

Style

SATURDAY, MAY 21, 2005

C

The Arts
Television
Comics

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Microsoft threw a megaparty at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles for its new Xbox. The Killers entertained.

It's E-Party Central

After Video Games Expo, Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo Let 'Er Rip

By JOSE ANTONIO VARGAS
Washington Post Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES — Here at E3, the Vatican conclave of the video game industry (only much louder), it's Sony's PlayStation 3 vs. Microsoft's Xbox 360. The new Xbox made the rounds, and Sony showed off dizzying specs for its new baby, due next year. Publicists are blowing smoke about both, but really it comes down to this: Which giant throws the best private party?

The global gaming industry appears to have picked up where old Hollywood, the anemic record industry and long-forgotten dot-coms left off — throwing a week's worth of mass shebangs that get bigger every year, bigger even than what Vanity Fair and Elton John have done to Oscar night, minus designer gowns. E3 (short-hand for the Electronic Entertainment Expo, the 11th annual L.A.-based confab of all things video game) could never just be another industry convention. Party-

wise, it's an all-out war. It feels like the late '90s again.

Imagine the shouting match: Microsoft: We've got the Killers! The Chemical Brothers! We're at the Shrine Auditorium!

Sony: Oh yeah? We're way up on a hill, overlooking Dodger Stadium, with a spectacular view of Los Angeles! We've got Jimmy Eat World! Steve Jones of the Sex Pistols! Brandon Boyd of Incubus! Liz Phair!

See PARTIES, C2, Col. 1

TV Preview

'Our Fathers' — What Be Thy Point?



BY KEN WORONER — SHOWTIME
Christopher Plummer as Cardinal Bernard Law in Showtime's movie about the priest pedophilia scandal.

By TOM SHALES
Washington Post Staff Writer

Of course, it sounds glib and perhaps insensitive to say that pedophile priests are yesterday's scandal, and that the world has moved on to others of arguably greater import, but then only the most naive could imagine that the problem no longer exists. Still, a big gray cloud of "why now?" hangs heavily over "Our Fathers," the Showtime movie about the tragic crisis and its sobering ramifications.

In addition, the film, premiering at 8 tonight on the pay-cable channel, is no prize package. It's flabby with unnecessary details, some of them arbitrary as well as irrelevant. It lacks the kind of cohesive punch delivered by, to name one prominent example, "Indictment: The McMartin Trial,"

See TV PREVIEW, C7, Col. 5

Design

Sunlight and Shadows At the Furniture Fair

By LINDA HALES
Washington Post Staff Writer

NEW YORK — Taking the pulse of design has become an annual ritual at the International Contemporary Furniture Fair. This week, heart and head were out of sync.

The 17th spring festival attracted thousands of designers, dealers, buyers, photographers, stylists, curators and critics to the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center and 60 other locales earlier this week.

Among the rough prototypes and slick production models, two schools of thought stood out. One is descended from the 19th century, with images of flowers and

vines escaping from some exotic garden to cover every imaginable surface. It traffics in sheer beauty and is meant to warm the heart.

The other comes from a darker place and thrives on imagery of danger, fire or simply the crash of broken porcelain. It can be beautiful but also disturbing.

At first, the romanticists appeared to be ascendant. They lavished delicate floral patterns on hand-knotted carpets, imprinted fern motifs on metal tables and painted poppies on couture-quality wallcoverings. Leaves found their way onto silk lampshades. The imagery suggested a Rousseau-like natural serenity, with

See DESIGN, C2, Col. 1



A cheerful chair made of recycled debris by designer Maarten Baas.

M. VAN HOUTEN



Jenny's Image On the Block

Latinos Say Lopez Is
Selling a Shift in Culture

By SANDY M. FERNANDEZ
Washington Post Staff Writer

This past winter, Kimlan Fong Wong and her boyfriend of several years, Anthony Taveras, stopped talking to each other for three days after she threw a vase at him during an argument. The subject: Jennifer Lopez.

"He kept calling her J. Ho," says Wong, a 29-year-old office manager and college student in Queens, who's originally from Trinidad & Tobago. "It was 'J. Ho this' and 'J. Ho that.' He knows I like her. I felt like he wasn't respecting me."

From his apartment in Takoma Park, Ramon Rivera wages his own defense of the singer/actress/entrepreneur — in his case, against his Honduran grandmother, who lives in Miami. Rivera, 22, lived there with his extended family until last year, when he decided he needed to assert his independence.

"Some of the older people have more traditional views," he says. "So the way she dresses, or the fact that she's been married three times, those things make people like my grandmother say, 'Oh, no, I don't like her.' But I say, 'Look at everything she's accomplished.'"

