

YOUR S.T.U.F.F.

STYLE • TRIUMPHS • UPSETS • FRIENDS • FUTURE

Quote of the week

"When the Backstreet Boys appeared on the TV, they were different, something new. Then I heard about Oasis, Robbie Williams, and I wanted to take drugs. It's as simple as that. It goes — you're a boy band and then you're a rock star and then you're messed up. After that, you end up dying in your hotel room — this is the life I want to live."

— Nadeem, lead singer of fledgling Iraqi boy band **Unknown to No One**, joking about the route to Western stardom

Who knew?

What would you do?

Say you ditched school to go to a party. Not unheard of, right? And your principal found out. OK. But how would you react if, when you returned to school, your principal demanded you undergo pregnancy, STD and HIV tests? That happened to about 10 13- and 14-year-old New York middle school students, who got angry and earlier this month sued with help from the New York Civil Liberties Union. Now the Washington Heights principal faces a lot more than detention.

— CARA NISSMAN



STAFF PHOTOS BY MATTHEW WEST

STAGE MAGIC: Andrew Mackin, 16, seen here playing a young Walt Disney in 'Gloryland,' will appear in the movie 'Mystic River' in October.

Almost famous

By CARA NISSMAN

Weymouth teen hits big screen in 'Mystic River'

Andrew Mackin wants to be a movie star — as long as it doesn't involve any, er, exposure.

The jittery Weymouth 16-year-old scrunches his face when asked about his talent and peppers his responses with "I don't know, it's weird" when he's asked about the celebrity knocking on his dressing-room door.

"It's exciting," he said. "I just get nervous."

But Mackin's face soon will become synonymous with mystery and murder when the movie "Mystic River" opens Oct. 3 in Boston. The movie, directed by Clint Eastwood, is based on local author Dennis Lehane's 2001 book, which delves into the interwoven history of three families as they cope with a brutal South Boston murder. Mackin plays the pivotal teenage character, John O'Shea — and that's all we're going to tell you!

Mackin said his co-stars, including Kevin Bacon and Laurence Fishburne, made him feel at ease when he arrived on the Canton set last October, the first time he'd

ever acted in a movie.

"They were intimidating," he said. "But they were really nice and treated me like I was one of them, like a star or something. It was really weird."

Mackin acquired his acting experience at the Company Theatre in Norwell. During the past nine years, he has played diverse characters, including the lead in "Little Shop of Horrors" and a Nazi youth in "Cabaret." And, despite his recent brush with Hollywood, he has returned eagerly to perform in the musical "Ragtime," which runs Friday-Aug. 24.

"I've just been doing it so long and they're kind of like my second family," he said. "I like big musicals. I have fun doing it."

The teen used to write, direct and act out shows for his neighbors and make movies with his family's video camera. But now he, like many fa-

mous actors, including Brad Pitt, feels shy when it comes to performing in front of his peers. He doesn't participate in school plays.

"He's more comfortable acting in front of 400 strangers than he is in front of his school peers," said his dad, Ken.

"I'm my harshest critic," Mackin said. "I never think what I do is good."

Eastwood apparently did, because he told Mackin after a particularly intense scene, "God damn it, you're good." Remembering that day, Mackin said, "I felt like I shouldn't have been there."

Mackin aspires to one day excel in all aspects of filmmaking, including film direction.

"When I see things, I see them through a camera, you know?" he said.

Zoe Bradford, co-artistic director of the Company Theatre, said Mackin is "gifted" and always has had "that spark."

"I tell most students that they shouldn't do theater or film unless they live and breathe it and dream about it," she said. "It's so competitive. They should choose a backup vocation. But I'm not too nervous about Andrew. He always listens and stays focused."

Mackin said he'd like to pursue more dramatic roles in film and leading roles in stage musicals such as



REHEARSAL: Mackin goes over his lines for the Company Theatre's production of 'Ragtime' with co-artistic director Zoe Bradford.

"Rent" or The Who's "Tommy." He said he thrives on the energy of live musical theater.

"It's so different, the adrenaline you feel on stage," he said. "It's easier to get than when you're on-camera. You hear the audience's cheering and applause."

Until then, though, Mackin plans to reckon with his nerves when "Mystic River" opens.

"I don't really want to see it," he said, squirming in his seat in the back row of the Company Theatre. "It's just, I don't know, it's going to be weird. But I'll probably see it just because I'm curious."

What's up? Tell Cara Nissman at cnissman@bostonherald.com.

Under Spain's magic spell

By REBECCA SCHILDKRET
TEEN CORRESPONDENT

After studying Spanish for years and absorbing everything I could about the culture, movies, clothing, cities, food and artists, I finally made my dream come true by visiting Spain. As my host family showed me around, I saw parallels to my life as a Boston teen — and some fabulous differences.

I stayed in a small, charming city on the north coast along the Atlantic called Santander. It is young and hip,

and all of the teens I hung out with were very welcoming. I fell in love with their culture. There, style is everything. Girls love shopping as much as American girls do, but their more formal, trendy styles appealed to me more than American clothing. Fast food is not popular. Cafes are preferred. The food is incredible and the cafe atmosphere allows for a more relaxed social scene. Hanging out with friends is what kids love to do most there, but they also make time each day to spend with family.

Everyone I met showed a love for Spain that was contagious. I am now officially a Europhile, and can't wait to go back to the continent!

Rebecca Schildkret, 18, lives in Jamaica Plain. Teens ages 13-18 can submit stories about their travels

The piece above is one of many teen stories I assigned and edited about everything from dating violence to pop culture.

Build characters

Are you a fan of fiction? Get creative by entering the second annual Your S.T.U.F.F. Short Story Contest.

If you're a local kid age 13-18, write a teen-targeted story (PG-13, OK?) of no more than 500 words, with a clear, descriptive beginning, middle and end. While writing, ask yourself, "Would I read this during the summer?"

Entries can be e-mailed to cnissman@bostonherald.com, faxed to 617-619-6544 or mailed to P.O. Box 2096, Boston MA 02106-2096 by noon Aug. 5. An entry without your full name, age, address, phone number, birth date, school and grade will get tossed.

The winner will be published Aug. 18, and receive movie passes. Good luck! — CARA NISSMAN