

Monday, March 22, 2010

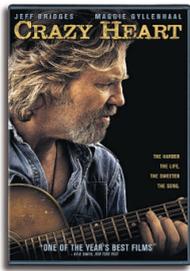
Lifeline

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New films in town no match for 'Alice'

Johnny Depp and Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* remains No. 1 at the box office. The movie took in \$34.5 million to keep the top spot for a third consecutive weekend. Its domestic haul increased to \$265.7 million after only 17 days in theaters. *Alice* easily beat a rush of new movies led by the family film *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, which opened at No. 2 with \$21.8 million. The Jennifer Aniston and Gerard Butler action comedy *The Bounty Hunter* landed at No. 3 with \$21 million. Jude Law and Forest Whitaker's action thriller *Repo Men* was No. 4 with an opening of \$6.2 million. The romantic comedy *She's Out of My League* rounded out the top five with \$6 million. Final figures are due today.

Jeff Bridges arrives on disc in April ...



Did you miss Jeff Bridges' Oscar-winning performance as boozy, broken-down country singer Bad Blake in *Crazy Heart*? You have another chance to see it when the DVD (\$29.98) and Blu-ray Disc (\$39.99) of the film are released April 20. Among added features are deleted scenes and alternate music cuts.

... and Celine Dion lands in early May

Celine Dion fans can mark their calendars for May 4. That's when a DVD and Blu-ray Disc of the documentary film *Celine: Through the Eyes of the World and Taking Chances World Tour: The Concert*, a new DVD/CD of live performances from Dion's world tour, arrives. *Eyes of the World's* home edition will offer an hour's worth of footage not seen in the movie's limited run in February. A deluxe two-DVD set featuring the movie and the concert will be available for \$34.99 at the singer's online shop. Visit celine Dion.com for details.

Nastia Liukin leaps into girls apparel



Warner Bros.

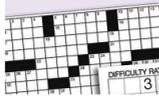
Liukin: Message of empowerment.

Gymnast Nastia Liukin, 20, is all for girl power. Liukin, who won five medals at the Summer Olympics in 2008, is joining forces with Warner Bros. Consumer Products for a line of girls merchandise. The *Supergirl* by Nastia collection, for girls ages 8-12, will be sold at JCPenney stores and on jcp.com beginning July 20. Products will cost \$20 to \$38 and will include dresses and tunics, knit pants and signature *Supergirl* T-shirts. "The *Supergirl* S-Shield is a unique and iconic symbol that has inspired this collection," Liukin said in a statement. "I believe it will do the same for girls who wear it."

By Lorena Blas with staff and wire reports
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Today's puzzles
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Top music downloads

Break Your Heart Taio Cruz featuring Ludacris	202,000
Rude Boy Rihanna	155,000
Hey, Soul Sister Train	154,000
Nothin' On You B.o.B. featuring Bruno Mars	153,000
Imma Be Black Eyed Peas	140,000

Source: Nielsen SoundScan for week ending March 14

By Steve Jones and Veronica Salazar, USA TODAY



Erin Andrews and Maksim Chmerkovskiy by ABC

'Dancing' with ...

Erin, Maksim and the other 10 couples, 4D



Courtney Love by Getty Images

South by Southwest

Festivals, celebs, 1,981 bands, 8D

Edie Falco a true star in 'Jackie'

Second season brings changes for the better

Nurse Jackie
Showtime, tonight, 10 ET/PT
★★★★ out of four

The next time you're tempted to refer to some reality fame-seeker as a "star," think of Edie Falco and refrain. To be sure, it's an insult to even the most minimally talented actor to be lumped in with poseurs whose only claim to public-figure status is barhopping, hot-tubbing, grandstanding and otherwise mismanaging a made-for-TV version of their lives.

But to watch Falco's gorgeously nuanced star turn in Showtime's wonderful *Nurse Jackie* is to realize that any word that can be used to describe both her and some camera-hog celeb wannabe on some TV *Dancing* show is a word that has lost all meaning.

TV preview
By Robert Bianco

Jackie has certified Falco's rank as a star of the first magnitude, through a performance that is beautifully spare and completely free of all visible signs of vanity. Falco allows us to see straight into the heart of this funny, angry, dedicated, addicted nurse and mother, and that includes showing us things Jackie herself may not know are there.

Jackie's life has changed, though not as drastically as last season's cliffhanger implied. Last year she maintained a



By Phil Caruso, Showtime

rigid separation between her personal and professional lives, and between her loving and much-wronged husband, Kevin (Dominic Fumusa), and her equally loving boyfriend, Eddie (Paul Schulze). Those walls have been breached, in part by Eddie, but in part also by Jackie's own desire to share more of herself with co-workers.

