2015 when he was displaying some of his photographs in the Southern Shore Art Association Gallery in the 700 block of Franklin Street. The gallery has since closed.

"But no one was in the gallery. It was the day of the Snowflake Parade, and all the streets were blocked off," Neal says. "So I grabbed my camera, went outside and started taking pictures of the horses passing by. I posted the photos on my Facebook page."

Serendipitously, the photos were seen on Facebook by Melissa Ashcraft, owner and head trainer of Transitions Equestrian Center, 2525 E. County Road 850 North in LaPorte. Ashcraft admired his work and asked him to visit Transitions and take some photos.

"She invited me to shoot some of the shows she was doing, like at the Michiana Event Center in Shippshewana, which can draw up to about 3,000 attendees," he said.

Ashcraft's invitation, and the photos he produced for Transitions, created an entirely new line of work for Neal – equestrian photography.

"The horse community is tight," he says. "Once I started posting photos, I started getting calls, and it never stopped. Until this day, I probably get two or three calls a week."

Neal acknowledges that equestrian photography is a unique specialty, and one that's "totally unintended. I love it because it is another area like the

theater, where the people are so passionate about what they do. And they take such great care of their animals, and all the training that goes into it."

In addition to photographing horses while trick training or performing dressage — where a trained horse executes a series of precise

movements in response to barely perceptible signals from its rider — Neal shoots the more rough-and-tumble action at rodeos around the Midwest.

He's also captured stunning images of horses with riders in saddle dashing through the surf on West Beach in Indiana Dunes National Park. Kite surfers and wet-suited winter surfers on the big lake also have become subjects of his work.

Just as his photography introduced Neal to the local horse community, it also opened a window for him into the local theater scene. He was hired to shoot photos for Dunes Summer Theatre. Leaders of the theater not only liked his photography, but also were impressed with his work for area nonprofit organizations.

He's now on the board of Dunes Arts Foundation, which oversees the theater, and he's the photographer-in-residence. He's also served on and chaired the United Way of LaPorte County board of directors.

Leveraging his asset management and leadership expertise, Neal volunteered to help plan the STAR Center at 422 Franklin St. Opening in 2018, it allows five area nonprofits to share resources while collaborating in the building.

In addition to his volunteer work, he was the full-time operations manager for the Northern Indiana Educational



Neal was accompanied on many adventures and photo assignments by his beloved dog, Charlie.



© Andrew Neal

This photo by Neal features a woman on horseback at West Beach in Indiana Dunes National Park.

Foundation, which provides accredited continuing education for area physicians and other health care workers, from 2017 to 2023.

He's currently operations manager of the Unity Foundation of LaPorte County, which promotes social and economic growth in the county.

Neal is a busy man, but he assures that he's getting enough sleep while juggling his civic, operational and photographic duties.

As he's been since his grandfather first introduced him to the thrill of photography, Neal is passionate about the craft.

"What I enjoy most about photography, is the variety of things I've shot and the people — the surfers, the rodeo people, the dressage people, the barrel racers, the actors," he said. "I've met so many awesome people who are so good at what they do."



Neal also takes publicity photos for Dunes Summer Theatre. Pictured here is the cast from last summer's "Boeing, Boeing."



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WinterFest Returns With Slate of Family Events

The annual WinterFest, organized by LaPorte Park and Recreation Department, returns with everything from ice-sculpture demonstrations to horse-drawn cabin rides Friday-Sunday, Jan. 26-28.

Free ice skating is all weekend at the Downtown LaPorte Ice Rink (Monroe and State streets). Visit www.laporteparkandrec.com and enter the discount code WINTERFEST during checkout to receive free admission. Skate rental is available for \$3. A signed waiver is required.

The schedule also includes:

Friday, Jan. 26

- Winter Craft for Older Adults (free) from 9-11 a.m. at Activity Center for Older Adults, 910 Lincolnway. Staff from LaPorte County Public Library and ACOA lead the program where participants create an upcycled paper snowflake using book pages.
- Ice Sculpturing Demonstrations (free) on Friday afternoon. The location is Plaza 618 on Lincolnway in downtown LaPorte.

Saturday, Jan. 27

- Pine Ice Derby (De Camp Band of Brothers) from 6 a.m.-2 p.m. on Pine Lake. Compete for prizes and share stories at The Blue Heron Inn, 1110 Lakeside, after the derby. Sundays Sons Band starts at 3 p.m.
- Snowball Softball Coed Tourney at 9 a.m. at Lions Field, 700 Lake Shore Drive. The event is a

double-elimination tournament.

- Basic Sewing Class from 9 a.m.-noon at Steady Stitchers Studio, 1640 First St. Learn to make a scarf, hat or hooded scarf. All sewing levels are welcome. The cost is \$5. Pre-registration is preferred at the park office, 250 Pine Lake Ave., or by calling (219) 326-9600.



- Introducing Jiu Jitsu for Kids (free) from 11 a.m.-noon in the lower level at LaPorte Civic Auditorium, 1001 Ridge St. A certified instructor leads the one-time class that introduces the martial art. Adults must

accompany children, with a waiver required.

- Frosty's Frozen Bike Ride (free) from 1-3 p.m. at Cummings Lodge on Grangemouth Drive. Registration is at noon. Participants take a leisurely one-hour ride and return to Cummings Lodge for snacks and hot chocolate. Signing a waiver is required.
- Exploring the Exchange (free) from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at the LPCPL Exchange, 807 Indiana Ave. Visitors learn what the facility has to offer, with staff providing instruction.
- Family Fun at Red Mill County Park, 0185 S. Holmesville Road, LaPorte (free). The schedule is: noon-2 p.m., Cookies and Crafts; 2-3 p.m., "Game Time: Arctic Animal Survival"; 3-4 p.m., "Snowshoeing," led by a naturalist and with free snowshoes available for checkout; 4-5 p.m., Night Hike (flashlights provided); 5-6:30 p.m., campfire with story telling and s'mores.

