



UWG MEN'S BASKETBALL SECURES A SPOT IN THE GULF SOUTH CONFERENCE TOURNAMENT

JEFF IGBOKWE
Contributing Writer

The University of West Georgia's men's basketball team confirmed their place in the opening round of the Gulf South Conference (GSC) Tournament last Saturday after a comfortable 83-54 victory against the Alabama Huntsville Chargers.

The occasion was made more significant as it marked this year's "Basketball Reunion," the annual event at UWG which honors the 1974 championship-winning men's basketball team at West Georgia College, with many of those who were in that team in attendance on Saturday's game. While one of their standout players this season, Camron Donatlan, was absent from the team due to a hamstring injury, UWG managed an impressive defensive performance, subjecting their opposition to a season-low 54 points.

"I don't think there was anything that we didn't prepare for," said Head Coach Dave Moore after the game. "We have played these guys (Alabama Huntsville) a lot over the last six years, and have played them in the tournament a bunch. We knew they were going to mix in their defenses, change back zone man and extend their pressure a little bit. We were ready for all that, so we were prepared for this game, and they didn't show us anything that we weren't ready for."

Three of the standout players offensively for West Georgia were Cole Fisher, Marlon Smith and Zawdie Jackson. It was Fisher who started UWG off to a fast start after the shooting guard scored back-to-back three-pointers in the first four minutes of the game, with Jackson and Smith helping West Georgia go into halftime up 37-18.

In the second half, Alabama Huntsville was much better offensively as they

managed to shoot 48 percent from the field and 40 percent from three, however, Jackson never let the opposition back into the game as he went for 18 points in the half, ending the game with an impressive 30 points, 10 assists and five rebounds.

"Zawdie Jackson played like a first-team All-League player, he was 30 in 10, he controlled the pace, made big plays, and we needed him today. Zawdie obviously stood out with his numbers," said Moore. "Cole Fisher was also a huge lift for us. He was making shots, and he's got 14 in 9, nine big rebounds for Cole with the two-guard spot is something that we really needed. He had 27 defensive rebounds for the game, which was a huge key to winning, so I thought he was big.

"And then Marlon Smith came in for Cam Donatlan in the starting lineup, his shot-making was really good tonight, 4 for 8 from 3," continued Moore. "We absolutely needed that against these guys [Alabama Huntsville]. Those three players carried us offensively, but the defense and rebounding were what really stood out. That's how you win."

Proud of his team, Moore claimed that this victory would give his team confidence going forward, however, he expressed the importance of keeping focus for the entirety of the game, despite the result.

"We just have to keep playing 40 minutes, I thought we gave up some easy baskets at the end that we didn't want to concede. We want to keep defending and rebounding, and continue to take pride in our defensive numbers that we put up," Moore continued. "Other than that, I thought everybody contributed when they got in the game. They played hard, they played together and that is what we are all about."

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Photo: Jeff Igbokwe, *The West Georgian*

LIVING WEST

UWG THEATRE SHOWCASES "FUDDY MEERS"

BREANNA TILLIE
Contributing Writer

Works of fiction are commonly constructed within specific genres to appeal to the tastes or the mood of the individual. However, genres often blend together, not merely to enhance the plot, but to offer complexity and depth to the story. Dark comedies are known for using humor to tackle heavy and complex issues that may otherwise turn off those who hesitate towards such subject matter.

The University of West Georgia's theatre program is showcasing the dark comedy, "Fuddy Meers," from Feb. 20 to Feb. 24 at 7:30 p.m. and Feb. 25 at 2:30 p.m. Though the play features weighty topics such as amnesia, trauma and abuse, its comedic storytelling keeps these themes engaging and approachable.

"Don't let the plot fool you, it's actually really hilarious," said Austin Sharpe, an actor in the production. "But in it being so funny, it lets the audience take their guard down. Through all of the jokes, quips, funny physical blocking and action, it gets the audience vulnerable to the really deep and emotional parts of it."

"Fuddy Meers" touches on themes of reliability and people not being honest, making it easy for the audience to feel sympathetic toward the characters involved. Everyone has experienced the frustration of not knowing what to believe or who to believe.

"There's a lot of mistrust and misguided information. It's trying to figure out for yourself who you are and what other people mean to you,"

said Sharpe. "You'll connect with a lot of the characters."