This is familiar ground to the three Rios sisters, who grew up in Puerto Rico and are now scattered on the East Coast, two in Washington and one in New York. Normally pretty tight, the sisters are divided along the Lopez line — two for and one against — and have discussed the topic enough that Ralph Sordyl, husband to dissenter Mary Blanca, knows exactly where the others stand.

See LOPEZ, C4, Col. 1

BY MIKE BLAKE — REUTERS

Recordings

Il Divo: A Boy Band's Cheese, Aged

By PHILIP KENNICOTT
Washington Post Staff Writer

When they give a final requiem for traditional masculinity, they could do worse than to hire Il Divo. The toothsome singers of the "popera" quartet, whose eponymous album debuted at No. 4 on the U.S. Billboard album chart (and is No. 8 this week), specialize in music that is earnest but un-

threatening. The cover of their hit album shows them with roses in the lapels of their dark Italian suits, and inside, their photographs have an androgynous purity, with bright eyes wide open, pools to swim but not drown in. And when they sing, it is gooey and teary and sentimental, the way a good-looking singing waiter sounds after about three carafes of the house red.

Il Divo is a Simon Cowell project. The brutal judge from "American Idol" is, we've been assured, a music producer and record executive. So now, at the high-water mark of his "Idol" fame, Cowell has offered the world a recording that is, presumably, representative of his idea of good singing. As a judge on "Idol," he's obviously

See RECORDINGS, C5, Col. 1



"Il Divo" debuted at No. 4 on the U.S. Billboard album chart.



BY SCOTT GRIES — GETTY IMAGES



BY SETH WENIG — REUTERS

Woman, Brand And Symbol

LOPEZ, From C1

"They love her," he says, wonderingly. "They go see her movies the first day they open."
"Don't tell people that!" snaps his wife. "It's so embarrassing!"

Once again, we are talking about J. Lo. Last weekend Lopez's latest movie, "Monster-in-Law," a romantic comedy co-starring Jane Fonda, opened as the nation's No. 1 film, grossing more than \$23 million at the box office. Lopez mounted a tireless publicity blitz to support it, appearing in the past few weeks on the "Tonight Show" and "Good Morning America," MTV and BET, the cover of Blender magazine and the wall of your corner bus shelter. Everywhere, it seemed. This, for some Latinos, is how Lopez's presence feels *all the time*.

And it's not just because of the gallons of ink spilt over Lopez and her high-profile paramours (notably P. Diddy, Ben Affleck and now salsa superstar Marc Anthony). Or the number of times that green Grammys dress — filmy and slit from here to there — pops up on the Internet. Or the number of times VH1 reruns "The Fabulous Life of Jennifer Lopez." It's because Lopez is a figure who straddles an amazing number of Latino fault lines, areas of often-vehement disagreement about what is and isn't Latino.

The price of ambition? *Check*. The importance — or not — of being identified as Hispanic? *Check*. Of speaking Spanish? *Check*. Of a bodacious booty? *Check*. Dating white? *Check*. Dating black? *Check*. The politics of going blond? *Check*. And so on.

"People argue passionately about her," says Michelle Herrera Mulligan, co-editor of the essay collection "Border-Line Personalities: A New Generation of Latinas Dish on Sex, Sass, and Cultural Shifting." "She's a lightning rod, a catalyst and representative for everything."

Of course, plenty of Latinos don't follow celebrities. And for those who take their entertainment primarily in Spanish, she's far from the biggest star in the firmament. But for others — especially those who, like the Nuyorican actress herself, are strivers moving through a predominantly English-speaking world — talking about her is irresistible.

Part of this is because "she's the first icon that generationally fits" the changing profile of young Latinos, says Christy Haubegger, founder of Latina magazine and now a brand manager with Los Angeles's Creative Artists Agency.

After decades of growth from immigration, the Latino population rise is now being spurred predominantly by in-country births. While 54 percent of Latino adults are foreign-born, only 15 percent of those under 18 are, according to the Census Bureau. In November, Haubegger co-directed a study of more than 1,000 Latinos ages 14 to 24 that sought to define this demographic.

What Haubegger's team found, she says, is a "pan-Hispanic" self-identity, at odds with the way Latinos have thought of themselves in the past. "Previous generations defined themselves as being from a certain country — you said you were Mexican or Cuban," she says. "But half this gener-



BY PAUL DRINKWATER — NBC VIA GETTY IMAGES

Woman of the entertainment world: Clockwise from top, Jennifer Lopez on MTV's "Total Request Live," dishing with Jay Leno after "Monster-in-Law," and feeling the love after showing her fall collection at Fashion Week in February.

ation has never even been to the country their parents are from. Or they're mixed — they say, I'm Colombian and Honduran."

