

# Moffett would rather be in 'Philadelphia'

By **ROBERT HOFER**

D.W. Moffett has been cast in the Kevin Spacey-led production of "The Philadelphia Story" at the Old Vic, completing principal casting. Jennifer Ehle had previously been announced as the femme lead for the London production. Jerry Zaks directs.

Rehearsals begin next week, with perfs set for May 3-July 23. A possible Broadway transfer is in the offing pending critical and audience reception.

Moffett plays Mike Conner to Ehle's Tracy Lord and Spacey's C.K. Dexter Haven, played in the 1940 film version by James Stewart, Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant, respectively.

The Philip Barry comedy was originally staged on Broadway in 1939. Hepburn starred with Joseph Cotten and Van Heflin.

# 'Inquest' in U.S. conquest

By **JOHN DEMPSEY**

The smash ratings chalked up by reruns of "CSI" in off-network syndication this season have helped to propel "Da Vinci's Inquest," a similar Canadian police procedural, onto TV stations reaching 70% of the U.S. for a fall debut.

"CSI" reruns are averaging 9 million total viewers since they began in syndication in September. Ritch Colbert, a principal in Program Partners, which distributes "Inquest" in the U.S., says many stations will pair the show with "CSI" after the late news on Saturday and Sunday.

Stations including WCBS New York and KCBS Los Angeles have picked up the show for two years and will play two different episodes each weekend. Instead of paying cash to Colbert, the stations give Program Partners seven minutes of

commercial time in each "Inquest" hour to sell to national advertisers. (The stations keep seven minutes for local sale.)

Colbert has bought the U.S. rights to 91 hours of "Inquest" from Thunderbird Films, a Vancouver company headed by Tim Gamble and Michael Shephard. They shoot the show in Vancouver for about \$1.1 million an episode.

Once Program Partners has secured full clearance of the show in syndication, Colbert said, he'll start pitching it to cable networks such as Spike, USA, A&E and TNT. Colbert has reserved the right to sell the Monday-Friday runs to cable, also beginning this fall.

Other stations taking "Inquest" include KYW Philadelphia, KPIX San Francisco, WBZ Boston, WSB Atlanta, WWJ Detroit, KOMO Seattle, WFOR Miami and WCCO Minneapolis.

# FILM REVIEW

## Guess Who

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Race notwithstanding, Percy's behavior comes across as bizarre, though to be fair, Simon's own silliness — telling Percy whopping lies and rattling off African-American jokes to demonstrate how cool he is — is every bit as off-putting. There is a promising drinking game, however, based on the number of times someone says "Percy Jones," which includes the lead character, who regularly talks about himself in the third person.

If there's a saving grace, it's in the easy rapport that exists between Kutcher and Saldana, which generally surpasses the lines they're given. Beyond that, only a few rays of light find their way into director Kevin Rodney Sullivan's uneven direction, which can't settle on a tone. Those include an amusing bit when Theresa and her mom (Judith Scott) take refuge with Theresa's aunt, as well as Hal Williams' fleeting turn as Percy's even grumpier dad, who doesn't hide his irritation over having whitey at the dinner table.

Kutcher offers a more buttoned-down version of his "That '70s Show" persona (he's a successful stockbroker who abruptly quits, for reasons that take too long to explain), but his charm only goes so far. And while Mac should come away with a better box office scorecard here than for "Mr. 3000," he's still yet to find a film worthy of his standup and TV gigs, though this comes closer to his sitcom-dad strike zone.

Ultimately, though, "Guess Who" plays like a squandered opportunity — a film that could have wryly dealt with matters of race, or simply could have been funnier, had it possessed a clearer template than a star pairing and a truncated title.

As is, the movie is summed up by a moment where Simon and Percy ride in a car together, fidgeting uncomfortably as the radio keeps spitting out songs about interracial love — a mild laugh that subsides about halfway through the scene. After that, it's just two guys in a vehicle, with nothing to say.

# CONCERT REVIEW

## Black Crowes

(Hammerstein Ballroom; 3,500 capacity; \$42)

Presented by Best Buy. Band: Chris Robinson, Rich Robinson, Marc Ford, Ed Hawrysch, Sven Pipien, Bill Dobrow. Opened and reviewed March 22, 2005. Also March 25, 26, 27, 29, 30.

By **RICH NIECIECKI**

**T**he latest version of the flock known as the Black Crowes welcomed home an exiled former member and ended a nearly four-year "hiatus" with a triumphant first show in a week-long Gotham run.

In an unusual instance of a hardcore fan base rejoicing over the return of an integral member of a popular group while the average record buyer goes "who?," guitarist Marc Ford is back trading soaring leads and licks with founder-guitarist Rich Robinson. Estranged since 1997, he has now rejuvenated the others and himself in the process, as Ford's tone and style of playing contribute an undeniable spark to the songs of Rich and his brother, vocalist-focal point Chris.

Ominously bathed in electric candelabra lights and with a downright messianic look in a full-bearded Chris Robinson's eyes, the newly regathered band emphatically kicked into opener "Gone" from 1994's classic "Amorica" as if they had never left.