"Fuddy Meers" also touches on themes of trauma and its effects, displaying how people are complicated and how the distressing events that someone experiences can shape them into the person that they are. However, the play is not simply putting the trauma on display for the sake of entertainment. Those in the audience who have experienced traumatic events will be inspired by the perseverance of the characters and the showing of their healing and getting better.

"There's a lot of trauma in it. A lot of the characters have gone through some immensely awful things," said Sharpe. "But the play shows them pressing on, moving forward and trying to recover from these things as well."

Trauma can often feel overwhelming and cause a feeling of utter
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helplessness and disarray. The play exhibits the reality of that feeling while also offering encouragement and hope.

“You see Claire struggle and you can’t help but feel sympathy for her. There’s one part in the show when Claire tells her mother that she doesn’t know who to trust, she doesn’t know what she’s being told and she doesn’t know what’s going on,” said Sharpe. “Trauma can create that feeling of not knowing what to do and feeling very overwhelmed. However, the play shows people being there for Claire

and helping to bring her out of that. It’ll be really encouraging to see that.”

“Fuddy Meers” will be performed on a three-quarter thrust stage, with the audience being on three sides of the stage.

“It’s a very intimate stage. We’re right there interacting with the audience and I always feel like it helps them connect with the piece a lot more,” said Sharpe. “At the same time, it can be a challenge because we have to make sure that we’re constantly present and focused, intent with everything you do because everyone can see you at all times. But

still, it’s a lot of fun and I can’t wait to have that nice interaction with the audience.”

Sharpe praises the hard work and dedication of the theater department and encourages students to be supportive and attend the production.

“There are so many amazing people,” said Sharpe. “Along with the actors, there are so many great student designers and people working behind the scenes doing such a great job.”

Potential viewers should take into consideration that the play does contain swearing, fighting and elements of abuse.

FRENCH FILM FESTIVAL GOES BEYOND THE BORDERS OF FRANCE

JANNETTE EMMERICK
Contributing Writer

UWG’s annual French Film Festival has four more movies lined up for the Spring Semester, and despite the label of “French,” this year highlights facets of French culture beyond “France.” Hosted by the ILC, the films chosen each hold unique perspectives and languages including but not limited to Catalan, Arabic and German.

“It’s a really exciting opportunity for us to be able to bring in films that maybe our students haven’t seen before,” said Claire Ezekiel, Lecturer of French. “Films where they can hear the language in action, see culture in action and be able to have connections and make cultural comparisons within the films and within the discussions we have around the films.”

The films will let viewers see the interweaving of diverse cultures. Moreover, the Festival works with faculty to make the experience interdisciplinary, with philosophy professors and history professors stepping in, but also fellow language professors.

“Josep” was [presented by] Dr. Jeff Zamostny, in Spanish, he did a great job with that bringing in different things for students to look for in the film before watching it and also highlighting the different languages,” said Ezekiel.

“Josep” was the first film of the festival, which followed an artist under the title name during the 1930s, who was a prisoner in a concentration camp in France, under Franco’s dictatorship. The second film was “Corsage,” which is an artistic film about Empress Elisabeth of Austria, the wife of Emperor Franz Joseph.

“This year in particular we’re excited to have films that have all different languages,” said Ezekiel. “So we have films, like Josep, that bring in Spanish [and] Catalan. We have French and Arabic films. We have the German film that had all kinds of languages with German and French. So we’re not just focusing on French language. It’s not just films made in France necessarily. We’re expanding on French culture.”

The next film in the line-up is set in New York City, meaning the film will heavily feature English, but was directed by Sébastien Lifshitz, a French filmmaker.

“[The film] is a really interesting film

about a community of transgender women in New York in this place they called Casa Susanna. So it’s got a little bit of French. But I think it’s mostly in English.”

“Casa Susanna” will be shown on Feb. 26 in Callaway Hall 145 at 6 p.m.

The next film “Haut et Fort” will be on March 5, at 5 p.m. With the English name “Casablanca Beats,” the film is set in Morocco’s hip-hop and rap scene and will feature Arabic, French, and English dialogue.

“So we have the two co-presidents of the French Club that are going to introduce the film,” said Ezekiel. “And around the film we’re gonna have games and food and try to make it a really nice community event that expands farther than language students.”

