

***Welcome to BVS Reviews. My name is Bruce Von Stiers. BVS Reviews is a monthly e-zine dedicated to reviews on a variety of media.***

Since June 10, 1997, this site has been visited over 700 times.

## ***Credits***

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## Draw to Build

Bruce Von Stiers

Sometimes I get a glint in my eye and think about the house that I'd like to build. It would need to have a double car garage, a huge family room and a master bath with a hot tub. But how or who would design this masterpiece of a home? I could with *3D Home Architect Deluxe* from **Broderbund**.

The user's manual has a tutorial in it. This tutorial will take you through the basics of the program and how to build a basic home. *Did I use it? Naw!* I just started out putting in walls and windows. I added doors and appliances. When I ended up, the design looked like I either had too much coffee or wasn't awake enough. On to the tutorial I went.

You start with a single wall. Then you build a basic room structure. From then on, the program lets you design an entire house. Walls are drawn in 15 degree increments. You can redraw a wall if it isn't right. I had to do that quite a few times. Click on the *Door Mode* button to place a doorway into a wall. The *Window Mode* allows you to put a window in a wall. Be careful to center the window along the wall. If the window is too off center, the design looks flawed. Either that or you're trying for that *Frank Lloyd Wright* look.



The program lets you put in things like washers and dryers, ranges, hot water heaters and toilets. You can add a large variety of stairways and entranceways. You can add a roof to your structure. And when it's finally finished, you can view your design in stunning 3-D. From the *Options* menu, you can grab a *Materials List*. You can customize this list to include part or all of the plans. Then take the list to your local lumber yard and get sick over what materials cost. You can also print this tribute to architectural genius as the program supports most printers.

An additional program is the *3D Home Interiors*. This program allows you to customize the contents of any room from your design. There are professional room samples for you to look at. Interiors has over 10,000 Brand name appliances and furnishings that you can place in your room. You can only import a room at a time into Interiors. Another down side is that although the rooms look wonderful in Interiors, you can't import them back into a Architect drawing. They have to remain free standing drawings of your room design.

3D Home Architect requires either *Windows 3.1* or *Win 95*. The processor needs to be at least a *486DX 33*. If you're running *Win 95*, *8MB* of *RAM* is needed. Clear off *16MB* of hard drive space for the needed files. A double speed *CD ROM* drive is necessary.

This program is really fun to use. The lumberyard chains like *Payless Cashways* and *Builder's Square* use similar software to help customers.

*3D Home Architect Deluxe* can be found at most software stores. If you don't need all the bells and whistles, grab the regular program, *3D home Architect*. It doesn't have some of the advanced features of Deluxe, but it is basically the same program.

By using this software, you get to design what you want. And you won't have the counter guy at the lumberyard say "*ya wanna put that where?!?!?*".

## *Hit The Ball & 1, 2, 3 and You're Home*

*Josh Von Stiers*

As you may know the **World Series** is coming up. And baseball is in. This is a review on **Baseball Pro '98** and it's from **SIERRA**.

You have *Baseball 96* and like it okay. What's so great about **Baseball 98** that you have to buy it? Now 5 new all star players are in **Baseball 98**. With all the teams. With even better batting practices. There are 2 different modes of play; Arcade and Exhibition. In Arcade mode it is easier to hit, run, and base and in Exhibition you'll get a little taste of the minor league.

There is a brand new start up screen that lets you get going fast. In batting practice, you can go against any pitcher or batter in the league. Player controls are easier to use. You can now control each man in the field. You can pick the plays better, too.

