

SNAP SHOTS



Boyle

BOYLE IS TOP DIRECTOR

"Slumdog Millionaire" continued its march through Hollywood's awards season as its filmmaker, **Danny Boyle**, won the top honor Saturday from the Directors Guild of America. The win puts Boyle on the inside track for the same prize at the Academy Awards, because the guild recipient almost always goes on to win the directing Oscar.



Neeson

NEESON BULLETS TO TOP

Liam Neeson's CIA thriller "Taken" bumped off "Paul Blart: Mall Cop" at the weekend box office, raking in \$24.6 million and helping fuel the first \$1 billion January in Hollywood history. Box office revenues were up nearly 20 percent in January over the same period last year, reaching a record \$1.03 billion for the month.

THREE CRUISES TO BRAZIL

Tom Cruise has arrived in Brazil to promote "Valkyrie." Cruise, his wife **Kate Holmes** and their daughter **Suri** arrived in Rio on Friday and planned to visit several tourist sites before giving a press conference on Tuesday, the day "Valkyrie" premieres.



Cruise

STAY AWAY FROM HER

Britney Spears has obtained a restraining order against former pal **Osama "Sam" Lutfi** and one-time boyfriend **Adnan Ghalib**. According to court records, **Lutfi**, **Ghalib** and attorney **Jon Eardley** have been trying to gain control of Spears' affairs.

RAPPER GETS 90 DAYS

Rapper **DMX** has been sentenced to 90 days in an Arizona jail for convictions on theft, drug-possession and animal-cruelty charges. DMX, aka **Earl Simmons**, also was placed on at least 18 months' supervised probation.

-PATRIOT LEDGER NEWS SERVICES

'Bingo' buddies

Company Theatre production looks at men being women caught in a numbers game

By **WILL DREYFUS**
FOR THE PATRIOT LEDGER

Bingo. Men in drag. 10-pound turkeys. It's all in the name of theater this weekend at Company Theatre in Norwell.

A traveling stage show comedy, "The Queen of Bingo" follows two bingo-obsessed sisters, Sis and Babe. The elder Sis is a widow while Babe is a divorcee looking for love.

The catch: Both roles are played by men. Namely, Shane Partlow and Rowan Joseph as Sis and Babe respectively. The two actors go back 20 years to a production of "Oklahoma!" where they met in Dayton, Ohio, in 1987.

Friends ever since, their comedy work together has been compared to that of Tim Conway and Harvey Korman. While Partlow isn't sure he'd describe himself that way, he did say he and Joseph together have very good onstage chemistry.

When "The Queen of Bingo" premiered in Chicago in 1993, it was directed by Joseph and starred women.

"We then took it to New York, off-Broadway (1997), with women still in the roles where Rowan produced and directed and I also served as

producer," Partlow said.

Joseph directed the Chicago and off-Broadway productions of the play with women in the sister roles. In July 2004, Shane decided he wanted to play Sis and Joseph agreed to direct the tour and play Father Mac and the Caller. He took over the role of Babe when the play opened for six months at the Coronet Theatre in Los Angeles in the fall of 2006 and has been playing the role ever since.

"When we decided that we were going to tour an all-male version of the show, I told Rowan I would really, really, really like to play Sis," Partlow said. "I see so much of my grandmas, my Aunt Peasley, my Mom, etc, in the character which really made me want to play the role. Rowan would say that I act a

lot like Sis offstage, also. I don't think so."

Joseph plays the role of Babe, the younger sister, divorced, and always comically complaining about being overweight. "She is loud, likeable, and fun-loving," says Joseph about his character. "She is also a bit moody when we meet her due to the fact she is coming off a sugar high brought on by binging after suffering a panic attack when the local football coach asks her to the homecoming dance."

As one might imagine, there are some special challenges to playing in drag but Partlow seems to take them in stride. It takes him more than an hour getting into hair and makeup before he can step onstage and play a believable Sis, but his efforts are worth it. On more than one

occasion he's actually fooled audience members into thinking he was really a woman.

"There are always a few people at the show who have no idea I am a man," Partlow offers. "We had a 100-year old-lady come for her birthday. Talking to her after the show she just could not get over the fact that I was not really a woman."

The show also incorporates a real bingo game with audience participation. The grand prize is a 10-pound frozen turkey.

"At most real Bingo halls they have games called "Early Bird Specials" and "Late Bird Specials" so the authors came up with "The Middle Bird Special," said Partlow about their turkey give-away. "Audience members are given a bingo card with their program. People love to play and try to win the bird."

While Joseph enjoys his role, "For our part, we like to think of what we do being closer to the old Shakespearean style of female roles being played by men. We do not see ourselves as actors playing men playing women, we see ourselves as the characters of Sis and Babe."

The show has been touring since October 2005 and has been seen in more than 20 states. This is the first time it will be performed in Massachusetts. Joseph is excited about coming to the South Shore. "People genuinely seem to enjoy the show and these characters wherever we play," he said. "Like the game of bingo itself, these ladies are pretty universal in their appeal."

Theater preview

THE QUEEN OF BINGO

The Company Theatre, 30 Accord Park Drive, Norwell. Feb. 7-8 \$25. 781-871-2787, companytheatre.com.



■ Shane Partlow and Rowan Joseph as Sis and Babe, respectively, star in "The Queen of Bingo," playing this coming weekend at The Company Theatre in Norwell.

TELEVISION

'Trust Me': It's just what he was waiting for

By **TERRY MORROW**
SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE

Eric McCormack has braced himself for the kind of comparisons "Trust Me," his new series, is getting.

McCormack isn't referring to how fans may compare it with "Will & Grace," his last series venture, in which he played gay uptight lawyer Will Truman. Instead, he's hearing how folks are stacking up "Trust Me" to "Mad Men" because both shows are set at ad agencies.

"People keep talking about the two (shows) as if it's 'ER' and 'Chicago Hope,'" he says of the series, airing 10 p.m. Mondays on TNT. "These are entirely different shows."

"One is an ensemble drama, a period

piece, that is very stylized. I think of ours as a 'thirtysomething' with a slight 'Boston Legal' mischievousness."

McCormack, who won an Outstanding Lead Actor Emmy for "Will & Grace," plays Mason McGuire, a highly driven and more popular part of a duo at a Chicago agency. Mason is clearly a star, though his partner, Conner (Tom Cavanagh), is more talented with better ideas.

Though the opener leaned more toward the serious side, future episodes mine more comedy. "This isn't anything new for audiences," he says. "You can have your cake and eat it, too. You can do comedy in a drama."

McCormack says he took his time before going back to series TV. In Mason, he has

found someone who's more confident than Will. Mason is also straight and has children.

"I remember reading this script two years ago and thinking 'Ah! This is a grown-up show' and that's hard to do anymore," he says. "We live in a 'High School Musical' kind of world these days."

"Mason is the next logical step for me. He's the responsible one in a crazy world."

He said it was a perfect progression from "Will & Grace."

"I didn't want to do a sitcom because nothing could live up to the experience I had," he said. "So I waited for that thing, whatever it was, and hoped I knew it when I saw it. When I saw this script, I knew this was what I was waiting for."



■ Eric McCormack, left, and Tom Cavanagh in "Trust Me."