

The Style Invitational

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 751: Strike Gold



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

"I Wove Lucy": Documentary about Appalachian women who sew dolls based on "Peanuts" characters.

"Charlie's Rangels": An A&E "Biography" installment on the New York congressman and his adorable family.

Even people who are willing to watch "Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader" are beginning to figure out that the networks are starting to run out of "unscripted fare" as the writers' strike drags on (at least it was dragging at press time). Fairly New and Remarkably Successful Loser Christopher Lamora of Arlington suggests that we help them out. This week: Slightly change the name of an existing or former TV show to create a program that can scab the writers' strike — a reality show, a game show, a news show, a documentary, anything but a fictional series with a plot, as in Christopher's examples above.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a perfectly decorous khaki-colored baseball cap, donated by Dave Prevar. Decorous, that is, until you read the logo: It says "Puke & Snot," referring to the comedy duo that pops up at various Renaissance festivals.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable Mentions (or whatever they're called that week) get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Feb. 11. Put "Week 751" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published March 1. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Russell Beland, who this week receives his — gasp — 1,200th blot of ink; this week's Honorable Mentions names are by Kevin Dopart and Ned Andrews, respectively.

REPORT FROM WEEK 747 in which we sought some amusing ways to improve the experience of airline travel. My, were you people bitter — Heaven forbid that you are a fat person or a parent if you ever ride with these entrants. Numerous Losers suggested having the planes just travel on the ground; that passengers should get to vote people off the plane; potluck meals; and, for some reason, in-flight karaoke. Some people sent in ideas that were entirely too sensible, like one from Tom Witte of Montgomery Village that people without luggage should get to sit down first, or Steve Buttry's suggestion to change smoking lounges to cellphone lounges.

4 Have the first-class passengers board last, to spare the rest of us their smirks as we file in. (Steve Langer, Chevy Chase; Rick Haynes, Potomac)

3 Parents with small children must wait to board the plane until after it has taken off. (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

2 the winner of the VHS tape of "Fisher Price Little People Discovering Animals," one of the few items arguably more irritating than sitting for an hour on the tarmac: It works for FedEx: Instead of this complicated network of city-to-city flights, just send everyone to a holding pen in Memphis, and then when there are enough passengers for a flight to, say, Yazoo City, just load up and send them out! While waiting, passengers in the pen could fold napkins or something. (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER Install removable tray tables. Then when the person in front of you reclines his seat to the supine position, you can place your tray, drinks and all, right on his face. (Beverley Sharp, Washington)

STARTING OUR DESCENT, OR THE KILOMETER-HIGH CLUB

Install a timer that automatically pops open the bathroom door after three minutes of use. (Larry Yungk, Arlington)

Just take out that whole al-Qaeda cell of grannies with nail files and hand lotion and be done with it. (Pam Sweeney, Germantown)

Serve the meals already in barf bags. (John Kupiec, Fairfax)

Seat the smelly fat guys next to the screaming children: more space for the former, muffling the latter, and saving me from both. (Jacob Aldridge, Gaythorne, Australia, a First Offender)

When the person in front of you reclines too far into your space, his entire seat snaps shut like a bear trap for the remainder of the flight. (Anne Paris, Arlington)

Hire a second person to handle luggage at Dulles. (Steve Buttry, Herndon)

Cut down on restroom use by giving passengers a third of a can of soft drink instead of half a can. And the airlines might save another \$10 a flight! (Russell Beland, Springfield)

In the spirit of paying people to give up their seats on overbooked flights, pay me for not buying a ticket in the first place. (Ellen Raphaeli, Falls Church)

A free drink for everyone surrounding a crying baby; two free drinks for the baby. (J. Larry Schott, Gainesville, Fla.)

Passengers are seated in sections based on personal appearance; you can use frequent-flyer miles to upgrade from "Mildly Grotesque" to "Not Bad" or "Sorta Hot." (Jeff Brechlin)

Land the planes backward to reduce that lurching feeling in the seat. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

Oxygen masks are so sterile and uninteresting — we should get replicas of attractive celebrities that inflate and drop from the ceilings for us to press our lips against. If oxygen still came out, even better. (Dan Ramish, Vienna)

Allow infants and small children to relax during the flight inside specially padded and soundproofed overhead compartments in the rear of the plane. Water and food pellets can be provided as in guinea pig cages. (Roberta Wilkes, Seattle, a First Offender)

Install onboard vending machines, so the flight attendants can concentrate on flying the plane. (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

Attach a toilet to the front of the beverage cart that's blocking the aisle. (Ben Aronin, Washington; Russ Taylor, Vienna)

Award my mileage points on the basis of where my luggage travels. (Ellen Raphaeli)

Everyone submits a photo when booking. At check-in, for \$50 you can switch from the seat next to the fat guy or the 2-year-old to the seat next to the cute girl. For \$100, she can get away from you and sit next to the fat guy. (Michael Fransella, Arlington)

When passengers are trapped in a plane on the tarmac for more than five hours, they get to sell the plane and split the proceeds. (Cy Gardner, Arlington)

Create a no-frills airline called My Corporate Jet, so it sounds better when people ask how I got to the meeting. (Russ Taylor)

Tape baseball cards to the wheels so the plane makes a cool race car noise as it takes off. (Steve Langer)

During a long flight, we should be allowed to kick off our shoes and light up. — Richard Reid, U.S. Ad-Max Facility, Florence, Colo. (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

Emergency slide Fridays! (Randy Lee, Burke)

Next Week: Dead Letters, or The Dirge Report

Keep Shooting! Photo Contest No. 4

We're still accepting entries for our photo contest to illustrate, humorously, any of five captions listed below. Deadline is Feb. 25; see the contest rules at www.washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational (click on "Week 750").