**Baseball Pro'98 is great. Go out and get it now!**

*If you play good enough, your favorite team will win the World Series.*

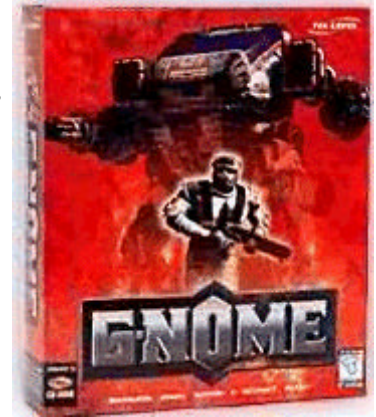
## *Go Home G-Nome*

*Bruce Von Stiers*

Just when I said that I'd never play another one of these stupid games, we got G-Nome. I thought that it might be a step up from Corel's Ashes To Ashes. The game is better than Ashes, but I still didn't like it very much. G-Nome comes from 7th level. It follows their other shoot em up, Helicops.

You can play G-Nome by yourself or over a network. Any protocol that is supported by DirectX 3.0 can be used. In the multi-player or network game, scoring will be given according to the kill ratio and damage caused. The single player game has no scoring. If you complete the objectives, your mission is a success and you move on.

There are just three difficulty levels, Easy, Medium and Hard. The higher you go, the tougher it gets to play. You can turn off the EF/X Dialogue and CD Music. There are also three different detail levels. A Low detail shows you less but speeds up the game considerably.



There are a wide variety of vehicles and weapons that you can use. You can use different weapons for each mission. You can start the game with a new Campaign or learn almost all the tricks by going to Training. The interface is the HUD or Heads Up Display. This gives you weapons status, target acquisition and radar. Most of the time, you'll be manning a HAWC (Heavy Armor Weapons Chassis).

The plot line for the game goes something like this. Ruhelen is a planet in the Omicron Reticulli System. There are four races of people who have colonized Ruhelen. An uneasy peace that had been established is now disturbed by the discovery of untold wealth of ores and minerals in the nearby Phygos system. One of the races on Ruhelen, the Scorps, have developed a new weapon. This weapon is the G-Nome. Your mission is to stop the project and destroy the G-Nome prototype.

The game is fairly easy to play. After getting killed about 400 million times, I was able to really move and groove with my HAWC. Using the right weapon at the right time helps a lot. I didn't try the network option as I don't know anybody who'd play against me.

Like the majority of games of this type, G-Nome is pretty lame. How many times can you kill or blow up something? I really wonder sometimes if we wouldn't be better off with the old text based games that made you use your imagination. As this game is geared for the Teen + age group, it gets violent and bloody sometime. If you like that kind of game, grab this one. If not, the same money can buy you a nice golf sim.

# *A Tee Between Golf Sims*

*Bruce Von Stiers*

Ever since Tiger Woods made a big splash, everybody wants to play golf. Me, I learned how to play a few years ago. I wasn't very good then and haven't improved much since. All of which brings me to what this review is about: Golf Simulation games. The two I looked at were **Front Page Sports: Golf** from **Sierra On-Line** and **Links LS '98 Edition** from **Access Software**. Sierra has made some good strides into the sim market with their *Front Page Sports* section. They have *Baseball* and *Football*. It makes sense that they would try to knock Links off it's perch as the top Golf sim.

FPS:Golf has several nice features. If you're just itching to play a game and don't want to go through the normal setup screen, then choose *Quickstart*. This uses the settings from the last game played and puts you at the *Tee Box* for *Hole # 1*. The *Setup* menu lets you choose local, LAN or Internet play. You can choose between *Pete Dye Golf Club* and *The Prince Course* for the course you want to play. You can also add on courses like *Coeur D'Alene*. The Rough Length, Green Condition and Wind Condition can all be changed. Different modes of play can be chosen. Medal, Match and Skins are a few types of games that can be played. *Two Man Scramble is fun to play (you know, the best ball hit sets the shot)*.

You use the mouse to control your shot. Click the left button to start the shot. Move the mouse back to get you back swing and then forward to make the shot. If you move the mouse around too much, your player loose his balance and falls over. You can customize several of the play options to make the game easier or more difficult.

