

'Last Hand' offers free tickets for students

August Lysy
STAFF WRITER

Having spent the last five months co-writing and assistant-directing the play "The Last Hand," I cannot honestly expect that my own review of the production would be objective. But when the tickets are free (see below), the reader may at least grant me the time to assert the play's entertainment value by illustrating the origin of the tale and by briefly describing the various characters that make it up. It is my hope that, if I am successful, the reader will be interested enough to take advantage of the free tickets to see the play his or herself; thereby, in essence, becoming his or her own critic.

The origin of "The Last Hand" dates back to a hot summer in Chicago's River North. Richard James Ziemann, the now-playwright and then-bouncer, stood intimidatingly—arms crossed over his thick chest, brows furrowed—at the front entrance of a hopping night club. The night was passing dully, when

up strode through the parting crowd a youth of fearsome countenance, his hazel eyes locked on Richard's. A moment passed as the two stared off, toe-to-toe: Richard's coldly suspicious eyes boring into the passionless gaze of the boy. Just then—a hand pressed into Richard's shoulder, and a voice instructed him to allow the boy in. Richard backed off; and so the youth, though underage, passed by into the pulsing lights and throbbing beat of the club.

Inside, Richard observed the boy command the attention of all whom he passed: smiling angelically at some; scowling fiendishly at others. It was not until later, at the end of the night, that Richard had the opportunity to interview the boy—the boy who had indeed captured the interest of Richard himself. Surprisingly, he was willing to divulge his story. And his was a story of uncommon tragedy gone unobserved and disregarded; a story of families lost and dreams ensnared on the dangerous streets of Chicago's West Side.

Richard's experience with this youth, his story, became the seed that would eventually grow into the compelling tale of Angel, a

young gang member with the hope of escaping his cutthroat existence in order to fulfill his dream as a rapper; and Clip, a hardened gang enforcer who must wrestle with his own identity in order to find his own redemption from his past. Embroiled in their gang code of respect, status, and violence, Angel and Clip—best friends torn asunder—each must desperately pursue their goals as their stories play out in the taut conflict between loyalty and betrayal.

And winning won't be easy. On either side of this duo lie the unpredictable characters of The Pharaoh and El Grito. The former is the gang leader whose tyrannical reign of the West Side has caught both Angel and Clip in his grip; the latter is the suspicious acquaintance of Angel whose provocative and wily character may just cost Angel his life.

In the background of this drama stand Miguel and Dante. Miguel, a low-regarded street-tagger whose ambition is outmatched only by his cocaine addiction, mindlessly pursues The Pharaoh's respect and the chance to run his own crew. A dullish drug-dealer, Dante

is one of the many exploited followers recruited by The Pharaoh; like most of The Pharaoh's underlings, his allegiance demanded the blood of his family—and the decision haunts him still.

"Follow me, Angel," The Pharaoh suggests, "and I'll see that you live to die old." But with a risky heist going down tonight at The Pharaoh's card game—Angel's sole desire is to live to see the next morning.

The Last Hand is playing September 13th through October 20th at the Athenaeum Theatre, located at 2936 N Southport, at the intersection of Lincoln/Wellington/Southport (right off the Brown Line). Student tickets are \$15. FREE tickets are available for Friday Sept. 20th, Saturday Sept. 21st, and Sunday Sept. 22nd (7:30pm showing on Fri & Sat, 2:00pm on Sun). To reserve your free tickets (limit two per email), please email LastHand@shoutchicago.com with your name, phone number, and performance date and time. You will receive email confirmation of your reservation, and your tickets will be held at the box office.

Movie Review:

'Blue Jasmine'

Alexis Pagano
TECHNEWS WRITER

I haven't been to the movies for months, but I decided to shell out the \$12 to see the most recent Woody Allen movie, Blue Jasmine—and it was worth every dollar. Overall, the humor is smart and subtler than other of Allen's past films, like "Midnight in Paris This is an excellent showcase of Woody Allen's talent for writing brilliantly constructed social situations, in which the characters are brought to face the negative consequences of their disingenuous social maneuvering.

I can confidently say that "Blue Jasmine" is Allen's strongest film in some time, in part credited to an outstanding performance by Cate Blanchett. Her character, Jasmine, is both sympathetic and repellent as she struggles with the reality of her situation, clinging to her dignity as she inevitably breaks down. Recently widowed by her late husband, who committed suicide after being caught in fraudulent business interactions, Jasmine escapes to the West Coast to San Francisco to live with her younger, working-class sister Ginger (Sally Hawkins).

