

My Name Is Jonas

No... nothing to do with the Jonas Brothers but more on the title in a bit. This evening, we gathered at my oldest brother's house with the fourteen of us and more extended family for the birthday celebration of my oldest (**14!?**) niece and **13** year-old nephew/godson. The kids hunted eggs when we arrived. Then some of us watched GOLF while others engaged in some Guitar Hero on the Wii. I actually amazed myself as I went head-to-head with almost everyone then had to go up against the household crowd. Elizabeth kept selecting the same song again and again and beating everyone again and again until she competed with her dad. I told them that I would just have to sneak out to the house while she was in school and practice... but as before, a little Wii goes a long way.

Birthdays mean cake and candles. I don't know why it took so long between the time the candles were lit and the blowing but I decided to test my wind strength. Honestly, I was sitting at the opposite end of the 6' table and blew all 14 candles out... not totally because they relit. I was thinking that the ice cream cake with peeps on top was going to melt before the candles were extinguished.

After the cake was wrapped up, someone had the BRILLIANT idea of playing golf on the Wii. WOW... wasn't it enough to sit and watch Tiger Woods hit a tree and others hit birdies (which kind, I still do not know) and bogies (why anyone would want to hit a poor dead actor is beyond me)? Needless to say, I was pleased when the 18 holes were done so we could return to Guitar Hero and Elizabeth's endless selection of [My Name is Jonas](#). At least on my turn, I was willing to try songs we had not done previously. And I did get to see a picture of John Truitt's adorable baby girl.

My Bloody Valentine 3D

It's almost embarrassing to admit that I saw a movie called, "[My Bloody Valentine 3D](#)". But the reason I'm writing a blog about it is because I actually *liked* it. A true slasher film; the grisly violence was excessive. But I actually didn't find myself rolling my eyes at the constant gore fest, which is what I did during the last few movies in the Saw franchise. In the poorer quality Saw movies, some of the violence doesn't really even make sense. It's almost like they're trying to see how far they can go, how shocking they can be, and what they can get away with, even if it's not integral to the plot. My Bloody Valentine 3D actually has a well-developed, interesting plot. If you don't pay attention to the newspaper headlines that *come out of the screen* in the beginning of the movie (very cool 3D effect – definitely more on those later), the plot might actually be hard to follow. I know, a good plot is unheard of for a slasher flick, but I was even left to piece together some plot details after the movie was over. Not that it was *too* hard to follow, just a lot of continuous action that makes it difficult for one to think about character relationships and how they relate to the plot while also watching the movie. So for my best attempt at a plot synopsis, here we go...

Harmony is a small mining town where everyone knows everyone else, and the mine is the lifeblood of the town. The filmmakers very successfully give the audience a good feel for the sleepy little mining town. Decades ago, there was an accident in the mine which was initially blamed on the owner of the mine, Hanniger. When it was found that the victims of the mining accident were actually brutally murdered, it was blamed upon the sole survivor of the accident, Harry Warden,

who is left in a coma. A few decades later, he wakes up and slaughters 22 people, including a group of teenagers having a party at the mine. Four of the revelers make it out alive, and flash forward 10 years to now. Hanniger's son (he was one of the 4 survivors) returns to the town as a new rash of murders unfold, and he finds himself accused of the brutal crimes. There's actually more to it than that, but this kind of gives you an idea about the movie. The plot and direction of the movie allow the audience to never be sure who to suspect of the murders, and there are various twists and turns. Very well done for a horror movie, especially one belonging to the slasher genre. Now on to the 3D effects...

3D does not often work for me because my eyesight is very uneven – I have near perfect vision in my left eye, and terrible vision in my right eye. But I was sure to bring my eyeglasses, which kind of levels the playing field for my eyes, and so when I wore the 3D glasses on top of my regular eyeglasses, the 3D worked very well. I've been to various 3D shows at Disney World and Universal Studios, and I would say those are the best of the best – but even they don't always work for me; sometimes I have to squint to be able to see the 3D. But now it seems there have been some advancements in the technology, and it's clear the movie industry wants to showcase these advancements given the rash of 3D movie previews I've seen in the theaters recently. Among the 3D features that will be out in 2009 are: Monsters and Aliens, Up, Disney's a Christmas Carol 3D, Ice Age 3, and Toy Story in 3D. But anyway, My Bloody Valentine 3D was very cool – the entire movie was actually in 3D for me, and all I had to do was sit there – no fiddling with glasses, no squinting... and that was a first for me. The murderer's weapon of choice is a miner's ax, and there were many times it would actually appear to come out of the screen (along with disgusting bits of gore, of course)! Besides that effect, other things about the movie were cool because of the 3D as well; even scenes that consisted exclusively of dialogue.