Sunday, Jan. 28

- Winter Kids Craft (free) from noon-1 p.m. at Cummings Lodge. Kristi Chadderdon from Parties on the Gogh leads the program that includes snacks and hot chocolate.
- Horse Drawn Wagon Rides (free) from 1:30-3:30 p.m. at Cummings Lodge. Hot chocolate is served at the lodge after the trip through Soldiers Memorial Park.
- Snow Globe Painting at 2 p.m. in the lower level at LaPorte Civic Auditorium. Chadderdon leads the adult class that costs \$45, with all supplies and instruction included. Pre-registration is required.



Visit www.laporteparkandrec.com for additional details on all events.



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Studebaker Museum, RazorFly Studios Restoring Fozzie Bear's Vehicle

The 18-month process has begun to restore the bullet-nosed 1951 Studebaker Commander driven by Fozzie Bear and Kermit in 1979's "The Muppet Movie."

The project, slated for completion by summer 2025, represents a collaboration between South Bend's The Studebaker National Museum and RazorFly Studios.

The museum has secured approximately \$60,000 for the project, with more donations sought.

Computer-generated imagery was not available when "The Muppet Movie" was shot, so two cars were used during production. After filming ended, one car was not preserved and no longer exists. The other car spent years exposed to the elements on the Warner Brothers studio backlot. The Studebaker Drivers Club's Orange Empire chapter later acquired it and gifted it to the museum.



The bullet-nosed 1951 Studebaker Commander before the restoration process.

RazorFly Studios, located in Sylva, N.C., is an Academy Award-winning costume, prop house and custom car builder, specializing in building screen-accurate replica vehicles. Their work includes a certain time-travelling DeLorean.

The Muppet Car's condition necessitates a comprehensive "ground-up" restoration.

RazorFly will document its disassembly and, using screen shots of the film, restore the mechanical systems, interior and exterior appearance, as well as the trunk's remote driver compartment where the stunt person operated the car during filming.

When the restoration is complete, the car will be fully operational and safe.

Visit www.neoncrm.com for more details and to donate to the project.

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- Beginning Colored Pencil from 1-3 p.m. Tuesdays, Feb. 6-March 5.
- Figure Drawing from 7-9 p.m. Tuesdays, Feb. 6-27.
- Ceramic Arts: Wheel Throwing (Beginner/Intermediate) from 6-8:30 p.m. Tuesdays, Feb. 20-March 26.
- Ceramics Open Studio from 4-8 p.m. Wednesdays, Feb. 21-March 27.

The following children's classes include:

- "February Creativity Lab" (ages 5-9) from 10 a.m.-noon Saturdays, Feb. 3-24.
- "Ceramics for Kids" (ages 6-9) from 10 a.m.-noon Saturdays, Feb. 3-March 9.
- Illustration for Teens: Anime (ages 14-17) from 5-7 p.m. Wednesdays, Feb. 7-March 6.
- Multi Media Magic (ages 10-14) from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Thursdays, Feb. 29-March 21.



Register through the website at www.artbarnschool.org. Art Barn School of Art is located at 695 N. County Road 400 East, Valparaiso. Call (219) 462-9009 for more details.

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The band consists of the multi-Grammy winner Levy on harmonica and piano, Chris Siebold on guitar, Josh Ramos on bass and Luiz Ewerling on drums. It performs original music in styles of Jazz, Brazilian, Latin, World Music and Blues.

Levy has played with the likes of Steely Dan, Kenny Loggins, Bela Fleck and the Flecktones, Trio Globo and Paquito D’Rivera. Siebold, house guitarist for five years on “A Prairie Home Companion,” is a member of the fusion band Kick the Cat. Ramos was Ramsey Lewis’ bass player for five years and the bassist for CALJE, a Chicago modern Latin/jazz ensemble. Ewerling is considered one of the top Brazilian drummers living in the U.S.

Tickets, which are \$100, can be purchased on The Acorn’s website at www.acornlive.org

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Franciscan Health Michigan City Celebrates Five Years in New Location

Franciscan Health Michigan City officials, physicians and employees are celebrating five years in the current location at U.S. 421/Interstate 94.

The hospital opened at 3500 Franciscan Way on Jan. 12, 2019. The project began with a groundbreaking in 2016. Built by Tonn & Blank, the 425,000-square-foot hospital has 123 private inpatient rooms and outpatient services with advanced diagnostic equipment.

The opening marked a move from the previous location at 301 W. Homer St. Franciscan Alliance first opened in that location in November 1904 under the name St. Anthony Hospital.

The Homer Street building, now known as the Legacy Campus, houses Franciscan's inpatient behavioral health unit, the Prenatal Assistance Program and Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly.

Before the new hospital opened to the public, a blessing ceremony and chapel altar dedication took



place.

In a press release, Northwest Indiana Forum President-CEO Heather Ennis called the hospital's new location a key asset to the area.

"Being right there on I-94 has really opened the hospital up to accessibility for more folks who feel like that's a place that they want to go, and a place where they're going to and get quality care," she said.

Ennis said the hospital is helping spur additional devel-

opment nearby.

"The downstream revenue from a hospital investment is amazing," Ennis said.

In a press release, Franciscan Health Michigan City President-CEO Dean Mazzoni said there was a "great outpouring from our community toward our healthcare workers during COVID." That included donations of supplies, financial contributions and meals.

He recalled community members placing signs along the driveway into the hospital campus with inspirational messages and thanks to healthcare workers for working through the pandemic.



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“Origin” Embarks on a Journey of Pain, Truth and Hope

by Andrew Tallackson



The journey begins for Isabel Wilkerson (Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor, center) to start her new book in “Origin.”

Early drafts of this review began with a litany of words like “powerful,” “transcendent,” “important”...and it read phony. “Criticy,” if that’s even a word. Like exploiting a thesaurus might do Ava DuVernay’s film justice.

Instead, I will go from the heart. “Origin,” which DuVernay wrote and directed based on Isabel Wilkerson’s 2020 Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents, moved me more than any film in 2023. Not in any obvious, manipulative sense, like a tearjerker. More, that it spoke to me. As an exploration of themes from Wilkerson’s book. As the personal journey it depicts for Wilkerson. Through the hard truths it reveals peppered with hope, and a directive for the future, that left me weeping.

Save for a wobbly foray into big-budget studio fare (2018’s “A Wrinkle in Time”), “Origin” is entirely in DuVernay’s wheelhouse. There is an immediacy to all of her work, and not just with “Selma,” but especially Netflix’s monumental “When They See Us” (2019), where she holds society up to a microscope and basically says, “Too bad if you don’t like what you see. Let’s talk about this.”