*Links* has been around for quite a while. Each version gets a little leg up on the last one. The current version, *Links LS 1998 Edition*, has several new or enhanced features. *Scramble* and *Alternate Shot* have been added to the play mode, giving you six different ways to mull a shot. You can play over the Internet. There are two new golfers to play against. *Links* is now completely compatible with Windows 95 and Windows NT. You also get *digitized scorecards*. But if you're like me, you just toss those things into the trash on the way to the parking lot. You also have other players on the screen with you. That way they can see you sink the best putt of your entire life.

With *Links*, you can play up to 72 holes of golf. The courses are *Kapalua Resort* courses on Maui and *Latrobe Country Club* (Arnie Palmer's home course). You can also use any other SVGA *Links* Championship course with LS '98.

*One of the best features that Links has is the Swing Gauge*. As you hold down the left mouse button, the *Swing Gauge* gives you a visual indication of the intensity of your swing. With FPS:Golf you have to guess and feel for the swing intensity.

I could go on about which features each program has, but I won't. *Links* is overall the better of the two. As I said before, it's been around for a while and just keeps playing through. FPS:Golf is a very good program too. It just doesn't have all the bells and whistles that *Links* has. If you're a diehard *Link* player, switching to FPS:Golf might put you in the rough. But if you're a fan of Sierra's or just like to try new games, FPS:Golf will drive you along.

## A Less Thrilling Report

*Bruce Von Stiers*

**David Ignatius** is a business news editor for the Washington Post. He is also the writer of novels about the intelligence community. His latest book is called *A Firing Offense*. It is published by **Random House**. There are **333** pages and the book lists for **\$23.00**.

We meet Eric Truell at a funeral of a colleague. He has to speak about Arthur Bowman to the crowd gathered. All the while Eric holds secrets about how Arthur died. From there the book takes you back through Eric's past as a reporter. He works for the New York Mirror newspaper. . He gets an exclusive interview with terrorists in a Paris restaurant and uncovers a kickback scheme in the French government. He is assisted by a shadowy U.S. intelligence agent. He comes back to the U.S. and works in the Washington bureau of the Mirror. Through some strange circumstances, Eric learns that there may be a foreign spy at the paper. He tries to uncover the truth.

There are quite a few twists and turns in this novel. I was disappointed in the book as a whole, though. The dust cover built this up to be a great novel of spies and intrigue. Yes, there are some spies and danger, but this isn't quite a Robert Ludlum novel. It does do a good job of detailing what the life of a newspaper is like. You meet reporters and editors. The employment policies are so strictly enforced that they eventually come back to haunt Eric.

A Firing Offense is a middle of the road thriller. There is enough mystery and intrigue to keep you going, but it leaves you with wanting a little bit more.

## *Turbulent Flying*

*Bruce Von Stiers*

Sharon McCone has been around for about twenty years. From titles like *Edwin Of The Iron Shoes* through *The Broken Promise Land*, this northern California P.I. has solved a lot of cases. The latest Sharon McCone book is titled **Both Ends Of The Night**. The writer of Sharon's mysteries is **Marcia Muller**. Ms. Muller has written over twenty novels and garnered several awards for her work. She is married to mystery and western writer **Bill Pronzini**. His books often feature the "Nameless" detective.

Sharon is called up to Los Alegres for an FAA review by her old flight instructor, Matty Wildress. Although she isn't due for the review yet, Sharon meets with Matty to find out what is the matter. Matty wants to hire Sharon to find her missing lover. John Seabrook has taken off, leaving a profitable business and a young son behind. McCone agrees to take the case and begins to look for Seabrook.

Matty is warned not to fly in an airshow but ignores all attempts at help. She is killed and McCone suspects the plane was rigged. Along with her lover Hy Rapinksi, Sharon tries to uncover the mystery of Seabrook's disappearance and the murder of Matty. The case takes McCone from California to Florida and Arkansas.

**Both Ends Of The Night** is a good P.I. novel. Sharon McCone is a tough as nails detective with a heart of gold. The case ends as it should; not the best way, but the right way. *Both Ends Of The Night* was published by *Mysterious Press*. It has 353 pages and lists for **\$23.00**.