As one reviewer on imdb.com mentioned, My Bloody Valentine 3D does not take itself too seriously – and that’s a good thing. In fact, a few months ago when we first saw the movie’s preview and tagline “Nothing says ‘date movie’ like a 3D ride to Hell!”, we thought it was a joke... you know, one of those “previews” that actually ends up being a commercial. But it was for a real movie, and so we couldn’t resist venturing to the big city to utilize a free voucher we had gotten on a previous visit to see the otherwise expensive 3D ride to Hell. If you are a fan of horror movies, My Bloody Valentine 3D is a must-see. I’m not sure how this movie would translate to a regular screen. It might still be a good horror movie, but given the 3D effects, it was nothing short of awesome! I would almost classify it as a sort of haunted house experience, except you’re sitting in a seat and not walking around. If you look at it that way, the \$13.50 price tag (\$11 matinee) would be a bargain for the over 90 minute experience compared to admission at most haunted houses. Of course, haunted houses don’t have the extra-long, very gratuitous nude scene, which I could have definitely done without, but since that’s my only complaint about the movie, overall I would definitely consider it an afternoon well-spent with hubby (no we did not take the kids to this feature!) After all, nothing says ‘date movie’ like a 3D ride to Hell! Apparently so!

Waiting up

Ok, I’m the father of a teenager. She is out tonight watching a movie, leaving Dad home alone to blog away the evening.

My youngest as a rather big heart. She took her sister to the latest teen vampire movie (there has been more than 1 right?) for her birthday. Not anything I was interested in, so I came

home and ate cheeseburgers....

Now, I am waiting for them to come home. The movie should be over soon, and I will still be awake when they come in. All the worries of a father when his children are out late. Deer running on the country roads, other cars, and a bit of snow coming down. I hope they like the movie. It looked like a yawner to me, but then it was marketed toward teenagers/young adults.

So, my second youngest will be 21 in a few short weeks. My youngest is a senior in High School. Me, I'm feeling old tonight. Visited my old college this week. So many new buildings, so many old ones. They were taking the seats out of the theater when we were there. Those seats were over 30 years old!!! I thought they were old when I graduated. I guess they had a bit of life in them. I imagine that they could have replaced the seats more than once in the past 30 years, but how many times would you want to buy that sick green color?

Just thinking about what I want to be when I grow up. I think my dream job would be a voice for an animated show/movie. That really sounds like a lot of fun. And I have more than enough voices, I could almost voice a whole show.

Love running on battery power. I can take this laptop anywhere in the house. I will be looking for the best reception on my cell modem card. I should be getting my router next week, so I want to know where to set it up.

They're home!! good night...

Teenagers Driving You Crazy?

Then drive to Nebraska and drop them off. For good. Seems Nebraska has a “safe haven” law like a lot of states, however, they are the only ones to have neglected placing an age limit on the kids who are left at the safe havens. These laws are designed to protect the safety of unwanted infants, encouraging mothers to drop them at hospitals instead of getting scared and doing something horrible and regrettable to the babies. Most states set their age cap at 72 hours, but since Nebraska failed to set a cap, they are seeing an influx of people dropping off their troublesome teens, including people who don’t even live in Nebraska! Read about it below:

(CNN) – Frustrated parents are dumping their teenagers at Nebraska hospitals – even crossing state lines to do it – and the state Legislature has scheduled a special hearing to try to stem the tide.

A 14-year-old Iowa girl was left Tuesday at Creighton University Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska.

Nebraska’s “safe haven” law, intended to allow parents to anonymously hand over an infant to a hospital without being prosecuted, isn’t working out as planned.

Of the 17 children relinquished since the law took effect in July, only four are younger than 10 – and all four are among the nine siblings abandoned by a man September 24 at an Omaha hospital.

On Tuesday, a 14-year-old girl from Council Bluffs, Iowa, was abandoned at Creighton University Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska, just across the Missouri River from Council Bluffs. The case marks the first time a parent has crossed state lines to abandon a teenager in Nebraska, authorities said.