Wilkerson’s book took a complicated look at caste: a societal hierarchy that allows racism to flourish not just among different races, but *within* the same races and ethnic groups. Wilkerson (2010’s The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s



“Origin”

Running time: 140 minutes. In theaters. Rated PG-13 for thematic material involving racism, violence, some disturbing images, language and smoking.

Great Migration), saw the germ of her new book emerge around the time of the 2012 Trayvon Martin case, in which the black teen was shot and killed by Hispanic-American George Zimmerman. The painful themes, or pillars, of the caste system that Wilkerson explored ranged from prohibiting marriage/sex between races to the dehumanization of races to deny dignity and individuality. She began drawing parallels between the notion of caste among blacks, Jews in Nazi Germany and people living in India.

At the same time, Wilkerson experienced unfathomable loss. The first being the sudden death of her husband, Brett, followed by the loss of her mother and eventually, the death of a close cousin to cancer.

Wilkerson is played by Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor, the Oscar nominee for 2021’s “King Richard.” No disrespect to freshly minted Golden Globe winner Lily Gladstone (“Killers of the Flower Moon”), but Ellis-Taylor gives the performance of the year *and* the performance of her career. It may be too understated for some, at first, existing more as the ques-

tioning journalist than anything else. Late in the film, though, after Wilkerson interviews Miss Hale (Audra McDonald) about a crushing incident from her youth, Hale asks Wilkerson how she's holding up. Wilkerson can't help but note the parallels between what she's investigating in terms of caste, and the interracial marriage between herself and her late husband, Brett (Jon Bernthal). Noting through tears how the two didn't "break," watching Ellis-Taylor, as Wilkerson, deliver beauty through pain is like nothing else from 2023.

The same holds true for the scene where Wilkerson says goodbye over the telephone to her biggest supporter, her cousin (Niecy Nash-Betts, outstanding), as she lies on her deathbed. The direct, heartbreaking simplicity of Wilkerson's words, delivered by Ellis-Taylor, well, the facade I'd maintained of holding it together crumbled. I wept. The humanity, accented by the lyrical score from Kris Bowers, is the actress' finest moment.

DuVernay stages interludes of figures from the past, including August Landmesser, reportedly the man in a famous photo refusing to perform the Nazi salute. Landmesser's relationship with a Jewish woman provides part of the link Wilkerson needs to prove a key point about caste in her book.

While "Origin" risks being didactic, more like lecturing than storytelling, DuVernay lets her actors spin the dialogue so it feels like it's emerging organically, on the spot.

By the last act, when Wilkerson arrives in India, where the notion of caste is brutally unforgiving,



Jon Bernthal is equally affecting as Wilkerson's husband.

DuVernay arrives at enlightenment. A plea for compassion and understanding. And, in a moment of brilliant symbolism, the responsibility to chip away at the present foundation of our society.

Lest any last-minute Oscar contender present itself, "Origin," for me, was the best film of 2023.

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Rediscovering the Brilliance of Michael Mann's "Heat"



The celebrated scene in "Heat" — the coffee shop conversation between opposing sides of the law played by Al Pacino and Robert De Niro.

Revisiting Michael Mann's "Heat" for the first time in nearly 30 years, a nagging regret emerged for not watching it with greater frequency.

We movie geeks like to revisit movies. Sometimes, it's for the escapism, to lose yourself in the story all over again. Other times, it is to savor the craft: the talent that created something extraordinary. Even better is that perfect movie where the repeat viewing is a union of the two experiences.

"Heat" will become that type of encounter for me.

I remember enjoying it when it debuted in 1995. Appreciating the sleek visuals and tough performances. Beyond that, though, it didn't leave the mark on me that it clearly did on so many others. Today, words like "masterpiece," "ground-breaking" and "influential" are applied to it." "Oppenheimer" director Christopher Nolan worships it, the opening to his Batman sequel "The Dark Knight" (2008) a direct tribute.

Every observation is 100 percent accurate.

What was I thinking, back in 1995, at the ripe young age of 25, not valuing this film?

Chalk it up to the ignorance of youth.

Viewing "Heat" for only the second time, and one year shy of its 30th anniversary, Mann's picture, which he wrote, directed and lifted from fact, is ground-breaking ironically for everything it *isn't*.

You could call "Heat" a crime picture, a heist tale or action film, but those are lazy labels. Elements of those genres sculpt the story structure, but don't define it. There are big action sequences — two, and they're doozies — but the thrust of the tale is not action. The star power is staggering, but the actors do not overwhelm each other.

past
present

Andrew Tallackson



No, the crowning achievement of "Heat" is that it is a nearly three-hour picture about people, and there is not one dull moment, not one wasted shot, not one character that feels cheated of screen time. It weaves a tapestry of characters who exist in moral gray areas. Even the "heroes," if you will, carry baggage that muddies the line between good and evil, right and wrong.

Mann achieved plenty of success early in his career, including "Thief," "Manhunter" and TV's stylistically influential "Miami Vice," along with big-screen feats like "The Last of the Mohicans," "The Insider" and "Public Enemies," the latest being Adam Driver's "Ferrari."

"Heat" opens with the meticulously executed heist of bearer bonds concealed in an armored truck. It is a master class by Mann in boldly efficient storytelling. Each crew member is introduced, their role in the heist succinctly revealed. They've covered every angle, exploited every possible weakness to their plan. In just a few short minutes, we grasp who is involved, what they plan to do...and even when it's pulled off, *at first*, without a hitch, we gasp at the ingenuity of it.

But "Heat" is designed not to celebrate these men,

but to dissect ego and hubris. When one of the thieves kills a guard for no apparent reason, forcing the crew to kill the other two, the “heat” implied by the title, the ensuing pressure from the law, rains down in full.

Robert De Niro plays Neil McCauley, the ring leader, and Al Pacino Vincent Hann, the LAPD lieutenant who pursues him. These two are always one step ahead of each other, and the most famous scene in “Heat,” the coffee shop conversation between the two, is remarkable. No physical confrontation, just two men who realize they are opposite side of the same coin.