## *Framing A Shoot*

*Bruce Von Stiers*

I picked up *Shooters* and expected to find another droll mystery. Instead I found myself working along with the main character to find out who did what. I was slightly disappointed with the conclusion of the book but overall it was good. This book was written by *Terrill Lankford* and published by **Tom Doherty Associates** under their **Forge** imprint.

*Nick Gardner* is a highly sought after fashion photographer. His pictures are so hot and sexy that they sizzle. We first meet Nick as he's driving down Pacific Coast Highway listening to the Door's L.A. Woman while his girlfriend performs oral sex on him. This sets the tone for the whole book. You now know that this book is going to be about sex, rock-n-roll and whatever.

Nick goes to a party with his girlfriend and meets *Candy Bishop*. He ends up taking her back to his place for a wild night of sex and drugs. In the morning, she is gone and Nick goes to work. He finds out later that she has been murdered and he is the chief suspect.

As he tries to unravel what happened to Candy, you discover that Nick has a terrible secret that he's been hiding from everyone. Something happened in his past to make him change who and what he was. Now the past may have caught up with him.

As a mystery, *Shooters* is middle of the road. There's enough intrigue to keep you going but no edge of the seat stuff. The sex scenes are very graphic and steamy however. If you're looking for a great mystery, this might not be your cup of tea. But if you like sex, drugs and rock-n-roll mixed in with your mysteries, then *Shooters* might be your fix.

*Shooters* has **224** pages and lists for **\$20.95**.

## *Defending Trash TV*

*Bruce Von Stiers*

With all the hype that surrounds **trash T.V.** I figured somebody would write a murder mystery about it. Now somebody has; sort of anyhow. *Ken Gross* has taken his **Lieutenant Maggie Van Zandt** character into a brand new mystery. The title of the book is *The Talk Show Defense* and is published by **Tom Dohery Associates** under their **Forge** imprint. It has **224** pages and lists for **\$20.95**.

Peggy O'Neill had been cheated on and abused by her husband. Coming off a divorce she goes on the Kevin Grant Show to be one of many women telling their stories. When it's time for Peggy to be interviewed she tells a lie about her marriage. This lie starts a humpty dumpty ride of mystery and murder. Peggy's ex-husband Mickey seeks to take revenge against the talk show world.

Peggy disappears and seems to have been murdered. Maggie Van Zandt is called in to handle the case. After following several false leads, Maggie is able to figure out who did what to whom.

The title suggests that this might be a trial lawyer mystery. Instead it's a police detective novel. From reading the dust cover, I thought that bodies would be piling up all over TV land. Not to spoil the book, but you can do the body count with one hand. Other than some misconceptions on my part, I thought that this was a good mystery. Maybe Jenny Jones should read this novel.

## *Going For 1st*

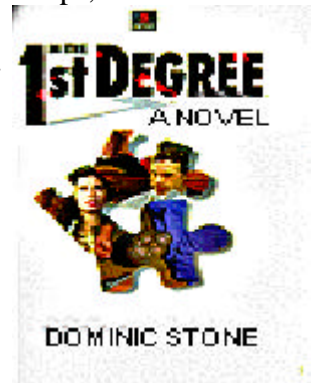
*Bruce Von Stiers*

Last year *Broderbund* came out with a mystery game called *In the 1st Degree*. Now there is a novel based on the game. Written by *Dominic Stone*, the book has the same title as the game. The mystery was published by *Prima Publishing*. Prima has other titles such as *Hell: Cyberpunk* and *The 7th Guest* which are also novels based on computer games.

Zachary Barnes is dead. His partner, James Tobin, is found standing over him. The cops, in the form of Inspector Looper, investigate the murder. They arrest Tobin for the murder and then it's up to Assistant District Attorney Sterling Granger to prosecute the case. Granger wants to see Tobin convicted of murder in the 1st degree.