Her co-workers have changed, too, mostly for the better. Zoey (Merritt Wever) has gained a private life and confidence, while Dr. O'Hara (Eve Best) is about to gain an unexpected romantic partner. Sadly, Haaz Sleiman's Mo-Mo has departed, but the new character in his place — Arjun Gupta's recovering addict Sam — is better positioned as an antagonist for Jackie.

The best change may be the new respect shown to Anna Deavere Smith's Mrs. Akalitus, who too often last sea-

Personal, professional: Edie Falco stars as NYC emergency room nurse Jackie Peyton. Dominic Fumusa is her husband, Kevin, owner of a neighborhood bar.

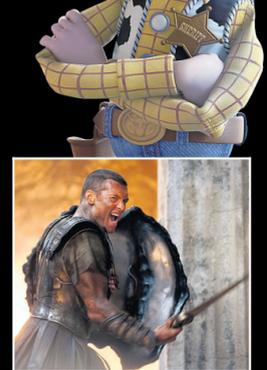
son was used for cheap comic relief. This year she's more grounded, and while she's still Jackie's supervisor, she's no longer her enemy or foil.

What's remarkable is the fine balance producer/writers Linda Wallem and Liz Brixius maintain between the comic and tragic. *Jackie* can be a dark show, and it's going to get darker. But there isn't an episode that doesn't leave you yearning to see the next.

There also isn't a performance that doesn't work, from the kids to Nurse Thor (Stephen Wallem) to the now tweet-obsessed Dr. Cooper (Peter Facinelli). But it all revolves around Falco, who stays present and real in every moment, with no discernable fuss. It's a TV performance for the ages — and it's a reminder that for most other people on TV, the term "star" is too much. For Falco, it may not be enough.

Screening ShoWest

3-D clash of the theater titans, 3D



Sam Worthington as Perseus in *Clash of the Titans*; Woody (voiced by Tom Hanks) in *Toy Story 3*

Top, Disney/Pixar; above, Warner Bros. Pictures



By Anne Ryan, USA TODAY

Celebration of life: Marybeth Solinski gets ready to blow out the candles on her 59th birthday cake last fall with her niece Sarah Gaziano, 22.

Aging with Down syndrome

Gene studies reveal that the process is faster but often protective

By Liz Szabo
USA TODAY

In 1950, when Marybeth Solinski was born, a diagnosis of Down syndrome was practically a death sentence. Children with the condition often died before their 10th birthday.

Yet Solinski, at 59, has outlived her parents. She has even joined AARP.

Cover story Her longevity illustrates the dramatic progress for people with Down syndrome. Thanks to better medical care, the average life expectancy for a child with Down syndrome is now 60 years, according to the National Down Syndrome Society, which estimates that about 400,000 people are living with the condition in the USA.

As they live longer, adults with Down syndrome — who have an extra copy of chromosome 21 — are teaching scientists about the genetic roots of aging, says Ira Lott, head of pediatric neurology at the University of California-Irvine School of Medicine.

Scientists today are searching this chromosome, which contains only about 200 of the body's roughly 20,000 genes, to



Photo courtesy of Solinski family

Family portrait: Marybeth Solinski, top, with her sisters Lee Cornell, left, and Paulette Solinski.

Please see COVER STORY next page ▶



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Down research may unlock secrets of aging

Continued from 1D

learn why people with Down syndrome suffer disproportionately from some health problems, such as Alzheimer's disease, but are spared many others, such as heart attacks, strokes and certain types of cancer.

By studying adults with Down syndrome, researchers hope to find new ways to combat diseases of aging in the larger population as well, Lott says.

"It's an interesting detective story," says Lott, head of the science advisory board of the National Down Syndrome Society. "People with Down syndrome are unique when it comes to many aspects of aging."

Aging troubles start early

People with Down syndrome tend to age prematurely as they develop conditions such as menopause, brittle bones, arthritis, hearing loss, wrinkles and sagging skin about two decades earlier than usual, says Brian Chicoine, medical director of the adult Down syndrome center at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge, Ill., the leading center of its kind.

"People say they seem to age overnight," says Dennis McGuire, director of psychosocial services at the same center. "They suddenly develop wrinkles and gray hair."

Solinski, for example, wears a brace on one leg and hearing aids in both ears, and she has had two corneal transplants. "She's more like a 79-year-old than a 59-year-old," says her sister, Lee Cornell of Illinois.

Yet researchers suspect that this unique genetic profile also protects people with Down syndrome from many common ailments. A growing number of researchers are asking:

► What protects their hearts?

Half of babies with Down syndrome are born with correctable heart defects, and most adults with Down syndrome are overweight with high cholesterol. Despite these risks, however, people with Down syndrome virtually never develop high blood pressure, heart attacks or hardening of the arteries, Lott says. Doctors are still trying to learn why.

► Why don't they get cancer?