“The few situations we’ve seen so far demonstrate the need for a change in Nebraska’s safe haven law,” Gov. Dave Heineman

said in a statement Monday. "In the coming legislative session, I will advocate for changes that put the focus back on protecting an infant in danger. That should be our priority."

All 50 states have safe haven laws, but only Nebraska's lacks an age limit. Nebraska's part-time Legislature is adjourned until January, but two state legislative committees will hold a joint hearing November 13 to discuss a remedy.

"They've got a huge problem," said Linda Spears, vice president for policy and public affairs for the Child Welfare League of America. "It's a pretty poorly constructed law to meet its original intent."

When it was introduced in the Legislature, the bill had a presumed age limitation of 72 hours, said Todd Landry, director of the state's Division of Children and Family Services.

"The original intent was to protect infants from the immediate danger of being harmed," he said.

However, the law's final language uses the word "child" and does not specify an age limit, leaving it open to interpretation. Other states' laws specify the maximum age at which a child may be relinquished, ranging from 72 hours in several states to 1 year in North Dakota, according to the National Center for State Courts.

"Clearly in these cases so far that we've seen, none of these children were in any immediate danger of being harmed," Landry said. "It is our opinion that the law does need to be modified."

The law is being abused, Heineman's statement said.

"Safe haven laws were not designed to allow families having

difficulty with older youth and teenagers to abandon their children or responsibilities as parents," he said.

The parents may not always be to blame, the Child Welfare League's Spears said.

"The original safe haven laws were created for young moms who are having babies who didn't know how to get help. I think these are families with older kids who don't know how to get help and who are in desperate need," she said.

Most state laws fail to provide for research into who is abandoning babies and why, league spokeswoman Joyce Johnson said.

"Those are the kinds of things we've been wondering about and saying we need to know more about, and you'll never know if you just have a law that says you can anonymously leave a child somewhere, no questions asked," Johnson said.

New Jersey, she said, is an exception. That state's safe haven law provides funding for research and evaluation as well as \$500,000 a year for public awareness, according to a September 2007 report by a New Jersey safe haven task force.

A woman who dropped her 15-year-old nephew at a Lincoln, Nebraska, hospital told CNN affiliate KETV last month that she and the boy's guardian could no longer handle his behavior problems. Watch woman explain why she left 15-year-old at hospital »

The woman, Cathy Poulin, said she tried discipline and medication, but nothing worked. The boy's mother died several years ago, and his father left him, she said.

"We had to go to the next level," Poulin said. "He can be made to get help."

The Omaha man who left his nine children, ages 1 to 17, at Creighton University Medical Center was overwhelmed by the

sudden death of his wife after the youngest child was born, he told KETV.

"I was with her for 17 years, and then she was gone. What was I going to do?" Gary Staton said. "We raised them together. I didn't think I could do it alone. I fell apart. I couldn't take care of them."

Staton is just the kind of parent whom safe haven laws fail to help, Johnson said.

"He was grieving, he didn't have a lot of money, and all those children – he was trying to figure out how to feed them, how to clothe them, and deal with the grief of losing his wife. He needed help," she said.

Heineman and Landry urged Nebraska parents who are having trouble coping to call the United Way's 211 resource line or Boys Town, a nationally known nonprofit child services organization based in Nebraska.

Other options include community and faith-based support groups, crisis hot lines, treatment centers and other services, Landry added.

By Jim Kavanagh

SPLASH! It's Mr. Woodcock in Real Life

We went kinda crazy with the movies this weekend... We watched the 1984 classic [Splash](#) with the kids, and we also took in [Mr. Woodcock](#) and [Dan in Real Life](#) (for the adults). [Splash](#) is a [Tom Hanks](#) and [Daryl Hannah](#) movie about a mermaid who leaves the ocean to come to New York city and fall in love with Tom Hanks. It sounds dumb, but it's actually pretty well done and a movie with substance and heart. The special effects of her fins aren't bad either, considering they're over 20 years old and most likely made without computer assistance. Since I haven't seen the movie since I was a kid, I was wondering this time around about how many takes it took to film the underwater scenes... mainly the one where Daryl Hannah's character looks on a map in a sunken ship to find where Tom Hanks lives. Also, there's a scene in the movie where they are trying to choose a name for the mermaid, since her name is unpronouncable in English. They're walking down a New York street, and Tom Hanks mutters, "where are we, Madison..." to which Daryl Hannah replies, "Madison, I like Madison." That was a joke in the movie at the time, that the mermaid was named after a street in New York, but nowadays, the name Madison is almost TOO popular. We had about 4 Madisons or Maddies in a play we directed last year out of 21 kids! Anyway, I would recommend this as a good family movie, especially for little girls. There is actually some nudity (female rear end), and I could have done without a few of the kissing scenes, but overall, it is good family entertainment. I wonder if it would have gotten a PG13 rating if it had come out a few years later? I know there is a [Splash Too](#), but judging by the lack of returning actors, I haven't bothered to check it out. After a quick lookup on [imdb.com](#), I found that it got a whopping 3.0 rating with only 170 votes. Also interesting is that Madison the mermaid in [Splash Too](#) is