The characters in the book follow the ones in the game. Ruby Garcia is the love interest. Yvonne Barnes is Zachary's wronged wife. Simon Lee is a slightly sleazy guy who works around the Barnes Gallery. You find out a lot about Granger. A subplot that involves Granger, his ex-wife and daughter is somewhat like what Marcia Clark experienced during the O.J. Simpson trial.

What is the jury verdict? Like the jurors, I can't reveal anything. But I can say that there are some interesting twists thrown in. If you've played the game, you'll want to see if the book has the same ending you did. If you haven't played the game, read the book anyway. Then you'll probably want to play the game too. You can find *In The 1st Degree* at bookstores everywhere. You can contact **Prima Publishing** at (916) 632 - 4400. **Broderbund** can be reached At (415) 382 - 4582.



## ***Blown Away By Killer.App***

***Bruce Von Stiers***

What would happen if someone like *Bill Gates* of Microsoft or *Steve Jobs* of Apple were criminally insane? That's the basis for ***Killer.App***, a new thriller by ***Barbara D'Amato***. Ms. D'Amato is a mystery writer who's **Cat Marsala** detective books are best sellers. She is also the author of **The Doctor, The Murder, The Mystery**.

Suze Figueroa is a Chicago cop. She's divorced, has a son called J.J. and lives with her sister Sheryl. Some strange things are happening at SJR DataSystems, where Sheryl works. After going to Suze with her suspicions, Sheryl is critically injured in a car wreck. Suze begins to investigate the things that Sheryl found. Along the way she encounters Dean Utley, the computer mogul who owns SJR DataSystems, and his band of cyber thugs. Suze has help from her partner, Bennis, a white collar crime detective named Jesus Delgado and a computer whiz nicknamed the Wizard. Together they uncover a hideous plot and try to prevent it from happening.

This mystery shows what could happen if a computer genius becomes a power hungry madman. If you like reading cyber babble and are a mystery fan, you'll thoroughly enjoy this book. I think that Ms. D'Amato has written an entertaining and informative novel. It is published by **Tom Doherty Associates, Inc.** and lists for **\$22.95**. You can find it in the mystery section of your local bookstore.

# *Foster Kids*

*Bruce Von Stiers*

When a book is written about a celebrity there is usually a lot of oohing and ahing. If the famous person is trashed in the book, it sells even better. Publishers are looking for hooks to draw people to read these tomes on the famous. I just finished reading a book written by *Buddy Foster*, a former child actor. The book was about his more famous sister, *Jody Foster*. The book is entitled **Foster Child** and is published by the **Penguin Group** under their **Dutton** imprint.

Buddy Foster takes you through the immediate past history of the family, beginning with the great grandparents down to the current children and grandchildren. He explains who the various people are in the life of the Foster clan. The father had been in the military when he met their mother. They began a fiery relationship that cultivated several children and ultimately a divorce.

The dysfunctional family angle is well covered here. The Fosters seem to have been a less than perfect family, with both parents blaming each other for failures. The mother blames the marital breakup on the father's womanizing. The father claimed it was because of the mother's lesbian affair. Throw a bunch of children into the mix, along with mom's best friend Aunt Jo (who was also her lover?) and you have quite a mess.

Jody first started working in show business at an early age. According to Buddy, she got a Coppertone commercial that he was auditioning for as her start. The ups and downs of Jody's career are highlighted as well as her great success in recent years.

The nightmare of John Hinckley and all of the fallout from the Reagan assassination attempt are dealt with here. Buddy describes what Jody went through during that time.

*Jody Foster's sexual orientation?* Her brother deals with it a little bit, but leaves you to actually make up your own mind. He does indicate that Jody was deeply influenced by both their mother and Aunt Jo, who were supposed to be lovers.

In some respects, this book is as much about Buddy as is Jody. He takes you through a lot of his ups and downs as well. You learn about Buddy's life as an actor from Hondo to Mayberry R.F.D. You find out about Buddy's self destructive path that led him through years of partying, drugs and three marriages.

