

SPIDEY

From Page 1

\$200 million mark domestically, not a bad haul, especially considering it debuted just a little more than two weeks before "The Dark Knight Rises."

Garfield's Peter Parker is a harder-edged, more angsty teenager than was Maguire's, which brings a little more depth to the character but also makes him a little less likeable.

One of the big differences between this incarnation and the previous films is that we see and learn something about Parker's parents, who left him with Uncle Ben and Aunt May so they could skip town, something that appears will be central to the plot in this film's sequel.

Parker's love interest in this movie is Gwen Stacy (Emma Stone), who is the daughter of the New York City chief of police (Denis Leary). This becomes an issue for Parker, whom New York's finest considers a vigilante.

Spider-Man battles Dr. Curt Connors (Rhys Ifans), a brilliant scientist who works in bioengineering at Oscorp and, while experimenting on altering human DNA, turns into The Lizard, which Spidey tears up NYC in battle against.

I can't honestly say I was expecting much with "Spider-Man" — I went solely because my son wanted to go to the movies and it was either that or "Ice Age 4," which I refuse to see.

However, this movie was actually considerably better and (slightly) more complex than I was anticipating. I thought it was going to be essentially a mash-up of the best of the Sam Raimi films, but Peter's back-story and the little post-movie snippet of what's to come, something that's become a staple of Marvel Comics' movies, is good enough to make me want to see what's going to happen next.

However, the Spider-Man franchise has several inherent weaknesses in it, but for movie fans, the most worrisome might be that it doesn't have a lot of villains the non-comic book collecting public would recognize — Batman, by contrast, has several villains that most people could name — and therefore, there's a pretty good chance we're going to see a good deal of repetition from the previous Spidey films.

If you go:

"The Amazing Spider-Man"
Starring Andrew Garfield, Emma Stone, Sally Field and Martin Sheen
Rated PG-13
Running time: 2 hours, 18 minutes
Playing at the Reel Deal Theater and Dreamcatcher Cinema

OPERA

From Page 1

"Maometto," as well.

He navigates the stage easily with an appropriate air of command, while singing very difficult passages without making a single mistake.

His voice is resonant and full, and his diction is so clear that the audience will hear every single word he's singing. Even if the audience doesn't know Italian, this detail shows the level of craftsmanship going into this production.

Patricia Bardon does a wonderful job with the role of Calbo, a Venetian general and admirer of Anna. Trouser roles can be tricky and Bardon navigates this one with style, possessing a pleasant, dark mezzo voice that is an especially good blend with Crocetto's brilliant soprano.

Maometto the second, a Turkish sultan out to conquer the Venetians, is played magnificently by Luca Pisaroni.

With a lush voice and an intense stage presence, Pisaroni is



Luca Pisaroni and chorus in Gioachino Rossini's "Maometto II." KEN HOWARD/Courtesy

a perfect match for Crocetto. The chemistry between the two is outstanding and their voices are yet another sublime fit. In fact, there aren't any voices in this cast that don't blend well with the others.

Although this is a gorgeous

piece, with lovely music and a cast that appears to be superhuman, there is one possible drawback: The opera is almost three-and-a-half hours long, with just one intermission.

Taking that into consideration, it is three-and-a-half hours of

some of the finest singing an audience may ever get the opportunity to hear.

It might not be a good choice for children or people who may need to leave the theater frequently, otherwise, it is definitely not to be missed.

Nachos not so grande at Coffee House

REVIEW BY MONITOR STAFF

When a restaurant does something right, patrons take notice. The same can be said when a restaurant does something wrong.

One has to ask what happens when an eatery that usually does something right takes a wrong turn and churns out not just a bad dish, but a horrible dish. Perhaps it was a bad day. Perhaps it was a different cook. No matter the reason, it's difficult to not be disappointed when you feel as though you just threw money away on an awful meal. Such was the case on a recent afternoon.

The Coffee House Café Home of the Coffee Booth usually makes some pretty tasty nachos. A bed of crisp blue and yellow corn tortilla chips lays beneath a mound of either ground

beef or chicken and is then topped with cheddar cheese, lettuce, tomatoes and fresh jalapeños (none of the pickled stuff here). Small cups of guacamole, sour cream and salsa accompany the nachos for dipping or spreading. Orders served in the restaurant are huge and can easily be shared. Take-out orders are also plentiful and fill a large clamshell take-out box. The take-out orders are layered just like the in-house orders, they're just smaller.

However, on a recent trip, it seems the process for serving take-out nachos changed. The change was immediately evident as the bag was opened. There were no small containers with guacamole or sour cream, only a container of salsa. The box in which the nachos were held was overflowing with iceberg lettuce and gua-

camole and sour cream oozed from the sides.

Once the container was open, it was quite the search to find any nachos beneath all the lettuce and tomatoes. Removal of the vegetables was attempted in an effort to get to the chips, but it was virtually impossible to get rid of the lettuce without getting rid of the ground beef, as well. It appeared that the lettuce and beef had been mixed together and put on top of the chips.

Alas, a few chips were hidden under the greasy, cold mass of lettuce. But one was hard-pressed to find a chip with an adequate amount of cheese or beef. The cheese that was sparingly provided was hard and held the chips together like glue. It ap-

peared that they had been heated a little too much and were stuck together; creating a concoction that might also be used to repair potholes.

Black beans rounded out the heaping hodgepodge. Of course, they were placed in between the chips and lettuce/beef mixture and appeared to not have been drained properly, so they were mushy. After digging to the bottom of the container, hoping to find something salvageable, it was discovered that there was nothing but cold grease beneath the chips, ruining any appetite that was left after digging through the mound.

The experience came as a surprise because that's one dish that the restaur-

ant usually consistently does right — and is one of two places in town that offers a repast for nacho lovers.

At a price of \$10.19 after tax, it was disconcerting not being able to enjoy it. A return visit might be in order, in hopes that the folks at the Coffee House can revert to the old way of serving nachos — where all the ingredients are separated until you're ready to put them together, but it will be a while before that happens.

On a more positive note, the restaurant does serve outstanding breakfast burritos and apricot scones and has the best chai in town. They also roast and grind their own coffee beans and offer a variety of coffee drinks and tea.

CHARLIE

From Page 1

we started doing productions in 2007, we were playing in the elementary school gym, and we had to work out rehearsals around basketball team practice. And then we rented space from St. Anthony's, which was a nice, little space that we were crowding seventy-five people into. Now we can hold 120 people and we don't have to worry that the lights might go out."

This year, Rock Pool Gardens, Embudo Valley Organics, Black Mesa Winery and Vivac Winery in association with The Embudo Valley Arts Asso-

ciation are sponsoring the DCP. "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" is based on the Comic Strip "Peanuts" by Charles M. Schulz. Book, music and lyrics are by Clark M. Gesner.

Catch the show at 7:30 p.m. July 27 and 28, Aug. 3 and 4, or at 2 p.m. July 29 and Aug. 5. Tickets are \$12 for adults and \$10 for seniors and students.

Purchase tickets by calling 505-579-9102 or online at dixonplayers.com. The Toolshed is located at #68, Hwy. 75, just look for the sign and park across the road.

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