Doctors once believed that people with Down syndrome didn't live long enough to develop cancer, says Sandra Ryeom, a researcher at University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine in Philadelphia.

Yet, with the exception of a rare pediatric leukemia, even elderly adults with Down syndrome rarely develop solid tumors, such as those of the breast or lung.

Last May, Ryeom and her colleagues found genes on the 21st chromosome that inhibit the growth of blood vessels necessary for tumor growth. Getting an extra copy of these genes, and possibly others, may help the body keep cancers in check by depriving them of blood, she says.

Researchers already are trying to develop anti-cancer treatments based on genes found on chromosome 21, says Roger Reeves of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

► What protects their eyes?

Although people with Down syndrome are at higher risk for cataracts, they rarely develop a form of blindness called macular degeneration, caused by an overgrowth of blood vessels in the retina, Ryeom says. Doctors suspect that the same genes that restrict blood vessel growth in tumors may also prevent abnormal blood vessel growth in the eye.

A link to Alzheimer's?

► Why do Down syndrome patients develop early Alzheimer's disease?

Adults with Down syndrome appear to develop the brain plaques and tangles characteristic of Alzheimer's disease very early in life — even as young as 3 or 4 years old. For decades, however, their brains also appear to repair and compensate for the damage, says scientist Elizabeth Head of the University of Kentucky's Sanders-Brown Center on Aging.

"Their brains may be clearing the plaques," says Head, who is now recruiting Down syndrome patients for a study on biomarkers of Alzheimer's. "As they get older, this protective process slows down."

By age 40 to 45, virtually everyone with Down syndrome has these plaques and tangles, although only 12% have dementia, Lott says. By age 65, up to 75% of people with Down syndrome have dementia.



Photos by Anne Ryan, USA TODAY

Home and family: Marybeth Solinski tends to a simmering pot in the kitchen with her sister Paulette Solinski.



Everyday living: Solinski picks out some apples at the grocery store near her house in Chicago. She is learning to cook, she says, to follow in the footsteps of her mother, who died recently at age 92. She also likes to read, like her father.



Always learning: Solinski, at home with her sister Lee Cornell, loves to learn. She even takes flash cards on vacation.



Body and soul: Solinski receives Communion from Marlow Comisky, a Eucharistic minister from a nearby Catholic church who comes to her house once a week.

Down syndrome vital statistics

Pregnancy risks

The incidence of Down syndrome increases with the mother's age. But because younger women have most of the babies, 80% of children with Down syndrome are born to women under 35.

Births

The prevalence of Down syndrome at birth increased more than 31% from 1979 to 2002, partly because of an increase in older mothers, according to a December study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Life spans

Better medical care is allowing people with Down syndrome to live much longer.

Average life span:



Source: National Down Syndrome Society

"It's an interesting detective story. People with Down syndrome are unique when it comes to many aspects of aging."

— Ira Lott, head of the science advisory board, National Down Syndrome Society

Significantly, doctors have found a gene that increases the risk of Alzheimer's, called APP, on the 21st chromosome, Lott says. The gene, called amyloid precursor protein, is involved in the creation of the brain plaques seen in Alzheimer's patients. People who inherit mutated copies of these genes may develop Alzheimer's disease decades earlier than usual, says William Mobley, a neuroscience professor at the University of California-San Diego.

Yet not all people with Down syndrome succumb. One of Chi-

coine's patients lived to 83 without dementia.

Solinski, of Chicago, loves learning so much that she takes flash cards on vacation. She pores over children's encyclopedias and Nancy Drew novels. She is learning to cook, she says, to follow in the footsteps of her mother, who died in August at 92. And, she says, "I want to be a great reader like my father."

And Brooklyn resident Edward Barsky is still healthy and independent at 73, living in a group home and navigating public

transportation on his own, says his sister, Vicki Ploscowe.

"He's still going strong," says Ploscowe, of Manhattan.

If researchers could learn what protects certain people, they might be able to develop a therapy to prevent Alzheimer's — both in those with and those without Down syndrome, Head says.

'No other population' like this

People with Down syndrome present doctors with a rare opportunity to watch the disease

progress, Lott says.

"There's no other population where you can really study this," Lott says. Although some people without Down syndrome carry a gene that increases their risk of early dementia, "you don't know who in the general population is going to come down with sporadic Alzheimer's. With Down syndrome, you know that virtually 100% of them will have plaques."

For example, doctors don't yet know exactly how an extra copy of chromosome 21 causes or pre-

vents disease, Lott says. It's possible that getting a 50% larger "dose" of a gene affects the body's susceptibility to a disease, he says. Or, it's possible that the extra genetic material simply makes the entire genome more unstable.

Reeves says he's grateful to the Down syndrome community for teaching scientists so much.

"If it weren't for people with Down syndrome having fewer tumors," Reeves says, "we never would have thought to look for anything like this."