played by [Amy Yasbeck](#), who is nowadays best known for being [John Ritter's](#) widow. She was good in her bit part in [Pretty Woman](#), but still... I wonder if I should bother getting it from the library for the kids? Also in the original Splash is [Eugene Levy](#), who plays the bad guy trying to expose the mermaid – literally, by throwing water on her in public. This must be one of his first movies; I think he was a relatively unknown actor back then... Also, the late, great [John Candy](#) is hilarious as Tom Hanks' party animal brother, and those two have great chemistry in the movie... but on to the adult movies... ahem, I'm talking about the movies we watched without the kids...

Mr. Woodcock is a comedy starring [Billy Bob Thornton](#), who came no where near to reminding me of his character in [Sling Blade](#) – that's probably why he was nominated for an Oscar for that performance. I wasn't expecting much from this movie, but it was actually worse than I thought. It wasn't horrible, and I didn't feel like I wasted my time watching it, but it wasn't very funny, and there wasn't much to get from it. For one thing, I thought they would make the Mr. Woodcock character a little more nasty. As it turned out, he was really only nasty to little kids, which is still pretty bad, but I thought we'd catch him being nasty behind his girlfriend's back. Let me back up for a minute and give a plot synopsis – Mr. Woodcock is a horribly nasty gym teacher who terrorized kids so badly that a former student uses his experiences as fodder for an inspiring self-help book he wrote. This former student returns to his hometown in Nebraska to receive the "corn key to the city" only to find that his mom is happily dating Mr. Woodcock – his childhood nemesis! The successful author is played by [Seann William Scott](#), whose acting I wasn't thrilled with. His mother was played by [Susan Sarandon](#), and she was pretty good in the movie, given the character she had to play, who didn't have much depth. Like I said, I didn't feel like I wasted my time on this movie, but I don't know that I'd watch it again either. It definitely wasn't one of my favorite

comedies.

Dan in Real Life is a touching comedy (just falls short of a dra-medy, I would say, not quite sad enough, thank goodness) about a columnist widower named Dan (the ever-awesome [Steve Carell](#)) who is raising 3 daughters alone. The girls seem to be about 16, 14, and 9. For starters, let's just say that this movie had me dreading my life in about 10 years – the movie depicted teenage girls as frightening challenges for parents! Anyway, Dan takes his girls to visit their extended family for a few days, and when he first arrives, he really falls for the 'perfect woman'. He gets to his mom and dad's house, and wouldn't you know it, the 'perfect woman' turns out to be his brother's girlfriend. After a few days of torture... well, I'll let you watch the movie, I don't want to spoil anything for you. It's a really cute romantic comedy. If you have sons, you will be amused at Dan's daughters' antics. If you have daughters, be afraid, be very afraid! On another note, Steve Carell has beaten out Tom Hanks as my favorite actor – he is just amazing and so fun to watch, whether it's in [the Office](#), [Evan Almighty](#), or Dan in Real Life. His characters never remind me of each other, and it's not like they're mentally impaired like Billy Bob Thornton in Sling Blade or Tom Hanks in [Forrest Gump](#) – sometimes those types of characters are actually easier to play since they have a very specific demeanor about them. Steve Carell plays 'regular' guys, yet he gives them such depth and character that it really helps draw you into the movie and / or show. I never watched the tv show [Get Smart](#), but with Steve Carell playing Maxwell Smart in the big screen version of [Get Smart](#) due this summer, you can bet I plan on checking it out! Dan in Real Life is funny and heartwarming, and it makes me look forward to having huge family get-together weekends at our house someday with the kids and their spouses and kids... providing we survive the teenage years of course – that remains to be seen!