Many of them don't speak Spanish — and don't consider it important. They consider themselves trailblazers.

"They'd say, I'll be the first in my family to blank — go to college, vote," says Haubegger. And unlike their parents, who felt they were struggling for pop culture visibility, this generation turns on MTV and sees Daddy Yankee singing reggaeton — a meld of dancehall, Spanish-language hip-hop and salsa — or new VJ Susie Castillo talking in Spanish.

"They believe that they're part of something huge, that the mainstream is coming to them to scope out new trends," she says. "They feel like 'Pimp My Ride' is an homage to their culture."

"Jennifer is a big piece of that. The fact that she's a beauty icon not just for Latinos but for the general population is incredibly affirming. So her celebrity takes on a much larger role than that of Nicole Kidman or Gwyneth Paltrow. Nobody expects from them the things these girls expect."

In the survey, young Latinos chose Lopez as their favorite female celebrity. (She was first overall among those age 14 to 18.) In discussing her — the U.S.-born daughter of Puerto Rican parents, who understands Spanish but speaks it imperfectly, who defied her family to fulfill her ambition, but still sings her pride at being "from the block" — Haubegger says, "They're talking about themselves. It's an enormous burden to put on one woman."

But it seems to be a burden Lopez undertook, by luck or by design, probably both. (Lopez's publicist didn't respond to requests for an interview.) In 1999, she told a journalist that she thought

her first album would appeal to "my generation of people, who grew up in America but had Latin parents or parents of a different ethnicity. . . . That's what I felt like I needed my music to reflect." Three years later, talking about filming "Maid in Manhattan" in her childhood neighborhood, she was quoted as saying, "Rita Moreno never came to the Bronx when I was growing up. . . . I think it's important to do that, so people have that [inspiration] in their lives."

In his recent book "Starstruck: When a Fan Gets Close to Fame," author Michael Joseph Gross hypothesizes that the emotion one feels toward a celebrity is, essentially, the act of confusing feelings for a piece of work — a set of song lyrics, a role they played in a movie — for a connection with a real person. Validated by the song "Beautiful," for example, someone might imagine a kinship with Christina Aguilera. Or believe they understand Salma Hayek because they wept watching her portrayal of the artist in "Frida."

Lopez, Gross believes, is "very conscious" of this dynamic. But in her case, he says, the connection is "not about her work — it's her story."

To begin with, her biography, which she repeats in every interview, reads like an immigrant archetype: Raised in a working-class part of the Bronx by a computer technician and a kindergarten teacher, Lopez started out as a backup dancer and, by dint of hard work and determination, became a powerhouse — a \$12 million-a-picture film star, a recording artist who's sold 35 million CDs, an entrepreneur whose clothing line and fragrance businesses People magazine estimated to be worth \$350 million.

Her first CD, "On the Border," she told interviewers, was named after the train that took her, symbolically, from the Bronx to Manhattan. Her hit 2002 song, "Jenny From the Block," distilled immigrant success into a couple of catchy lines: "Used to have a little / Now I have a lot." That same year, "Maid in Manhattan" found her playing a hotel maid who, Cinderella-like, catches a senatorial candidate's eye. Now in "Monster-in-Law," she's a Latina temp and dog-walker who wins a surgeon's heart.

In other words, Lopez plays an average Latina — under the very best, luckiest conditions.

To some, this is inspiring. "She reminds me of many of the neighborhood girls I grew up with in the Latino neighborhood of Chicago who had a dream to make it big," writes Lopez fan Celso Cardenas, 23. "She is the epitome of the American Dream. . . . Many of our families come to the U.S. to prosper and she was able to pull herself up from her boot straps and make it huge."

To others, infuriating. "When she first came out, it was electric," Mulligan says. "I was in college and to see someone with a wide nose and a big [rear] — I felt like I was being born. That simply didn't exist before in popular culture. But I've been so disappointed."

She cites Lopez's relative lack of activism compared with Latino actors such as Jimmy Smits and Edward James Olmos and suggests the entertainer pales next to tour-de-force Rita Moreno.

"I just had a long conversation about this in Los Angeles. . . ."

And that continuing conversation is something that, at least for now, few other Latino stars can compete with. "What Latina performer has a story as great as J. Lo?" Gross asks. "Salma Hayek turns in good performances in good movies. How boring is that?"

"Stardom takes much more."

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