Is this an entertaining book? Yes it is. Is it completely factual? I'm not so sure. At times Buddy seems a little too whiny about things that happened. But then again, I've never walked in his shoes. He also states in his introduction that members of the family might disagree with recollections in the book. This may indicate that Buddy took certain liberties with the truth. But maybe not. **Foster Child** was co written by **Leon Wagener** who profiles stars. Another reason that this might not all be true? Anyway, you'll have to judge for yourself.

**Foster Child** has **278** pages including a eight page index. The list price is **\$24.95**

# Reading Golf Badly

*Bruce Von Stiers*

**Leslie Nielsen** is a superb comedic actor. He has taken his wit, along with his love of golf, and written an instruction book. The title of this tome is **Bad Golf My Way**. The book is co-authored by **Henry Beard**. Mr. Beard was a founder of *National Lampoon* and has helped Leslie in a previous book, *Leslie Nielsen's Stupid Little Golf Book*. **Bad Golf My Way** is published by **Doubleday**. The book has **129** pages and lists for **\$19.95**.

The book is broken down into seven chapters. The chapter titles include *Getting Off to a Good Bad Start*, *Making the Bad Golf Shots* and *Behaving Well While Playing Badly*. There are subsections in each chapter like "*Finding*" *A Lost Ball*, *Fourth Shot: Ball Above Feet* and *The Waggle And The Forward Press*.

Along with these words of wisdom come a whole bunch of pictures. *Figure 2-3* shows Leslie after a *Beautiful Swing*, with pointers to his Neat Haircut, Tasteful Shirt, Nice Wristwatch and other items on his body. There is also a series of pictures showing the Full Bad Swing.

This is a perfect book for those golfers who take the game too seriously. It's a fun and irreverent look at playing golf. Some of the pictures even remind me of my own game. Which is to say that although I may play badly, I have a lot of fun.

## *Computers and Dave Barry*

*Bruce Von Stiers*

If you have ever read any of his books or the newspaper columns he writes, you'll know that **Dave Barry** is very funny. Now Dave has trampled all over computers with his new book, ***Dave Barry In Cyberspace***. Published by **Crown Publishers**, this is **215** pages of pure cyber hilarity.

Dave takes us through the fast and furious world of computers. From his first machine (a computer from [yuck] Radio Shack ) to Windows 95, Dave tells of his misfortunes with computers. He gives some insights on *ComDex*, which he visited in 1995. He also talks about *AdultDex*, which is a xxx-rated version of ComDex. These folks weren't allowed to play with the big kids so they developed their own convention.

Dave tells us how to become computer illiterate and how we have progressed from 64k memory machines to megamonster home systems. He tramples Win 95 and steps all over the Internet. The most interesting section of the book is about a cyber romance. From a first back glance to a full cyber affair, two people reach out over the Net and find each other. The conclusion reads like something out of a tabloid headline. The sad thing about the cyber affair is that you read about these kinds of things a lot anymore.

Of all of Dave Barry's book, this is my favorite. Not only is he funny, he does know computers. You'll enjoy his insight as well as his listing of some obscure web sites. Go out and boot up your copy now.

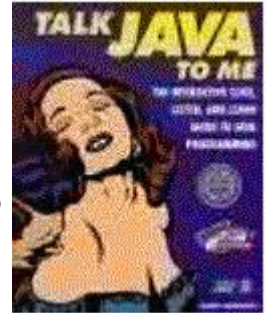
# *Listening To Java Talk*

*Bruce Von Stiers*

Remember the old saying “*You can’t judge a book by it’s cover*”? Well, the cover of *Talk Java To Me* is pretty spicy. The title and cover make you want to pick it up. The contents make you not want to put it down. This is an interactive guide to **Java** programming. The training is on the **CD ROM** disc that comes with the book. The CD is the primary focus of *Talk Java To Me*. The book is basically a supplemental guide to the training on the CD.

The training tailors itself to your level of expertise. Know some C or C++? The CD starts you out on a C users level. Don’t know beans about any programming language? Don’t worry! The training will start you at a very basic level.