Their work defines them, the means from which they deprive pleasure. Satisfaction. They respect that in each other, even when stating the obvious, that at some point, one of them will have to kill the other.

The irony, too, is that as McCauley is flourishing, Vincent’s private life is spiraling toward collapse. Now in a third marriage to a woman (Diane Venora) weary of his absence, engaging in an affair simply to spite him.

Credit Mann for casting actresses like Venora who never appear intimidated by their heavyweight co-stars. Venora, Ashley Judd and Amy Brenneman play women who, each in their own way, know the men in their lives better than they know themselves. Brenneman’s character, drawn to De Niro, finds out his true nature late, but when she does, the shift in her is starkly conveyed.

(I’ve always had a soft spot for Brenneman who, one year after “Heat,” appeared in the Sylvester Stallone disaster picture “Daylight,” playing a woman from none other than LaPorte, Indiana.)

Then again, the amount of talent in “Heat”...well, if made today, would jack up the budget to obscene extremes. In addition to De Niro and Pacino, you have Val Kilmer, Jon Voight, Tom Sizemore, Wes Studi, Mykelti Washington, Dennis Haysbert, Natalie Portman, William Fichtner, Hank Azaria, Danny Trejo, Henry Rollins, Jeremy Piven, Bud Cort and Xander Berkeley. Seriously, that Mann attracted all these people is a tribute to him, that they all wanted to work with him. And, they muzzle any potential for ego to get in the way. They disappear into this dark world. What we get in “Heat” are lives unraveling amid a Los Angeles landscape that offers little hope. And Mann takes his time with them. No one feels cheated.

Not that the director lacks in spectacle. The shoot-



The bank heist in “Heat” is one of the greatest committed to film.

out that follows the bank heist is one of the greatest committed to film. A street-level confrontation that thrusts you into the center of it all. Breathless, terrifying. The feeling of being exposed from all sides. The relentless chase that ensues is exhausting.

Even the quiet moments are spellbinding. Like Neil, locked in hesitation, unexpected noise alerting him to Vincent’s presence. Or Vincent, realizing Neil led him to an empty parking lot simply to observe him. And, of course, the climactic pursuit along an airport tarmac. It’s practically a silent film. No dialogue. Only the environment at play around them: planes inching toward takeoff, lights fading on and off. In both instances, you hold your breath, mesmerized by two men locked in a pursuit to the death.

I am at a loss that “Heat” received not one single Academy Award nomination. “Braveheart” won Best Picture, the other nominees including “Apollo 13,” “Sense and Sensibility,” “Babe” and “Il Postino.” All five excellent, but “Heat” achieved something more remarkable. It slipped in and out of genres, reinventing them in the process. In turn, it emerged as a classic.

Let the repeat viewings begin.



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Junky “Rebel Moon” Has Its Moments

by Andrew Tallackson

Sofia Boutella
stars in “Rebel
Moon: Part One —
A Child of Fire.”

Zack Snyder has become what I call a good-bad director, the bad and the good constantly at odds with each other.

His career began with a 1-2-3 punch: the superb “Dawn of the Dead” remake (2004), 2007’s crowd-pleasing “300” and the brave, if divisive “Watchmen” (2009).

Then, he launched into his DC phase — “Man of Steel,” “Batman vs. Superman,” “Justice League” and its 2021 four-hour extended cut — and he tumbled into a tiresome, repetitive format. Cool visuals, nifty action...but thin writing and overbearing climaxes that assault you with digital effects.

“Rebel Moon,” his latest, kicks off his new Netflix franchise. It began as a failed bid to Lucasfilm to create a “Star Wars” movie, and you can see that influence, including one warrior’s sword that’s like a Samurai lightsaber. Snyder, who not only directed, but also co-wrote the screenplay, also relies heavily on Tolkien, “Avatar” and, yes, “Starship Troopers.”

The result fits into Snyder’s reputation as a good-bad director. Visually striking, well cast, but flimsy in terms of character and plot. The movie’s basically a 2 hour, 15 minute setup for Part 2. Having said that, it kept me entertained, so Snyder’s at least done something right.

“Rebel Moon” opens with a rapid dump of information, narrated no less by Sir Anthony Hopkins, in which we learn of the militaristic empire known as the Motherworld, which has ruled another galaxy

★ ★ 1/2

“Rebel Moon: Part One - A Child of Fire”

Running time: 133 minutes. Netflix. Rated PG-13 for sequences of strong violence, sexual assault, bloody images, language, sexual material and partial nudity.

for centuries, and where the king, queen and princess are assassinated. An evil senator takes over, luring a sadistic admiral as his military leader.

Snyder then delivers the most gorgeous image of his career: a farmer, plowing her field, set against the backdrop of a ringed planet. The sheer scope of the visual — the farmer dwarfed in size by the planet — is the stuff of fairy tales. The farmer, Kora, is played by Sofia Boutella (“Kingsman: The Secret Service,” “Atomic Blonde”), who is quickly becoming this generation’s Sigourney Weaver. The farmer gazing at her, Gunnar, is played by the wonderful Dutch actor Michiel Huisman (Netflix’s “The Haunting of Hill House”). Is he infatuated by her, or in awe of the sight before him? A little of both.

These two live in one of those idyllic farm communities not unlike Tolkien’s Shire, and it’s quickly visited by soldiers of the Motherworld (Spectacular Image No. 2 as the Motherworld ship emerges from the clouds above).

Here’s where overtones of “Starship Troopers”

emerge. Motherworld’s soldiers are the space-opera equivalent of a fascist regime, decked out in military regalia not unlike Nazi gestapo. The admiral, Atticus Noble, is played by Ed Skrein (“Deadpool”), whose gaunt frame and chiseled features would have been at home within the Third Reich.

When Noble and company arrive ready to pillage, Kora, whose past at this point is a mystery, springs into action, kicking enough ass to establish herself as a warrior. She then announces her intention to assemble an army to combat the Motherworld.

That’s the whole movie. Kora corralling her team. Most movies would wrap that up in 20 minutes or so. Making it the thrust of “Rebel Moon” is a mistake because you can feel the story heading somewhere, yet never getting there. Like it’s late to its own party, the party being Part Two that drops on Netflix in April.