- I should have just stayed in bed today.
- Washington, D.C.: Sister City of Xplf, Planet Zornog
- Seventy-eight percent of Americans consider their pet "an equal member of the family."
- Chris has never been quite like the other kids.
- This is why it is important to read the directions on the package.

Big-Screen 'Hannah Montana': Just a Rerun

MOVIES, From C1

cent Price to duet with Miley Cyrus. No luck.) The technology gives you the joy, if you are 12 and not a critic, of being totally assaulted with an overcompensating sound system and the sensation of being amid a sea of prepubescent hands and their squealing owners. One stagehand rightly likens it to standing near a jet at takeoff. You get Cyrus's long blond mane whisking your face, and her tongue sticking out many times, as if to emphasize that she just took you for \$15. Little brat. And her drummer surr likes to twirl his sticks. They nearly poke you in the eye at times. After 10 minutes, you start wishing that would happen. No serious viewer was expecting the filmmaking talent here — director Bruce Hendricks and choreographer Kenny Ortega — to make "The Sorrow and the Pity." But the sorrow and the pity is that they have taken this concert film too literally. It is strictly a pastiche of the recent 69-city tour featuring Cyrus. Complaints arose that concert tickets were too pricey (though movie tickets are \$15, even for kids, and even for the matinee we attended) and hard to get, and so Disney made this limited-run movie to reach fans robbed of Cyrus's promising vocal ability, completely affected stage persona and defiantly inarticulate speaking style. "Hey, you guys," she greets the stadium-size

crowds who wave light sticks. Sometimes, she goes super-duper plural: "Hey, you guyses." Great, or even decent, or even mock concert films — from Martin Scorsese's "The Last Waltz" to Rob Reiner's "This Is Spinal Tap" — capture the fun of the music as well as insight into the people and artistic creativity behind it. Hendricks misses almost entirely. He could have made more of the balding, paunchy yet spry Ortega teaching Cyrus a James Brown dance move with the microphone stand. And what about those pumped-up dads, seen in the movie, who'll do anything to get Cyrus tickets, including racing in high heels? The film makes little of such moments, preferring the bland sheen of the concert and its songs about being true to yourself, life being what you make it, having fun at a party, etc. Among the backup band, the level of musicianship is pretty high, if over-practiced. The "special guest" Jonas Brothers boy band also shows up, and one of its members proves precociously smarmy when he introduces a song for the young audience by saying, "This is for all the ladies in the house." Later, he says, "Where my ladies at?" The best of both worlds? The appeal is not universal.

Hannah Montana and Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds Concert 3-D (74 minutes, at area theaters) is rated G and contains nothing objectionable.



What makes tween icon Miley Cyrus tick? Don't look for any such insights in the "Best of Both Worlds" film.

DISNEY

Music

Nguyen's 'Brave' New Whirl

"At first I thought it would be funny if we only played songs off the first record," said Thao Nguyen at Iota on Thursday night. But since this was a CD-release party for her second album, she concluded it might not have been all that humorous. If Nguyen and her band, the Get Down Stay Down, had neglected songs from the sparkling "We Brave Bee Stings and All," the near-capacity crowd would have been denied her very best stuff. Thankfully, Thao behaved herself.

Centered on Nguyen's propulsive, shimmy-shake folk riffs, "Beat (Health, Life and Fire)," "Swimming Pools," "Geography," "Feet Asleep," "Fear and Convenience" and "Bag of Hammers" were the highlights of a deliriously good set. If the Falls Church native's singular guitar style was the chassis, her voice provided the real combustion: imbued with the same scratchy sensuality as Beth Orton's, Nguyen's singing contains a verve that is wholly her own. And with her



Thao Nguyen delivered the goods: Songs from her new CD.

personality — equal parts beguiling songstress and imp — she comes across as entirely uncalculated.

For its part, the GDSD (guitar, bass and drums) played with admirable restraint, adding only necessary coloring. Willis Thompson's drumming was particularly apt, as was the trio's slow-burn, indie rock-and-soul arrangement for Smokey Robinson's "You Really Got a Hold on Me." That Nguyen could step intimately inside such a formidable chestnut was almost as impressive as her tapestry of original songs. All of which means she's sure to be shimmying on much bigger stages before too long. — Patrick Foster

8 ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATIONS
INCL. BEST PICTURE

WINNER BEST PICTURE

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WINNER DIRECTORS GUILD OF AMERICA AWARD BEST DIRECTOR JOEL COEN & ETHAN COEN

WINNER SCREEN ACTORS GUILD AWARDS BEST ENSEMBLE CAST BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR - JAVIER BARDEN

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8 ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATIONS
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BEST DIRECTOR BEST ACTOR
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PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON DANIEL DAY-LEWIS

WINNER SCREEN ACTORS GUILD AWARDS BEST ACTOR DANIEL DAY-LEWIS

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WINNER GOLDEN GLOBE BEST ACTOR DANIEL DAY-LEWIS

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