The relationship between the sisters serves as a platform of commentary about the disparity between classes, as Jasmine's refined grace and arrogance is juxtaposed with Ginger's sweet and humble attitude. Jasmine lives in continuous judgement of her sister's simple

working-class lifestyle, in disbelief that Ginger could be content with such a life.

Ironically, she is in no place to really judge anyone considering she has essentially lost everything and has no real life skills (having been a trophy wife her whole life) she must take the menial job of a secretary at a dentist's office. She enrolls in a computer class, because she doesn't know how to use them. Even in her fallen state, which at this point consists of popping lots of Xanax and frequent drinking, Jasmine is an intrusive force in Ginger's personal and romantic life, disrupting all structure around her.

The small yet important roles played by Ginger's ex-husband (Andrew Dice Clay) and her current boyfriend (Bobby Cannavale) act as the opposing forces of blunt reality as they both deflate Jasmine's sense of pomposity and privilege by either blatantly confronting her or by simply ignoring her narcissism. The most successful stylistic element in this film is the implementation of periodic flashbacks of Jasmine's life and the events that have led to the present state.

Many such scenes begin with Jasmine sitting alone or in public mumbling half to herself and half to whoever happens to be around, telling her story. Her words lead into a flashback and the audience is transported into her story. The end of the movie is what really made it, in my opinion. The conclusion stays true to the ethos of the film, solidifying Woody Allen's re-emergence into the world of artful serious yet comic and touching cinema.

