

Look who needs a muzzle

"Look Who's Talking Now" is a fairly misleading title for those who paid attention during English class. The talkers are dogs, so the title should be "Look What's Talking Now."



Movie Review

By Roger Ebert

Anyone who paid attention during English will also find innumerable other distressing elements in the film, including what teachers used to call "lack of originality and aptness of thought."

The movie revisits John Travolta and Kirstie Alley, who in 1989 made a charming movie named "Look Who's Talking," and in 1990 a less charming movie named "Look Who's Talking Too."

The first movie was about how Alley, who, pregnant by her no-good boyfriend, met a taxi driver played by Travolta. The baby, with voice by Bruce Willis, took a liking to Travolta, and so — after a while — did Alley.

In the second film, they had a baby daughter together, who spoke in the voice of Roseanne Arnold. Now their dogs speak with the voices of Danny DeVito and Diane Keaton. The children, in the meantime, have grown up enough to speak in their own voices, although not with the wit and insight they possessed as infants.

All of which leads us to an overwhelming question: Why is it necessary for the dogs to speak? They engage in your standard "Lady and the Tramp" repartee, but along about the second reel I realized that there was no earthly reason at all for the dogs to talk except that they were in a sequel made by filmmakers who had lost the nerve to produce another talking baby ("Look Who's Talking Three").

The first film had maybe a shred of realism to flavor its romantic comedy. This one looks like it was chucked up by an automatic screenwriting machine.

Travolta gets a corporate pilot's license, and is hired by sexy bombshell Lysette Anthony, a corporate exec who wants to seduce him. She contrives for him to be away from his family on Christmas Eve, after which Alley packs the kids and the dogs into the taxi and heads off for the North Woods, where Travolta is being held captive in a snowbound cabin by the sex-starved exec.

After the taxi skids off the road and savage wolves attack the stranded family and the brave dogs fight them off and the kids unwrap their Christmas presents in the middle of a blizzard ...

So help me God, I am not making this up. Suggestions, please, for the fourth movie in the series. How about "Look Who's Talking Back," in which the audience gets its turn.

"Look Who's Talking Now" is rated PG-13. Roger's rating: 1 star.

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Sydney Brink/staff

Columbians Bush Bierschwal and his wife, Beryl, demonstrate their foxtrot routine at the Countryside Palace in Marshall Junction for ballroom dancing instructor Sharon Shea.

Fancy footwork

Ballroom dancer gets into the swing

By Christine Lyall

Staff Writer

MARSHALL JUNCTION — Sharon Shea lights a cigarette with a slight theatrical air, crosses her legs and perches on the edge of her sofa with a straight, dancer's back.

She looks across the room with her dark, flashing eyes at a petite man in a peach-colored shirt and pants and white sweater and shoes. He's her father, Vaughn Hills, and she admires him deeply.

She says Hills and her deceased mother, Orlene, greatly influenced the rhythmic path she chose to pursue in life.

Shea, the ballroom dance instructor at the Countryside Palace in Marshall Junction, literally followed in her parents' footsteps — footsteps that brushed forward and backward, glided side-to-side and dipped into the big band sound of the 1940s and '50s.

"And they were good footsteps to follow," Shea punned.

As a member of the Saturday Nighters Dance Club in Columbia and a drummer in various big band ensembles, Hills' natural backdrop was ballroom dancing. And Shea's mother was a trained dancer, as well.

Hills passed his love for ballroom dancing on to his daughter, who has brought it to Countryside, an establishment located just southwest of Interstate 70 off Highway 65. About two months ago, Shea and her business partners, Bob and Joella Robison — ballroom dancing students of hers for 2½ years — purchased the club.

The small-framed Shea, who is "over 50 years old" and exudes a commanding presence wherever she is, has dancing credentials spanning a two-page resume.

Trained in ballet, tap and jazz, she's taught and directed dance programs at studios — including several of her own — in Florida and her native Columbia. She is also a national ballroom

'We all possess a natural rhythm ... we all walk with a certain cadence. As a teacher, you just have to know how to bring it out of your students.'

— Sharon Shea, Ballroom dance teacher

champion and a judge for the National Dance Council of America.

Shea started dancing when she was about 5 years old, she said, and went on to train with dance legends Martha Graham and Bob Fosse, among others. She also performed as a line dancer in the original Broadway production of "Annie Get Your Gun," starring Ethel Merman.

Although Shea now focuses her energy on ballroom dancing, she didn't always have a passion for the dance style.

"We kind of scoffed at ballroom dancing," she said of her elitist ballet and modern dance circles. "I'd had an opinion that it was more like a circus entertainment."

Then she happened to catch a ballroom dancing competition in Chicago years ago, where the then-champions performed the Viennese Waltz.

"I just fell in love with it," Shea said. "They truly looked like they were floating a foot above the floor. He in his black tuxedo, and she in her beautiful white gown just flowing about her ... and the chandeliers and the polished floors. ... It just reminded me of the Victorian Age, when everyone would ballroom dance."

"It was just beautiful. I immediately wanted to know everything about it," she said.

In addition to its social and recreational benefits, ballroom dancing is therapeutic in that it integrates the soothing qualities of music with repetitious movement, Shea said.

"To me, ballroom is the ultimate exercise because it exercises every muscle in your body, including your brain," she said.