On March 13, “Chocolat” will be shown at 5 p.m., also in Callaway 145.

“Chocolat” is a somewhat pseudo-autobiography for the classic Film director of the film, Claire Denis. The story follows the main character’s childhood experience navigating colonial French Africa.

The festival concludes with “Saint Omer” on March 14th, which will be virtually available that day and include an introduction by French Professor Lisa Connell. This final film follows a trial case about a young woman accused of killing her daughter.

“I think with the goal of the festival, one of the things we are most cognizant of is that we do try to show a range of cultures,” said Ezekiel. “A lot of times when you’re taking a language class, you can have this understanding of culture as like a textbook culture, so as we do the film festival, we do try to think about representations of different cultures and how students can connect with that. Expanding language beyond hegemonic culture that you might associate with that language.

Regardless of whether students are interested in taking language courses, the

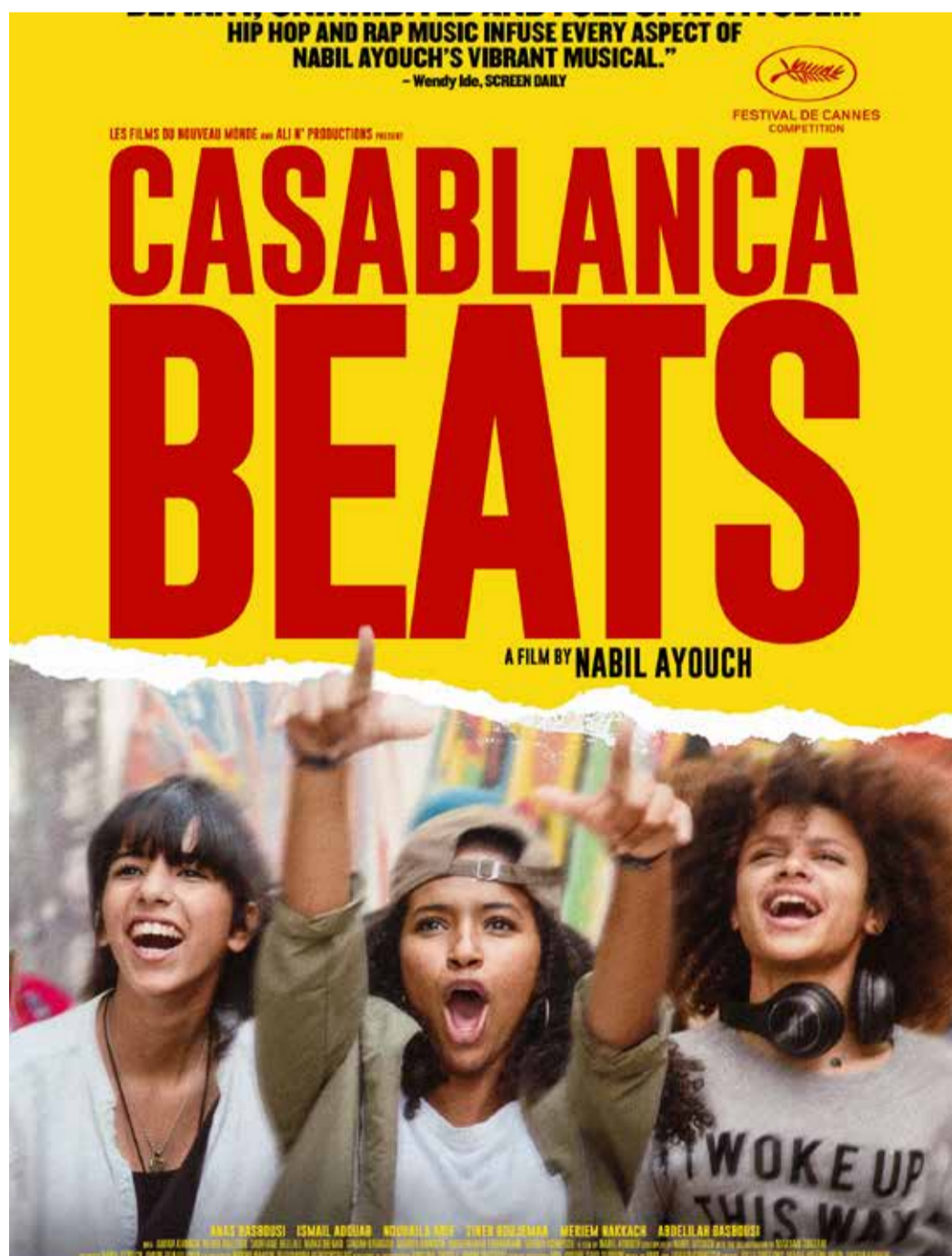


Photo courtesy of IMDB

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ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