Snyder cast his film well: Djimon Hounsou (“Gladiator,” “Amistad”) as a disgraced general; Ray Fisher (“Justice League”) as a fearless warrior; Charlie Hunnam (“Sons of Anarchy”), in a thinly written variation on Han Solo; and Doona Bae (“Kingdom”), one of my favorite South Korean actresses as a sword-wielding dynamo.

That these folk are played by capable actors makes Kora’s recruitment entertaining enough to almost disguise the fact that not much is happening. And the worlds visited have the striking variations we encounter in any “Star Wars” picture.



South Korean actress Doona Bae is fun as a sword-wielding dynamo.

Then, we get to the big finish: the first major confrontation between Kora’s team and Atticus Noble’s goons. As with every Snyder movie, the director loses control of himself. He hurls out a thunderous orgy of explosions, martial-arts choreography and digital effects. And, more so than any other film by him, he relies on slow motion to juice up the “cool” factor. Seriously, this guy applies so much “slo-mo,” it’s a surprise the story ever reaches a conclusion.

When a movie like this clearly has problems, yet entertains in spite of itself, you’re ashamed to admit you kinda sorta liked it. No doubt, now that Snyder has all the “housekeeping” out of the way, Part 2 will be a non-stop battle. Which could be a good thing or bad thing. With Snyder, the two are ever present.

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Michigan City Public Library

Michigan City Public Library's circulation/front lobby area is open to the public. Public seating is available, and the computer lab is open. Hours are: 9 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Friday-Saturday and closed Sundays.

The following programs are scheduled:

- **Scratch Club (ages 7-17) at 4 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 25.** Learn to code with Scratch — a platform to create stories, games and animations — by working through projects and sharing ideas. Call Dave at (219) 873-3045 for details.
- **Bubble Dance Party (all ages) at 4 p.m. Friday, Jan. 26.** An adult must accompany children 6 and younger. No registration is needed. Call Youth Services at (219) 873-3045 for more details.
- **Genealogy Help with Pat Harris from 1-4 p.m. Tuesdays in January.** Harris can offer tips and advice on how to research a family tree or find genealogical record
- **Needle Arts Club to Warm Up America Joining Night from 5:30-7 p.m. Thursdays in January.** Membership is open to anyone interested in needle arts such as crochet, needlepoint, cross-stitch, crewel, tatting and other hand stitching. All skill levels and ages are welcome. Also, the group has organized a local chapter of the Warm Up America Foundation. Volunteers are knitting

and crocheting handmade squares (7x9 inch) that will be joined together to make full-size afghans.

- **Winter Reading Bingo for Adults through Feb. 29.** Stop by the reference desk to pick up a Winter Reading Bingo sheet. Complete five reading-related activities in a row, then turn in the sheet to the reference desk to receive a sticker and free entry into a drawing for a \$25 Amazon gift card. The winner will be notified March 1.
- **Creative Tech Activities (ages 6-17) from 3:30-5 p.m. Tuesdays in January.** Create with LEGO WeDo, Micro:bits, paper circuits, Ozobots and 3-D pens. Children 12 and younger must have a parent or guardian attend with them.
- **Story Time at 10 a.m. Wednesdays.** Children birth to age 5 and adults will enjoy stories, songs and crafts. Check out previous story time videos through the library's YouTube channel, Facebook page and website.
- **Bottle Cap Buddies Scavenger Hunt in January.** Visit Youth Services, find all the characters and win a prize.
- **Weekly Crafts for Kids & Teens.** Each week offers a different project. Take-home craft kits are available, or create some in the Makerspace.
- **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance aid needed.** Volunteers help at least one day a week during tax season (February-April). The IRS provides some training, and passing the VITA test through the intermediate level is required. Testing and training are online. Call (219) 873-3049 for more details.
- **Learning Center volunteers needed for children and adults.** Areas include reading, math, high school equivalency and English as a Second Language. All supplies and training are provided. Volunteers are needed two hours a week. Contact Jessica Hoffmaster at (219) 873-3043 or stop by the Learning Center for more details.

Michigan City Public Library is located at 100 E. Fourth St. Visit www.mclib.org or call (219) 873-3049 for more details.



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LaPorte County Public Library has updated its curbside pickup service using meeScan.

New users can download the meeScan app through options such as Apple and Google Play. Then, place holds on items using a customer account. Once at the library, check in using the app and clicking Pickup from the bottom of the screen (or calling the library location). An appointment no longer is needed. Add the parking space on the app if picking up from the main location. Enter information in the instructions box if picking up holds placed on more than one account, or if needing additional assistance. A staff member brings held items to the vehicle. Customers using the app receive updates as their requests are processed. Returns can be placed in book drops and be checked in within 24 to 72 hours. At this time, there is no limit to the number of items customers can reserve and pick up during curbside.

- Coolspring Branch: Monday/Wednesday/Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Main Library: Tuesday/Thursday (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.) and Saturday (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.).

Patrons are no longer charged daily overdue fines. Customers only will be charged for items they damage, lose or never return.

The following programs are planned:

- **Tech Help Table (adults) from 2-6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 25, at the Coolspring branch.** Learn how to use a new tech device during a short, one-on-one walk-in visit.
- **Stories & More from 10-10:30 a.m. Friday, Jan. 26, at the main library.** Children ages 3-5 with their caregivers experience stories, songs, crafts and activities.
- **MDwise Community Conversation from 11 a.m.-noon Tuesday, Jan. 30, in the main library Study Cafe.** An expert presenter will discuss the Indiana-based family health plan provider. Each adult participant who attends receives a free \$25 Visa gift card.
- **Virtual Author Talk with Dr. Robert Lustig from 1-2 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 30.** Lustig is the author of Metaboficial: The Lure and the Lies of Processed Food, Nutrition and Modern Medicine. Register through the website.
- **Readers Corner-Book Club from 6-7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 30, at the Coolspring Branch Meeting Room.** The focus is Tom Hanks' The Making of Another Major Motion Picture Masterpiece.



LaPorte County Public Library is located at 904 Indiana Ave. The Coolspring Branch is located at 6925 W. County Road 400 North. Visit www.laportelibrary.org for more details, including programming through the Exchange building.