Shea, who once worked as a dance therapist at the Missouri State Hospital in Fulton, said ballroom dancing has been known to slow the advance of Alzheimer's disease and chronic memory loss. It's also beneficial for hip surgery patients or victims of osteoporosis.

"I'm the best example. I've had more than 8 major back surgeries from years of gaiting horses when I was young," Shea said. "Out of the surgeries, I should be in a wheelchair not walking. I owe my life to dance, and I think it is probably the most positive high in the world."

Columbians Bush and Beryl Bierschwal can attest to that.

The retired couple have followed Shea around the state as far as Springfield to continue their private lessons with the woman who will playfully, but forcefully, slap at errant legs.

"She's just real easy to work with. She's fun, and she's very good and very professional," Bierschwal said. "She's great. We just enjoy her."

Shea said anyone who can walk can ballroom dance. She said she structures her students' natural movements into four elements of side and rocking steps, backward and forward steps and a combination of all three.

As for rhythm, there's no such thing as two left feet, Shea said.

"We all possess a natural rhythm ... we all walk with a certain cadence," she said. "As a teacher, you just have to know how to bring it out of your students."

Shea currently conducts private lessons for \$28 an hour — which includes a videotape of the lesson — and is hoping to organize a group session for Tuesday evenings.

The Countryside Palace hosts big band dances — with live music — every Friday from 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. and tea dances at 4 p.m. on Sundays.

People

The Associated Press

LONDON — **Elton John** was upset and angry over a false newspaper report that he lived on a bizarre diet, spitting out chewed food rather than swallowing it, his manager told a jury.

"The article disturbed him deeply," John Reid testified during a trial on the rocker's libel complaint against the *Sunday Mirror*.

The tabloid admitted the story wasn't true but said it didn't know that last December when it printed it under the headline: "Elton's diet of death."

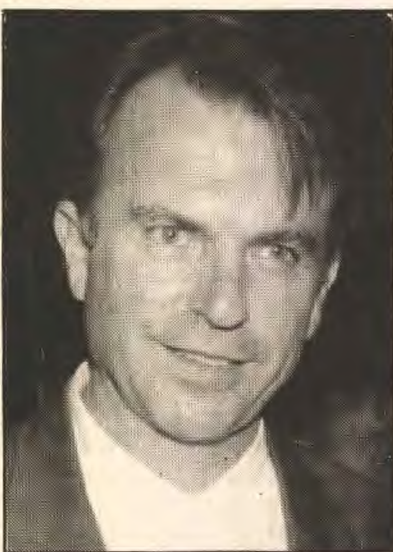
John said the paper acted recklessly by failing to check its facts. He told the High Court jury on Monday that he spent 16 years fighting the eating disorder bulimia and addiction to drugs and alcohol.

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — **Sam Neill**, the anthropologist who learns to like children in "Jurassic Park," was honored by his native country as entertainer of the year.

Neill lives in Los Angeles and wasn't on hand to receive the award Tuesday at a ceremony.

"I feel honored to be named this year's recipient," he said in a statement.

Neill's latest role is that of jilted husband in "The Piano," about New



Neil

Zealand settlers last century. It won best picture at the Cannes Film Festival this year.

NEW YORK — **Jackie Mason** is fighting for the right to be politically incorrect.

Comedy Central filed a federal lawsuit on Tuesday to block Mason from using the phrase on Broadway since it's also the title of a new series on the cable channel.

"People could get confused," said Steven Paul Mark, the channel's lawyer.

Radio personality reveals his 'Private Parts'

NEW YORK (AP) — For years, Howard Stern's life has been an open book. Now, it's available in hardcover.

The self-proclaimed "King of All Media" — a top-rated radio host, a cable-TV interviewer on the E! channel, a burgeoning movie star — has moved into the publishing world.

"Private Parts," a print companion to his raunch-and-roll radio show, jumped to No. 1 on best-seller lists in its first week of release.

The book is partly autobiographical, detailing everything from his anatomy (small) to his sex life (mostly solo) to his marriage (monogamous). As on his syndicated radio program — which daily draws 4 million listeners — it's every man, woman and child for themselves; Stern's book takes no prisoners.

"You talk about lesbianism. You talk about my sex life," Stern said in summing up its contents. "You're talking about my (messed) up childhood. You're talking about my mother. You're sort of getting everything."

You're certainly getting Stern's caustic, cutting takes on other celebrities.

Don't invite Stern to the same party as Roseanne Arnold. Or her husband, Tom. Or late-night hosts Arsenio Hall and Chevy Chase. Or former late-night host Johnny Carson. Or radio host Rush Limbaugh. Or movie-maker Spike Lee. Or model Cindy



AP Laserphoto

Radio jock Howard Stern's book jumped to No. 1 on the bestseller list in its first week of release in mid-October.

Crawford. Or anyone of French ancestry.

You get the idea.

"I am someone who is willing to get on the air and say whatever's on my mind," said Stern, sitting in his Manhattan office. "If I start censoring myself, and if I start saying, 'Well, I'd better not say that 'cause I have an image' — that's why I can't stand

Kathie Lee Gifford.

"She's censoring herself all ... day," Stern continued, warming to his subject. "That's the worst aspect of show business. Kathie Lee, Regis — all these ... empty-headed stars and their ass-kissing."

Ass-kicking is more like it in Stern's case. On the radio, Stern is outrageous,