There are 11 different lessons for you to work through. Each lesson takes you a step further down the Java trail. There are exercises that you will need to work on after concluding each lesson. The answers to the exercises are in the book if you don’t come up with a solution. Or even if you did, check the programming code to see if yours matches their example. The book also has a Language Reference section. This contains chapters on programming structure, elements and classes. It is a Must Read to complement the training on the CD.



*Talk Java To Me* is by **Harry McIntosh**. He, along with **Lynnzy Orr**, also narrates the CD. The publisher is the **Waite Press Group**. The book has **204** pages and lists for **\$24.99**.

This is a good starting guide to learning Java. It covers a lot of the basics that you need to start working in Java. It is more than just a spicy book cover.



## ***Boppin' Down The Road With Koz***

***Bruce Von Stiers***

***Dave Koz*** is one of my favorite jazz musicians. He has played all over the world and is a welcomed guest on programs like The Tonight Show. His latest CD is called ***Off The Beaten Path***. It is probably his best effort to date.

**Don't Look Back** has a beat that makes you want to dance around the room. **Let Me Count The Ways** is a love ballad with background vocals by *Stevie Nicks* and *Sharon Celini*. *Awakenings* is a light gentle piece that reminds me of a serenade. **Flat Feet** is bouncy like something out of *Grease* (*I know some people hated Grease , but I liked it*). **That's The Way I Feel About You** features vocals by Dave Koz himself.

There are thirteen tracks on ***Off The Beaten Path***. The CD lasts *over 74 minutes*.

There is an added bonus on the CD. There is a multimedia part of the CD that allows you to play it on your computer. There are video clips of Dave's songs along with interviews of members of his friends and family.

***This is a great CD to add to your jazz collection. Bop on over and grab a copy.***

# *Steaming Towards Volcano*

*Bruce Von Stiers*

The home video *Volcano* starts out with this little bit of information.

**In L.A. County there is the Office Of Emergency Management. This entity is a permanent division of the City of Los Angeles. The mandate of OEM is as follows:**

***In the event of an emergency or natural disaster, the Director of OEM has the power to control and command all the resources of the City.***

*Tommy Lee Jones* stars as Mike Roark, the director of OEM. He's supposed to be on vacation at home with his teen daughter. A minor incident happens and Mike ends up working the scene. He meets Dr. Amy Barnes (*Anne Heck*). Amy suspects that there is a major fissure somewhere under the streets of L.A.

Incidents begin to happen all over town until the La Brea Tar Pits erupt. From then on, Mike tries almost single-handedly to head off a flowing stream of Lava heading for Cedars-Sinai Hospital.

The film co-stars **Gaby Hoffman** as Mike's daughter, Kelly. **Jacqueline Kim** plays Dr. Jaye Calder. **John Corbett** of Northern Exposure fame plays Jaye's husband. The film was directed by **Mick Jackson**. It was produced by **Lauren Shuler Donner**.

*Volcano* comes from **Fox 2000 Pictures**, a division of 20th Century Fox. It has a running time of one hour and forty minutes.

*Volcano* will be available at video stores at the end of September.

If you like cheap, easy disaster movies, then *Volcano* is just the ticket. From my standpoint it's not very believable. But I don't live in L.A. wit the constant earthquakes and mudslides. I live in Kansas where they have tornadoes like they had in *Twister*.

# *The First Streak*

*Bruce Von Stiers*

**James Lee Burke** writes a good mystery. His books generally focus on *Dave Robicheaux*, a former New Orleans homicide detective. The first Robicheaux book has been made into a movie and is now out on video. The title of the film is *Heaven's Prisoners* and stars **Alec Baldwin** as Dave Robicheaux. **Kelly Lynch** plays Dave's wife, Anne.

Dave is an ex cop who owns a fishing camp on the bayou. He and his wife witness plane crash and rescue a little girl. Dave tries to discover what caused the crash and gets mired in a DEA investigation. He finds an old friend (**Eric Roberts**) and the man's wife (**Teri Hatcher**) mixed up in a drug ring. Dave gets help from an old girlfriend (**Mary Stuart Masterson**) who knows more than she's supposed to. The pace quickens as a murder occurs and Dave's life comes apart.