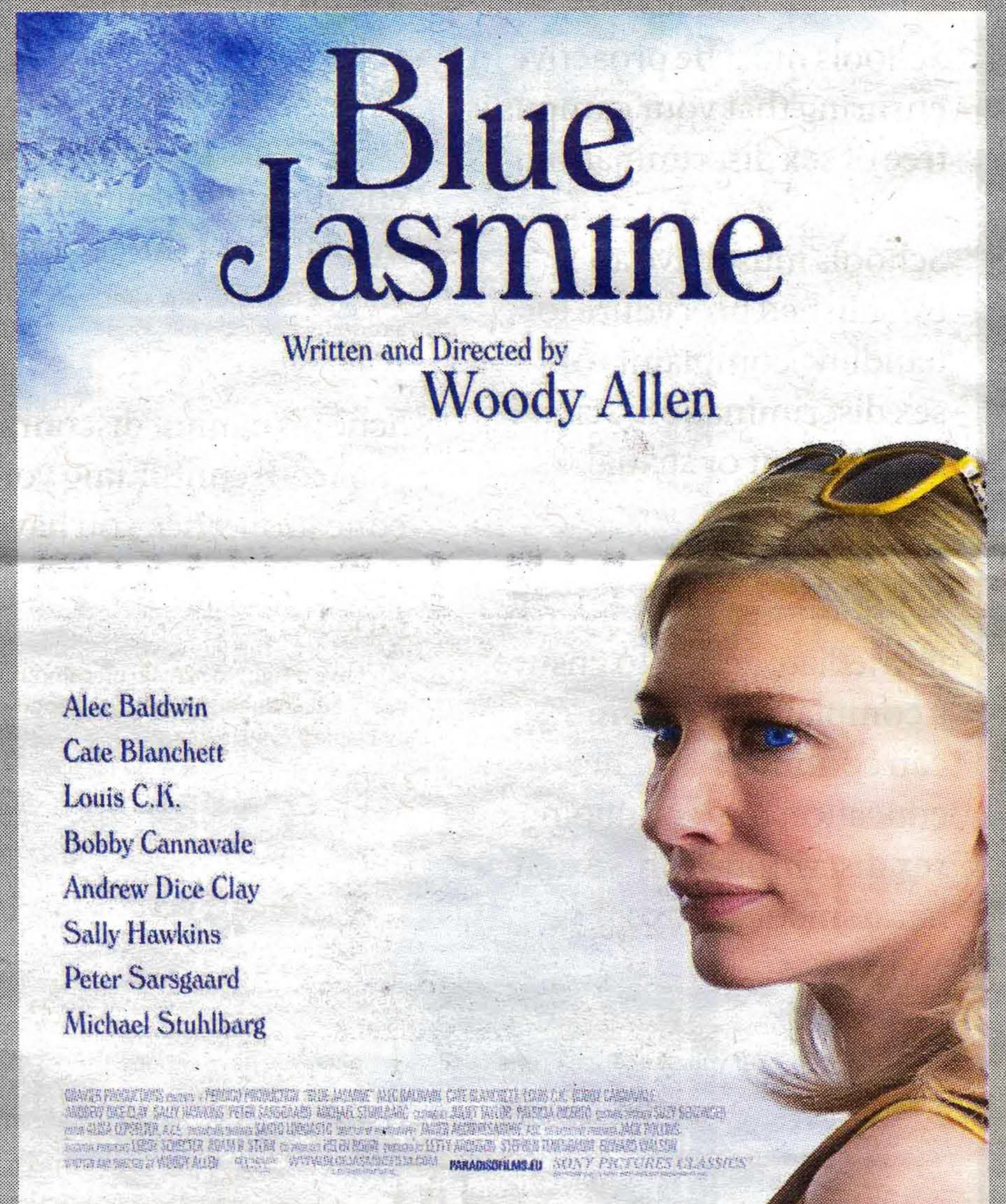


Image courtesy of utopolis.lu

Restaurant Review:

Disappointing trek to Chinatown's Three Happiness

Kyle Stanevich & Austin Gonzalez
TECHNEWS WRITERS

I was presented a problem over the weekend. I had to find a place to take my family out to eat. They came out with some college necessities forgotten at home, and as payment for their trip, I had to figure out a place to eat. Being just a freshman, I did not know too many good Chicago places that they had never been to before. Luckily, my roommate chimed in and suggested we go somewhere in Chinatown. He also recommended we stop by a Chinese bakery to get some of those amazing buns.

We first decided to drive over there. However, on a crowded Saturday it was impossible to find any parking space. We pulled into one lot entrance just to find that the lot officially reached capacity with the car in front of

us. It was just our luck that three other people also thought that they could get into the same parking lot and ended up boxing us in. After a slow escape, we drove around a bit more trying to find any place to park. Eventually we gave up and drove back to IIT.

Still determined to go to Chinatown, I had the idea that we take the train, the first of a series of bad decisions. Of course, my family does not have CTA passes, so after buying a pass we got on the train towards the loop. At this point all of us are starving. We get off at Roosevelt to transfer over to the orange line. Of course, the train was packed to the rim. We escape the large smelly train car at Halsted and begin the trek over to Chinatown. The path was narrow and littered with garbage, which made the entire thing stink like a dumpster.

We arrived, but our task was not yet finished. Next was the daunting task of deciding where to eat. There were so many places but which one is the best? I turned to my trusty

friend, Yelp, for answers. We were starving, so I didn't do any in depth research, but I decided on a place, Three Happiness, another bad decision.

At first it was like any other Chinese restaurant, a solid atmosphere, and not too crowded. We sat down and ordered some dim sum from the expansive menu. Then came our tea, which was surprisingly good, other than having as many tea flakes in the tea as pulp in extra pulp orange juice. Upon ordering Mapo Tofu, Kung Pao Beef, and General Tso's Chicken, our dim sum came out. At least the service was fast.

The dumplings and fried smelts were the best things we ate there. Once our actual food came we dug right in, but were disappointed. The veggies weren't cooked thoroughly, the rice was hard and dry, and the meat was extremely chewy. There weren't enough spices on the food to make it taste much like anything other than soggy corn flakes. We passed our

dishes around, so to taste all the food, but none of us were happy. The tofu was a bit soggy, and had no flavoring, more like tasteless cubes of opaque Jello-O. The beef was a bit like cold beef jerky that was soaked in like warm water for a week. The chicken was probably the best but still a bit on the cold side, not a good sign for chicken. I was personally looking forward to the tofu because I had the same dish in a Chinese class I once took, but it did not even come close. My family is not filled with Chinese food experts but we all agreed that that was some of the worst Chinese we had ever got. We hurriedly paid the bill and left.

Depressed and filled with a tasteless pit in our stomachs, we discussed stopping into the Chinese bakery, but just wanted to leave. I have been to Chinatown before and was never disappointed, but this time was one of the worst meals in my life. I will give the rest of Chinatown another chance but you will never find me inside of Three Happiness again.