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Community Concert Association



Magician Chris Funk, who wowed none other than Simon Cowell on “America’s Got Talent,” will perform at 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 3, at LaPorte High School’s Performing Arts Center, 602 F St.

The program is part of the LaPorte Community Concert Association season ticket.

Funk’s show incorporates unusual elements that include a violin concerto, guitar loop, live-feed camera and interactive video.

The public may buy tickets at the door. The cost is \$20 for adults and \$5 for students through high school. Call (219) 362-5292 for more information.

New Buffalo Township Library

- **“The Giving Tree.”** The library is accepting donations to Michiana Humane Society.
- **Winter Reading begins.** The program runs through Feb. 29.

Weekly programs:

- Story Time at 10 a.m. Mondays.
- Read to a Dog Sessions for all ages from 10:30-11:30 a.m. Tuesday and 4-4:45 p.m. Wednesday.
- Craft Time on Wednesdays while supplies last.
- Lego Club on Fridays-Saturdays.
- Yoga from 9-10 a.m. Saturdays.

All times are Eastern. New Buffalo Township Library is located at 33 N. Thompson St. Call (269) 469-2933 for more details.

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American Red Cross

The American Red Cross LaPorte County Chapter will sponsor the following bloodmobiles:

- Converge Community Church, 601 W. Buffalo St., New Buffalo, Mich., noon-5 p.m. EST Friday, Jan. 26.
- FOP Dunes Lodge 75, 416 U.S. 20, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 28.

Donors must be in good general health and feeling well, at least 17 (16 with parental consent) and weigh at least 110 pounds. Call (800) 733-2767 or visit www.redcrossblood.org for more details.

Gallery Talks for Teachers

“Gallery Talks for Teachers,” presented by The History Museum and Studebaker National Museum, is from 4:30-5:30 p.m. EST Thursday, Feb. 1, at The History Museum, 808 W. Washington St., South Bend.

Teachers can explore the new iteration of the Worker’s Home, and learn about life for black families in the 1950s, including themes of the Great Migration and Civil Rights Movement. A certificate of completion for two PGP points is provided, and teachers receive corresponding curriculum materials.

The event is free, with complimentary wine and hors d’oeuvres offered. Contact Director of Education Stephanie McCune-Bell at (574) 235-9664, Ext. 6241, or email smccunebell@historymuseumSB.org for more details.

City Directories, Plat Books Needed

The staff at LaPorte County Historical Society Museum, 2405 Indiana Ave., seek city directories and plat books for its collection.

The books are useful for research, the particular years sought from 2008-2023. Anyone willing to donate them should call the museum at (219) 324-6767 or email info@laportecountyhistory.org

Also, Jan. 30 marks LaPorte County Historical Society’s 118th birthday.



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City Reveals Events Calendar

Eight major events will shape this year's Michigan City Special Events schedule, beginning with the annual Michigan City St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 16 and Easter Egg Hunt in Washington Park on March 30.

The Singing Sands Sand Sculpting Festival returns June 7-9 in Washington Park, bringing back sculptors to create along Michigan City's lakefront.

"In addition to the master and semi-professional competition, local companies and organizations will have the opportunity to support their favorite charity in the Community Charity Challenge," Special Events Director Terry Greetham said in a press release. "Last year, we raised \$5,000 for local LaPorte County charities, and we hope to grow that this year."

The annual patriotic celebration follows, with the Kiddie Parade on Saturday, June 22, Patriotic Parade on Saturday, June 29, and Fireworks Spectacular in Washington Park on Thursday, July 4.

Labor Day weekend, Aug. 30-Sept. 2, sees the return of Oktoberfest to Washington Park.

"In addition to 50 entertainment acts last year, we doubled the number of food vendors and art, craft and merchandise vendors," Greetham said.

The final event is the Festival of Lights Celebration on Nov. 30. The parade welcomes Santa Claus, followed by the lighting of the Christmas Tree and annual Chili Challenge.

In addition to City-sponsored special events, MBA of Northwest Indiana Inc. will host a June-teenth Celebration on June 16 and 19, while LaPorte County Convention and Visitors Bureau will present the Michigan City AquaX Grand Prix on July 5-6, then the XInsurance Great Lakes Grand Prix on July 31-Aug. 4, both in Washington Park.

Visit www.emichigancity.com/175/Special-Events for more details.

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In the Area

Jan. 25 — Scratch Club (ages 7-17), 4 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3045.

Jan. 26 — WinterFest, Winter Craft for Older Adults, 9-11 a.m., Activity Center for Older Adults, 910 Lincolnway. Info: www.laporteparkandrec.com

Jan. 26 — WinterFest, Ice Sculpturing Demonstrations, afternoon, Plaza 618, downtown LaPorte Free. Info: www.laporteparkandrec.com

Jan. 26 — Bubble Dance Party (all ages), 4 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Jan. 26-28 — WinterFest Ice Skating, Downtown LaPorte Ice Rink (Monroe and State streets). Free admission: www.laporteparkandrec.com, enter discount code WINTERFEST during checkout. Skate rental: \$3. Info: www.laporteparkandrec.com

Jan. 27 — WinterFest, Pine Ice Derby (De Camp Band of Brothers), 6 a.m.-2 p.m., Pine Lake. Info: www.laporteparkandrec.com

Jan. 27 — WinterFest, Snowball Softball Coed Tourney, 9 a.m., Lions Field, 700 Lake Shore Drive. Info: www.laporteparkandrec.com

Jan. 27 — WinterFest, Basic Sewing Class, 9 a.m.-noon, Steady Stitchers Studio, 1640 First St. Cost: \$5. Pre-registration: (219) 326-9600, park office, 250 Pine Lake Ave.