WILL “PERCY JACKSON AND THE OLYMPIANS” EVER SUCCESSFULLY ADAPT TO SCREENS?

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Contributing Writer

Disney+ recently announced that their adaptation of “Percy Jackson and The Olympians” has been renewed for a second season. The first episode of the Disney+ original series was released on Dec. 20 and had many fans excitedly anticipating the rest of the episodes.

However, as the season continued, many fans, including myself, were extremely disappointed in the way the first season played out. I can only hope that the second season improves and tells the story of Percy Jackson the way it deserves.

“Percy Jackson and The Olympians” is a book series by Rick Riordan that debuted with “Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief” in 2005. Since then it’s become an expansive universe with 17 books and a dedicated fanbase.

The Disney+ original series was not the first film adaptation the series received. In 2010 the story of Percy Jackson first came to screens with “Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief” directed by Chris Columbus and starring Logan Lerman. Fans of the series were not afraid to hold back their opinions on the movie and the overwhelming negative responses caused the films to stop after releasing the second movie, “Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters,” in 2013.

Many fans were confident that the series would be the adaptation they had dreamed of since Riordan was much more involved in the TV show than the movies. However, after watching both adaptations I can’t help but wonder if this is a story that can be adapted at all.

The first season of the show follows 12-year-old Percy Jackson who discovers he is the son of Poseidon. After

learning of his heritage and training with other demigods at Camp Half-Blood he is sent on a quest to retrieve a lightning bolt stolen from Zeus. The story is filled with many suspenseful and action-packed moments that fell flat in the TV show. Moments that should’ve had viewers on the edge of their seats felt boring and underwhelming due to poor writing and a lack of special effects.

Many fans of the series have pointed out that the show looked low budget despite having a higher budget than the “Star Wars” and “Marvel” shows on the same streaming service. When compared to these shows there doesn’t seem to be much of a difference in terms of special effects, sets or props. This is disappointing considering the show had a budget of \$12-15 million per episode.

While the script followed the storyline

almost perfectly, it felt like the writers were checking off boxes when it came to writing. Some of the most memorable parts of the book were rushed into very short scenes or done in a way that seemed inauthentic. One of the reasons the movie adaptations were received so negatively was because of their inaccuracies in the original story. Even though the TV show was book accurate, it missed the tension the movies were successful in capturing. While the movies lacked accuracy the show lacked entertainment.

The best part of the TV show was the cast. Walker Scobell, Leah Jeffries and Aryan Simhadri are all incredibly talented actors who unfortunately fell victim to poor writing and directing. Scobell, Jeffries and Simhadri capture Percy, Annabeth and Grover in such accurate ways fans have joked it’s like Riordan shook his characters out of the book and into the real world.

With a passionate cast and a dedicated fan base supporting the show, I hope that the second season can make a comeback and prove that the beloved story can successfully be adapted for screens. Until then, I will continue to recommend the books over the screens.

