2009

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Tekstboekje

TIME GLOBAL ADVISER

TRAVEL | FOOD | GADGETS | STYLE | LEISURE

Streak of Luck

By Austin Ramzy

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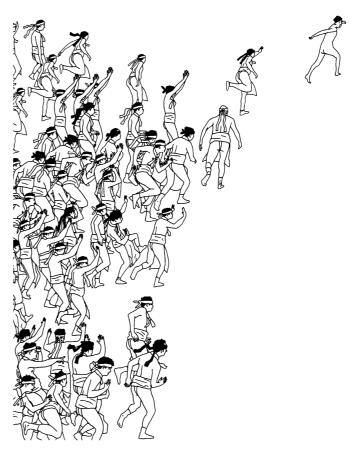
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If you see a naked man walking down the street, your first instinct might be to flee. But for thousands of men in central Japan each winter, there's only one acceptable response: strip down to almost nothing and go chase him. That's the way it has been done in the city of Inazawa for centuries. The ritual is perhaps the most famous of several *hadaka matsuri*, or "naked festivals", held around Japan annually.

The festivals are based on traditional Shinto purification rituals. In

15 Inazawa, where this year's event will be held on March 2, one self-confident fellow is chosen to be the official streaker. He's then marched



through the Kounomiya Shrine, where a throng of around 9,000 men wearing only loincloths attempt to lay their hands on him as thousands of spectators watch. The naked man is supposed to collect the bad luck and impurities of all who touch him. The crowd can get overly enthusiastic (sake¹⁾ is involved), so the man is protected by guards—but he still ends up pummelled and bruised by the conclusion of the festival. Then he ritually transfers the amassed bad luck to piles of glutinous rice balls for safe burial, dons his clothes and leaves. As for the half-naked throng outside, their luck improves right away—they get to change out of their loincloths.

www.time.com

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Are you an email @ddict?

As scientists claim that email abuse is worse for your brain than drugs,

Jasper Gerard worries that he might have to go cold Toshiba.

"Do you get upset if you haven't received a reply to your email within an hour?", asks a self-help site. An hour? Try two minutes. I open junk mail to check it is junk, then read it anyway. I seek my fix in bed, on trains, on the beach. I even check my emails when I get in from the pub hammered. True, I haven't sunk to the depths uncovered by researchers of addicts who email themselves, but I'm not smug — that could come. The degree of my addiction hit home as I was forced to go cold turkey when my server went down. How, I sighed, did we cope before email? But we did.

It is one of the great modern paradoxes that we crave this constant connection while feeling so disconnected. I'm guilty of initiating desultory e-conversations ("any gossip?" "no, me neither"), I suppose for that elusive sense of being part of things. OK, mainly to put off doing



some work. So much emailing is piffle: it replaces the pointless mobile call ("I'm pulling into the station now"). And if there is one thing worse than your spam, it is other people's spam.

In America, employees addicted to work-issue BlackBerrys¹⁾ are taking their companies to court for failing them. And while it is fun guffawing at the absurdity of Americans, you can understand why. When BlackBerrys first emerged, I asked a banker friend why he carried his around like a comfort blanket. He explained that it was fantastic because he could fit in an hour of work-related emails on his journey to the office and the same returning. He was pitifully grateful for this device, apparently unaware that his bank had craftily added two hours to his 14-hour day.

I was struck by the addictive power of emailing the first day it was introduced during my stint as a newspaper diary editor. The reporters tapped away in silence, apart from the occasional stifled snigger, but several hours later, no stories had been filed. Surreptitiously, I peered at their screens — to find that they were

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emailing each other, remarking what a mug their boss was for not noticing that all they were doing was emailing. Aagh!

6 No wonder businesses claim email is a virus costing zillions. Mark Jones, director of publishing company Cedar, tells me (via email!) that he has instigated an occasional "no email day" where anyone who sends non-urgent emails has to put money in a charity box. "We realised some of our staff were in a bad way with email addiction," he says. "People send

emails to colleagues sitting two feet away, and the thing about email is that one comes across far crabbier than in person."

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Jones found the most "vociferous" defenders of the right to email were not youngsters but oldsters. This was underlined for me by a neighbour who still "emails" her husband — even though he is, alas, traversing the great information super-highway in the sky. Hey, if I start doing that, I promise to don the straitjacket and go cold Toshiba.