Jan. 27 — WinterFest, Introducing Jiu Jitsu for Kids (free), 11 a.m.-noon, LaPorte Civic Auditorium, 1001 Ridge St. Info: www.laporteparkandrec.com

Jan. 27 — WinterFest, Frosty's Frozen Bike Ride (free), 1-3 p.m., Cummings Lodge, LaPorte. Registration: noon. Info: www.laporteparkandrec.com

Jan. 27 — WinterFest, Exploring the Exchange (free), 9 a.m.-5 p.m., LPCPL Exchange, 807 Indiana Ave. Info: www.laporteparkandrec.com

Jan. 27 — WinterFest, Family Fun at Red Mill County Park, 0185 S. Holmesville Road, LaPorte, noon-6:30 p.m. Info: www.laporteparkandrec.com

Jan. 28 — WinterFest, Winter Kids Craft (free), noon-1 p.m., Cummings Lodge, LaPorte. Info: www.laporteparkandrec.com

Jan. 28 — WinterFest, Horse Drawn Wagon Rides (free), 1:30-3:30 p.m., Cummings Lodge, LaPorte. Info: www.laporteparkandrec.com

Jan. 28 — WinterFest, Snow Globe Painting, 2

p.m., LaPorte Civic Auditorium, 1001 Ridge St. Cost: \$45. Registration: www.laporteparkandrec.com

Jan. 30 — Virtual Author Talk with Dr. Robert Lustig, 1-2 p.m., through LaPorte County Public Library. Registration: www.laportelibrary.org

Jan. 30 — Readers Corner-Book Club, 6-7 p.m., Coolspring Library Branch Meeting Room, 6925 W. County Road 400 North. Info: www.laportelibrary.org

Through March 31 — Work by Cheryl Kaper, The Legacy Center Gallery at Queen of All Saints Catholic Church, 1719 E. Barker Ave. "Meet the Artist" reception: after 10:30 a.m. Sunday Mass on Feb. 4. Legacy Center hours: 6 a.m.-8 p.m. Mon.-Thur., 6 a.m.-6 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 6 a.m.-3 p.m. Sun. Info: lucia@qas.org

First and Third Mondays — Singing Sands Toastmasters Club, 6:30-8 p.m., Senior Health/Wellness Center (old hospital ER, Barker/Buffalo).

Mondays in Michigan City — Bingo, Moose Family Lodge 980, 2107 Welnetz Road. Doors open/8:30 a.m., early birds/9:30 a.m., regular Bingo/10 a.m.

Mondays in LaPorte — Weekly line dance lessons, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1130, 181 W. McClung Road. Cost: \$5. Beginner lessons, 2-3 p.m. Improver lessons, 3-4 p.m. Info: (219) 363-8301.

Tuesdays — Bingo, St. Stanislaus Kostka Catholic Church, 109 Ann St. Doors open: 3:30 p.m. Bingo: 6 p.m. \$45 entrance fee (includes all cards). Info: (219) 336-3099.

Tuesdays in January — Genealogy Help with Pat Harris, 1-4 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Tuesdays in January — Creative Tech Activities, 3:30-5 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Thursdays in January — Needle Arts Club to Warm Up America Joining Night, 5:30-7 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

In the Region

Jan. 26 — Mississippi Heat with special guest Anne Harris, 8 p.m. EST, The Acorn, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, Mich. Tickets: \$25 + \$4 convenience fee, \$50 + \$4 convenience fee (reserved). Info: www.acornlive.org

Jan. 27 — Snakes Alive!, 10 a.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Jan. 27 — The Howard Levy 4: A Benefit for School of American Music, 8 p.m. EST, The Acorn, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, Mich. Tickets: \$100 + \$11 convenience fee, \$125 + \$11 convenience fee (reserved). Info: www.acornlive.org

Jan. 28 — High Dunes Hike, 10 a.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Jan. 28 — "Monsters & Myths," 2 p.m. EST, The History Museum, 808 W. Washington St., South

Bend. Admission: \$5, \$3/members. Reservations: www.historymuseumSB.org, (574) 235-9664.

Jan. 28 — The Acorn's Dance Showcase featuring Sawyer Dance Academy, 3 p.m. EST, The Acorn, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, Mich. Tickets: \$12 (general admission/day of); reserved seating (\$25 or \$37, with \$3 convenience fee attached to \$37). Info: www.acornlive.org

Through Feb. 13 — Newly acquired paintings from Philipp Brockington estate, Porter County Museum (PoCo Muse), 20 Indiana Ave., Valparaiso. Free admission. Hours: 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Tues.-Sun. Info: www.pocomuse.org

Through Feb. 25 — Series 1 Exhibit, Box Factory for the Arts, 1101 Broad St., St. Joseph, Mich. Info: www.boxfactoryforthearts.org, facebook.com/boxfactoryarts

Through Feb. 29 — "Changes" (solo exhibit by Chicago-based artist Bryana Bibbs), Chesterton Art Center, 115 S. Fourth St. Gallery tour/talk with Bibbs: 1-2 p.m. Feb. 10. Public weaving workshop: 10 a.m.-noon Feb. 10. Info/registration: www.chestertonart.org

Through March 14 — Chesterton-based plein air oil artist Christine Newton, The Village Gallery at Pines Village Retirement Communities, 3303 Pines Village Circle, Valparaiso.

Through May 12 — "Indiana Lore," South Bend's The History Museum, 808 W. Washington St. Hours (Eastern): 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Sat., noon-5 p.m. Sun. Admission: \$11/adults, \$9.50/seniors, \$7/youth 6-17, free/members. Info: www.historymuseumSB.org, (574) 235-9664.

Saturdays in January — Winter Fun, 1:30-3:30 p.m., Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education, 100 N. Lake St., Gary's Miller Beach neighborhood. Info: (219) 395-1882, www.nps.gov/indu


Saturday-Sunday in January — Warm Up to Winter, 1-3 p.m., Chellberg Farm, Mineral Springs Road between U.S. 12/20, Porter. Snow conditions: (219) 395-1882.

Saturdays-Sundays in January-February — National Park Themed Movie, 2-3:30 p.m., Indiana Dunes Visitor Center, 1215 N. Indiana 49, Porter. Info: www.nps.gov/indu, (219) 395-1882.

Sundays in January — Miller Woods Snowshoe Hike, 1-3 p.m., Paul H. Douglas Center, 100 N. Lake St., Gary's Miller Beach neighborhood. Info: (219) 395-1882, www.nps.gov/indu

Mondays — Pickleball, 5:30 p.m. EST, New Troy (Mich.) Community Center, 13372 California Road. Free, donations welcome. Info: (269) 426-3909, friendsofnewtroy@yahoo.com

Vickers Theatre — *Now Showing:* "The Crime is Mine." Not Rated. Times: 3 p.m. Jan. 27, 3:30 p.m. Jan. 28. *Also:* "Fallen Leaves." Not Rated. Times: 6 p.m. Jan. 27, 1 p.m. Jan. 28. All times Eastern. Theater address: 6 N. Elm St., Three Oaks, Mich. Info: www.vickerstheatre.com, (269) 756-3522.