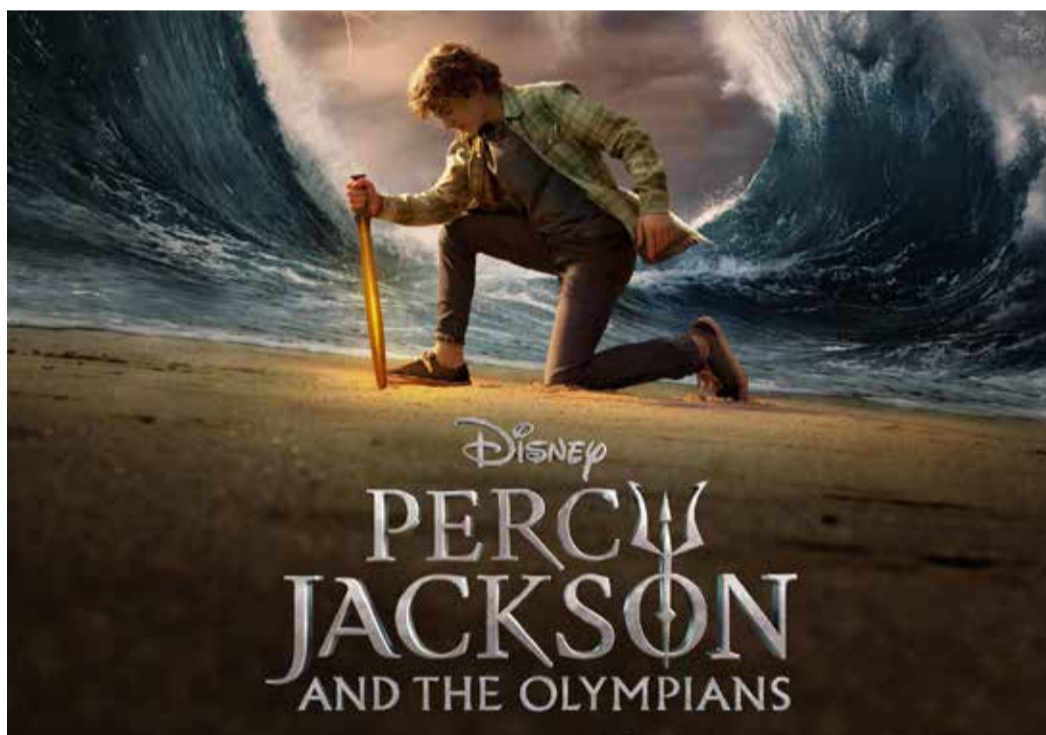


Photo courtesy of IMDB

JENNIFER LOPEZ’S “THIS IS ME... NOW” MARKS HER NINTH ALBUM

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Contributing Writer

On Friday, Feb 16, global Puerto Rican superstar Jennifer Lopez, famously known for her acting, dancing and music talents, dropped her “This Is Me... Now” album. Nuyorican Productions and BMG Rights Management produced this album, which is the first album released by Lopez under this new partnership; but Lopez’s ninth studio album release.

This album entices a lot of dimensions of Lopez’s love life with former and current lover Ben Affleck. Her album takes us on a journey of emotion as we listen to her reunite with her long-lost love. Despite all odds against them after three marriages and six engagements; the album reveals her happily ever after with Affleck.

In 2002 Jennifer Lopez met Ben Affleck on the set of the movie “Gigli” and from there the tabloids picked up on their relationship. In the fall of September 2003 Lopez and Affleck planned to get married but postponed and went their separate ways. Lopez went on to get

married and have children as did Affleck. However, years later they ended up divorcing their spouses and found each other once again. It’s not every day in the world of Hollywood that megastars such as Lopez and Affleck rekindle their relationship after twenty years of breakups, new lovers and divorce. However, in Lopez’s new album, we learn that she defeated all odds and finally made her happy ever after.

The release of her past albums was none short of iconic for Lopez. In 2002 Lopez released her third studio album, titled “This Is Me... Then,” where her album was influenced by her relationship with Affleck at the time. Songs on the 2002 album include “Dear Ben,” “Baby I Love You” and “You Belong To Me.” Lopez fans were ecstatic when she dropped the 2024 album “This is Me... Now” after marrying Affleck in July of 2022, this album signified her happy ending with her reunited love.

Lopez sings straight from the heart with each of her songs accompanied by a sweet chorus to the unchanging



Photo courtesy of Page Six

melody of the music. It is quite clear whether you are just listening to her songs for the first time or a longtime fan that her rekindled romance is the strength of a movie.

Although many of her fans were ecstatic about her album, some were sad. In an interview with ET, she hints at retirement after the release of “This Is Me... Now.”

According to ET, Lopez said “The truth is I don’t even know if I’ll ever make another album after this. It’s such the quintessential kind of Jennifer Lopez J.Lo project and I feel very fulfilled, so they will be collector’s items at a certain point.”

Regardless if this is Lopez’s last album or not her musical talent will never retire. You can listen to her album about her rekindled romance with her former lover on all streaming platforms.