The Daily Telegraph

noot 1 BlackBerry: PDA, a hand-held computer

(Can't Get No) Satisfaction

The new science of happiness needs some historical perspective

By Michael Shermer

This seemingly illogical preference is just one of the puzzles that science is trying to solve about why happiness can be so remarkably elusive in today's world. Several researchers have addressed the topic, but I found a historian's long-view analysis to be ultimately the most enlightening.

London School of Economics economist Richard Layard says that we are no
happier even though average incomes have more than doubled since 1950 and
"we have more food, more clothes, more cars, bigger houses, more central
heating, more foreign holidays, a shorter working week, nicer work and, above
all, better health." Once average annual income is above \$20,000 a head, higher
pay brings no greater happiness. Why? One, our genes account for roughly half
of our predisposition to be happy or unhappy, and two, our desires are relative
to what other people have, not to some absolute standard.

Happiness is better equated with satisfaction than pleasure, says Emory University psychiatrist Gregory Berns, because the pursuit of pleasure lands us on a never-ending treadmill that paradoxically leads to misery. "Satisfaction is an emotion that captures the uniquely human need to give meaning to one's activities," Berns concludes. "While you might find pleasure by coincidence — winning the lottery, possessing the genes for a sunny temperament, or having the luck not to live in poverty — satisfaction can arise only by the conscious decision to do something. And this makes all the difference in the world, because it is only your own actions for which you may take responsibility and credit."

Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert goes deeper into our psyches when he claims: "The human being is the only animal that thinks about the future." Much of our happiness depends on projecting what will make us happy (instead of what actually does), and Gilbert shows that we are not very good at this forethought. Most of us imagine that variety is the spice of life, for example.

13 in an experiment in which subjects anticipated that they would prefer an assortment of snacks, when it actually came to eating the snacks week after week, subjects in the no-variety group said that they were more satisfied than the subjects in the variety group. "Wonderful things are especially wonderful the first time they happen," Gilbert explains, "but their wonderfulness diminishes with repetition."

This getting accustomed to even lots of wonderfulness is what economists call "declining marginal utility" and married couples call life. But if you think that a wide range of sexual partners adds to the spice of life, you are mistaken: according to an exhaustive study published in *The Social Organization of Sexuality* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), married people have a more satisfying sex life than singles. Historian Jennifer Michael Hecht emphasizes this point in *The Happiness Myth* (Harper, 2007). Her deep and thoughtful historical perspective demonstrates just how time and culture-dependent all this happiness research is. As she writes, "The basic modern assumptions about how to be happy are nonsense." Take lovemaking. "A century ago, an average man who had not had a partner in years might have felt proud of his health and patient self-control, and a woman might have praised herself for the health and happiness benefits of years of abstinence."

Most happiness research is based on self-reported data, and Hecht's point is that people a century ago would most likely have answered questions on a happiness survey very differently than they do today. To understand happiness, we need both history and science.

www.sciam.com

Organ transplants

Psst, wanna buy a kidney?

IF THEY were just another product, the market would work its usual magic: supply would respond to high prices and rise to meet surging demand. But human kidneys are no ordinary commodity. Trading them is banned in most countries. So supply depends largely on the charity of individuals: some are willing to donate one of their healthy kidneys while they are still alive (at very little risk to their health); others agree to let their kidneys be used when they die. **17**, not enough people offer.



Kidneys are the subject of a quietly growing global drama. As people in the rich world live longer and grow fatter, queues for kidneys are lengthening fast: at a rate of 7% a year in America, for example, where last year 4,039 people died waiting. Doctors are allowing older and more sluggish kidneys to be transplanted. Ailing, rich patients are buying kidneys from the poor and desperate in burgeoning black markets. One bigwig broker may soon stand trial in South Africa. Clandestine kidney-sellers get little medical follow-up, buyers often catch hepatitis or HIV, and both 18 slap-dash surgery.

Many people will find the very idea of individuals selling their organs repugnant. Yet a market in the organs of deceased people already exists. Companies make millions out of it. It seems perverse, then, to exclude <a>21. What's more, having a kidney removed is as safe as common elective surgeries and even beauty treatments (it is no more dangerous than liposuction, for example), which sets it apart from other types of living-organ donation. America already lets people buy babies from surrogate mothers, and the risk of dying from renting out your womb is six times higher than from selling your kidney.

With proper regulation, a kidney market would be <u>22</u> the current, sorry state of affairs. Sellers could be checked for disease and drug use, and cared for after operations. They could, for instance, receive health insurance as part of their payment — which would be cheap because properly screened donors appear to live longer than the average Joe with two kidneys. Buyers would get better kidneys, faster. Both sellers and buyers would do better than in the illegal market, where much of the money goes to the middleman.