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History Museum Lecture

Arryngton Ladd will present the lecture "Monsters & Myths" at 2 p.m. EST Sunday, Jan. 28, at The History Museum, 808 W. Washington St., South Bend.

Ladd, the museum's exhibits coordinator, will describe folklore, common myths and how legends become legendary. The talk is in conjunction with the "Indiana Lore" exhibit, which guests can tour before or after the program.

Admission is \$5, or \$3 for members. Seating is limited, so reservations are strongly recommended. Visit www.historymuseumSB.org or call (574) 235-9664 for more details.

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The Fourth Rule by Jeff Lindsay (hardcover \$28 retail in bookstores and online; also available as an eBook and an audiobook. 273 pages.)

I have a problem with anti-heroes. I don't really like them. And that's what the narrator of this story is — a bad guy who steals great works of art, but a semi-good guy who only steals from the .1 percent who can afford to be robbed. But as my old grandma used to say, "There's no sense in robbing from the poor, they don't have anything!"

Seeing as this is the fourth book about Riley Wolfe, the most anti-hero you will ever meet, I decided to give him a chance. A few chapters into the book and I softened my view of Riley — just a little bit. The story, however, is pure, spot-on entertainment and well worth the read on a cold winter's night.

Riley has a set of rules he adheres to, but probably his Fourth Rule is the most important: "*Even if you're the best there is, watch your back. Because someone better is coming.*" Couldn't say it better myself. And this chapter of Riley's life proves this rule beyond a doubt.

There are all kinds of thieves, most of them petty — using brute strength to get what they want — smash-and-grab, gun-in-your-face...except for Riley, who uses his brain and finesse to get what he wants. That separates him from the rest of the rabble.

Lately, Riley's feeling a bit down. Nothing interesting to steal lately, and that makes him lethargic. A trip to the British Museum finds him staring at the Rosetta Stone, and the wheels in his brain start clicking. Really? Steal 1,680 pounds of rock in broad daylight? In Riley's mind, that's what it's all about — a "look what I can do!" right under your nose.

You remember that big gray stone, right? A proclamation written in three languages that helped us to read Egyptian hieroglyphics? The French discovered it in 1799, the Brits immediately stole it from them and set it in the British Museum while giving Egypt a lovely replica of the Stone. How generous.

Enter Caitlin O'Brian, a lovely young woman Riley meets in an art gallery. German Expressionism, to be exact. He is deep in thought when a soft, woman's voice makes him realize he didn't hear her come up behind him. Hmm. Not good for a thief. Red hair, Irish lilt to her voice. For the first time in his life, Riley is speechless. Talk about love at first sight. How could that be with Riley's staunch take on keeping his distance from anyone, man or woman? Watch out, Riley, she could spell trouble — was this meeting really happenstance? Or something else.

Caitlin disappears after a night of unbridled sex,

Off the Book Shelf

by Sally Carpenter



but shows up some days later. And guess what? She's carrying a painting Riley admired in the gallery. She certainly didn't buy it, but Riley is too busy thinking about their sex to ask how she acquired it.

Soon, Riley is telling Caitlin about stealing the Rosetta Stone.

She tells him that's an insane idea but, of course, becomes his partner in crime. Planning for the heist, as well as the actual execution of it, have you turning pages at an amazing rate. Riley's plan is exquisite: no detail left unturned, hours spent at the museum checking everything from security to location of doors and loading docks. As Riley says, "*...deciding to steal something like the Rosetta Stone is not quite the same thing as actually doing it. I had to have a plan, and it had to be spectacular.*"

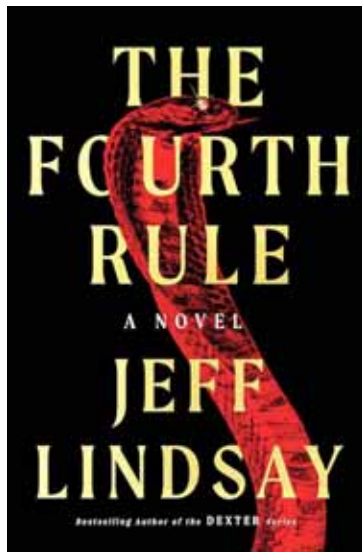
While all this planning is going on, there is another piece to the puzzle that is Riley's life. Riley has a rival, maybe a man, maybe a woman, known only as the Cobra. That person has a personal quarrel with Riley and is quietly, patiently waiting for the right moment to strike. After the Rosetta Stone theft, Caitlin is kidnapped by the Cobra...all future heists are suspended as Riley makes hasty plans (hasty being the operative word here) to save her. An exciting trip to the Canadian wilderness and the Cobra's hideout might have some flaws in it.

Adding to the mix, an American FBI agent is dispatched to England to help London police find Riley. His name is Frank Delgado, and his British counterpart is NCA Special Investigator Michael West. He's an officious sort who resents Delgado, making his dissatisfaction known. As West's boss puts it, "*...to bring over a cowboy cop from the colony, as he so poetically put it, he feels is a waste of his time and the agency's money.*"

Delgado, however, has seen Riley in person in New York City and is somewhat more familiar with his various disguises. Can these two give up the machismo long enough to remember what they're supposed to do? Men...

The final word: Wonderful pacing, not without humor, great escapes, mind-bending thefts and a protagonist who, in the end, gives reader their money's worth. The final chapter of The Fourth Rule is a real cliffhanger, leaving no doubt there will be book No. 5 in the life of Riley Wolfe, thief extraordinaire.

Till next time, happy reading!



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Jenn Bauer

Jenn Bauer is a LaPorte County native. She has been in the real estate industry for 10 years and a licensed agent/property manager for six of those years. Whether it is buying, selling or renting, her goal is to “Make the Move” for her client(s) easy and stress free.

You can call/text Jenn at 219-393-4882

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