In fact, with all the drama that's encircled the reformulation (begin-



**Chris Robinson, above, and his Black Crowes mates welcomed Marc Ford back after an eight-year absence.**

ning with Ford's ouster long ago and up through the recent mystery of just who would form the reconstituted lineup), Chris Robinson made little acknowledgment on-stage of what's transpired during the members' time apart. Ford has toured and recorded with Ben Harper and played L.A.-area clubs with his own band, the Sinners; Rich Robinson started and aborted a side band and then put out a studio record and live album; and Chris Robinson recorded and toured behind two solo discs under the guise of New Earth Mud.

Chris Robinson remains one of rock's best white soul voices, whether on the siblings-penned ballad "Bad Luck Blue Eyes Goodbye" and their aptly named "Soul Singing" or inspired readings of Bob Marley's "Time Will Tell," Bob Dylan's "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry" or the Bram-

lett-Clapton tune "Comin' Home."

Newcomer Bill Dobrow has the unenviable task of filling the seat previously occupied by Steve Gorman, the only drummer the Crowes had ever had. Given the various passages and tempo changes their repertoire often possesses (yes, there are still jams aplenty in the set, as even their well-known cover of Otis Redding's three-minute "Hard to Handle" becomes an extended discourse live), Gorman made his tasteful fills look so effortless. Dobrow not only looks spent and drenched in sweat after every song, he has to weather the admonishing looks of either Chris or Rich (or both), the latter of whom dictates the rhythm far more so than in the traditional bass player/drummer relationship.

And it's that group dynamic that looms as the primary question mark at this juncture, as Ford, bassist Sven Pipien and longtime keyboardist Ed Hawrysch, all apparently enjoying themselves, initially appear a bit detached in what is and evidently always will be the Brothers Robinson show. That shared sense of purpose so vital to the success of any group appears to be a work in progress, but if in fact they can resurrect that on a new record as well, the sky will again be the limit for the Black Crowes.

Tour route has them confirmed through June in the East and beyond with a summer leg forming, possibly with Tom Petty. Openers in New York include the John Butler Trio, Hackensaw Boys, the Soundtrack of Our Lives, North Mississippi Allstars and Ben Kweller.

# DATEBOOK

MAR. 25

## "The French Connection" Gene Hackman

stars as a tough cop in William Friedkin's drama with the famed car chase. Sunshine Cinemas, 143 E. Houston St. Midnight. Again Saturday. Call (212) 330-8182 or go to landmarktheatres.com/market/NewYork/SunshineCinema.htm



"The French Connection"

"I Vitelloni" Fellini's film about a group of disaffected young men screens at the Museum of the Moving Image. 35th Avenue at 36th St. 7:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at 6:30 p.m. Call (718) 784-0077 or go to movingimage.us.

MAR. 27

"My Darling Clementine" As the Film Forum's Essential Westerns series wraps up, this John Ford classic screens along with "The Ox-Bow Incident" and "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence." 209 W. Houston St. Call (212) 727-0110 or go to filmforum.com.

MAR. 28

"The Sweet Smell of Success" Tony Curtis and Burt Lancaster star in this famous noir about the seedy underbelly of New York's entertainment industry. On a double bill with "Gentleman Prefer Blondes." Loews State Theater, 1540 Broadway. 1:45, 7 p.m. Go to timesquarenyc.org

"Breathless" Godard's New Wave classic plays at the Alliance Francaise. Florence Gould Hall, 55 E 59th St. 4 p.m. Call (212) 355-6160 or go to fiaf.org.

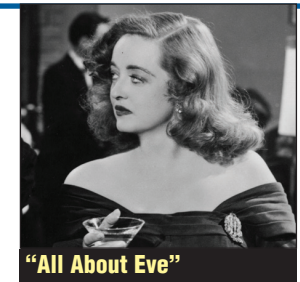
MAR. 29

Matt Lauer and Bryant Gumbel On the occasion of "Real Sports" 10th anni, the "Today Show" anchor interviews the show's host. Museum of Television & Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. 6 p.m. Call (212) 621-6800 or go to mtr.org.

MAR. 30

"Passion" Lincoln Center concludes its American Songbook series with three performances of Stephen Sondheim's musical, featuring the vocal talents of Patti LuPone, Audra McDonald and Michael Cerveris. Frederick P. Rose Hall, Time Warner Center, Columbus Circle. 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. Go to lincolncenter.org.

"All About Eve" Fasten your seatbelts for the Bette Davis classic. Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St., 7 p.m. Call (212) 777-3456 #597, or go to clearviewcinemas.com.



"All About Eve"

MAR. 31

Mike Nichols The helmer participates in a Q&A with "Rolling Stones" Peter Travers after a screening of his first film, "The Graduate." BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave. 6:50, 7 p.m. Call (718) 636-4100 or go to bam.org.

To submit Datebook items contact Zachary Pincus-Roth at (646) 746-6939 or datebooknyc@reedbusiness.com