This is an intense mystery. There are a couple of real nasty characters in the film played by *Hawthorne James* and *Don Stark*. The DEA agent is portrayed by *Vandie Curtis Hall*.

*Heaven's Prisoners* was panned by the critics when it hit the theaters. Apparently they thought it was too choppy and unevenly acted. The critics obviously never read the book the movie was based on. The book is choppy and uneven, making it gritty, and very real. But sometimes, gritty realism doesn't come across well on the screen.

One scene that I did feel was unnecessary was where Teri Hatcher is observed on a balcony completely nude. The scene only served as a vehicle to show off Ms. Hatcher's body. Frankly, I think she looks sexier with her clothes on.

*Heaven's Prisoners* is from **New Line Home Video**. It is by **Savoy Pictures** and Randy Morgan Productions. It was directed by Phil Joanou. It has a running time of 133 minutes and carries an **R** rating.

This is a good mystery. Watch it and enjoy. Then read the book to find out why Dave's nickname is Streak. I'll give you a hint. Look at Baldwin's hair during the film.

# *Kisses Between Speeches*

*Bruce Von Stiers*

I like the acting of **Michael Keaton** and **Geena Davis**. A while back they were in a movie together. The film is called *Speechless* and has been released by **MGM/UA Home Video**. It has a running time of *one hour and 39 minutes*. The film carries a **PG-13** rating.

Kevin and Julia meet in a New Mexico hotel lobby. They instantly connect with each other. Kevin tells Julia that he's a television writer, having written the Chuck & Eddy Show. Julia tells Kevin that she's a reporter. The truth is that they are actually speech writers for opposing candidates in a New Mexico Senate race.

The romance starts out fine until they both find out who the other person works for. They go from being sweethearts to virtual enemies. What happens from then on is a rollercoaster ride of failed romance trying to rekindle.

There are good supporting roles by *Bonnie Bedelia* and *Ernie Hudson* along with *Ray Barker*, *Gailard Sartain*, *Harry Shearer* and *Charles Martin Smith*. *Steven Wright* has a small role and *Mitchell Ryan* plays one of the candidates. *Christopher Reeve* plays Julia's former fiancé.

The film was directed by *Ron Underwood*. It was written by *Robert King*. The producers were *Geena Davis* and *Remy Harlin*.

Do Kevin and Julia eventually get together in the end? Come on now; you really wouldn't want me to spoil it, would ya? Let me just say that it's a great film to watch with a date.

# *Funky Monkeys*

*Bruce Von Stiers*

I just finished watching the video of the [Bruce Willis](#) movie *12 Monkeys*. *To call this film weird would be an understatement.* It was directed by **Terry Gilliam**, a Monty Python alumni, whose works include *Brazil* and *The Fisher King*. It has been rated **R** for violence, profanity and nudity. It has a running time of *2 hours and 10 minutes*. It was released by **MCA Universal Home Video**.

[Bruce Willis](#) stars as James Cole, who seems to be suffering from delusions that he is from the future. He has been sent back to the past to trace down a virus. In the near future, this virus kills almost the entire population of the world. Cole finds himself in 1990, trying to track down the virus. He is sent to a mental hospital where he meets Dr. Kathryn Raily ([Madelene Stowe](#)). He also meets Jeffrey Goines (**Brad Pitt**) a fellow patient.

Cole escapes the hospital only to reappear six years later in 1996. He kidnaps the doctor and tries to track down the Army of the 12 Monkeys. The 12 are supposed to be the cause of the devastation of the future.

To say much more about content of the film would deprive you of the conclusion. Let's just say that the movie ends on a sad surrealist note. There are supporting roles by **Christopher Plummer** and **Jon Seda**.

For me, this film was just a little too strange. I enjoy watching Bruce Willis but not in a movie like this.