Instinct often trumps logic. Sometimes that's right. But in this case, the instinct that selling bits of oneself is **23** leads to many premature deaths and much suffering. The logical answer, in this case, is the humane one.

www.economist.com

Tekst 5

Review

Elton John

The Point, Dublin

TONY CLAYTON-LEA

Elton John has been at the top of his game since the early 1970s, and the statistics alone prove him to be one of the most popular and enduring of British pop stars of the past 40 years: he has sold more albums in the UK and the US than any other British male singer and more than 150 million records worldwide. In short, this is a guy who doesn't need to prove anything to anyone.

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Which could be the reason why John's first gig on his latest (and according to the man himself, his final) European tour lacked any kind of bombast. The stage set consisted of a single digital screen. The stage itself threatened to dwarf the band, which comprised John's fellow ultra-professional journeymen, such was the compact space they took up. No finger-clicking backing singers, no brass. No strings attached.

Every song was familiar. He ripped through the type of set-list he has been ripping through for the past 30 years, yet made it seem as if he was singing them for the first, second or third time. That's not just the mark of a master professional, but of someone who cares about audience expectation. A true blue pop star who thinks about the fans? Give that man a knighthood. He already has one, you say? Then we really think it's time he was given another.

The Irish Times

Should childhood come with a health warning?

Helene Guldberg

1

The modern world is damaging our children, according to a group of eminent experts. More than 100 children's authors, scientists, health professionals, teachers and academics signed a letter to the London *Daily Telegraph*. It ran under the headline: 'Have we forgotten how to bring up our children?'

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Children are suffering, the experts claim, as a result of junk food, school targets and mass marketing. The modern world is not providing them with what they need to develop, apparently, which includes: 'real food (as opposed to processed "junk"), real play (as opposed to sedentary, screen-based entertainment), first-hand experience of the world they live in, and regular interaction with the real-life significant adults in their lives'.

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I share some of the concerns of the experts, particularly the fact that children now have fewer and fewer opportunities to play outdoors. Children are often no longer able to play in the streets, walk or cycle to school, play in local parks, or just mess about with their friends away from the supervision of parents and teachers.

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<u>27</u>, many of the letter-signers' concerns seem to be shaped more by contemporary prejudices about modern living than by real insights into what makes children tick. Take the denunciation of junk food. There is no such thing as "junk" food. Our digestive systems do not distinguish between fish fingers and caviar. We are bombarded with warnings about unhealthy modern diets and eating habits, but life expectancies continue to rise – in great part due to vast improvements in most children's diets over the past 100 years.

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And consider the warnings about new technologies. We are told that 'since children's brains are still developing, they cannot adjust – as full-grown adults can – to the effects of ever more rapid technological and cultural change'. The idea that children find it difficult to adjust to 'ever more rapid technological and cultural change' runs entirely counter to our everyday experience and to most scientific research. Numerous studies highlight the extent to which children are able to grasp and master new technologies. Indeed, many adults don't understand or use new technologies with the same ease that children do, which perhaps explains why they are so prone to seeing such technology as scary. We should be careful not to transpose our own, adult discomfort with technological and cultural changes on to children.

6

It is not screen-based entertainment that is restricting children's play-space. Instead, it is adults' over-anxious desire to remove children from all risks. Adults are overly concerned with keeping children under their control and protection, and out of harm's way – which means they often end up restricting children's opportunities for 'real' play. It could be argued that it is precisely because children are increasingly denied the freedom and space for experimentation and play in the 'real' world that they are using the virtual world to try to gain some autonomy and independence.

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The best thing experts can do for children is to argue for them to be given more freedom – not to do whatever they want, of course; they need clear boundaries set by parents. But unsupervised play isn't just some kind of childhood luxury that kids can do without. It is vital for children's healthy emotional and social development. Study after study has shown that it helps to develop children's ability to negotiate social rules and to create their own rules. Children need to learn to deal with risks and develop the capacity to assess challenges. They also need to be given the opportunity to develop resilience to life's inevitable blows. In short, __30__.

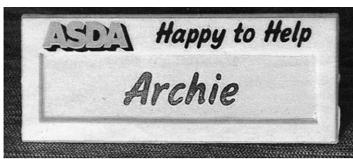
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Although children's lives have improved in very many ways over the decades, signers of the letter to *The Daily Telegraph* are right in highlighting that we do face a problem. Clearly, we need to ask some serious questions about what an increasingly structured, sanitised and relentlessly supervised world is doing to children. But it is important that we identify what the real problem is, rather than pointing the finger at easy targets and labelling children as fragile and easily damaged.

www.spikedon-line.com

How to put your name down for a better life







Alan Hamilton

- (1) Oh Dad, how could you have called me what you did? I want to be a Jeremy. Mind you, there's no reason these days why I can't become one, and it will cost me less than £40. Changing the name given to us at baptism has suddenly become a trend. In 1996 only 270 people in Britain changed their name by deed poll. Now, according to the Deed Poll Service, the number has burgeoned to between 30,000 and 50,000 a year.
- **(2)** Some of the reasons for changing verge on the eccentric, if not the impenetrable. John Anderson now walks the streets as Rolf Harris. Ian Roberts, an actor in *Casualty*, says that he is now more at peace with himself as Kwame-Kwei Armah in recognition of his African slave roots, but John Campbell, a bus driver, may have regretted changing his name to Ayrton Senna when he crashed his bus.
- (3) My reason for wishing to become a Jeremy is far simpler: Jeremys seem to bask in a better life than Alans, according to *The Times Book Of Names*. We Alans have an average age of 54 (I wish), earn an average of £25,000 a year (dream on) and are most likely to live in the North East of England (I never have). Now take your Jeremys. Of all the common Christian names, your average Jeremy is likely to be a mere 41, the highest earner at £33,000 a year and the most likely to live in London, be self-employed, in social grade A, own stocks and shares and to have bought his car new. Not much in common with Alans there, then.

- **(4)** For purposes more akin to entertainment than cutting-edge scientific research, *The Times* tipped up the contents of its databases the names of five million of you who take us on subscription, visit Times Online or send us e-mails, and tick the boxes of those "tell us about yourself" questionnaires and emptied them into an electronic mincing machine. The pudding that emerged may be a trifle of averages, but it is a multilayered potpourri of fascinating if frivolous titbits, one of which being that no Alan wants to be a Fred.
- (5) Fred is the name most likely to live in a bungalow, probably in the South West. The true curse of the Fred, <u>36</u>, is to be the lowest average earner, at a mere £15,000 a year. No Fred should pair up with a Dorothy, at £13,000 the lowest earner among female first names. Freds (and indeed Alans) should go for an Alison, Fiona, Sally or Suzanne, all of whom are in the £30,000-plus bracket. They might also consider a Susan; a 2005 survey by Barclays Bank found that Susan was the commonest name among customers who earn at least £100,000 a year.
- **(6)** Dad, you're forgiven; at least you didn't call me Fred. But then that name fell from favour in the 1920s, when even this old Alan wasn't born.

The Times

Lees bij de volgende teksten steeds eerst de vraag voordat je de tekst zelf raadpleegt.

Tekst 8

Letters to the Editor

A loss of national confidence in celebrating Christmas

Sir – I was appalled to hear that many British companies are banning Christmas celebrations at work for fear of upsetting other faiths. There are good reasons for dispensing with these celebrations, but this should not be one of them.

Attendance at such a celebration is a matter of personal choice. We are a Christian country and for centuries newcomers to these islands have settled here knowing that, in this country, all can celebrate their own faiths without offence or interference from the state or others. Is this not part of the reason they come here? I am a Christian, but not very campaigning, and once valued my Britishness and freedom of choice.

I am no racist: my family compromises a loving mix of black, white and Asian by choice. But this country appears to have lost or forgotten what being British means.

Don Seaman, Leominster, Herefordshire

Sir – Has this country lost its selfconfidence? This is a Christian country that celebrates Christian festivals. As a non-Christian, I am not offended by the celebration of Christmas, nor should any other minority be offended by it.

Are Christians offended by Diwali, Eid or Hanukkah?

Robert Morris, Edgware, Middx

Sir – Christmas – quite apart from the religious aspect – with the associated

tinsel and bauble trappings is our tradition and we must not be overwhelmed by the urge to make other people feel at home. What next: no shopwindow displays, no parties?

When abroad, we do as they do, but why do we have to do as they do here?

Are we all to be swept along by a government that is easily persuaded by anyone other than its voting population? **Frank Elms,** Basingstoke, Hants

Sir – It seems a local council is to force organisers of a Christmas party in Embsay, North Yorkshire, to carry out a "risk assessment" on mince pies to be offered free to villagers. Do we now live in a *Two Ronnies* sketch?

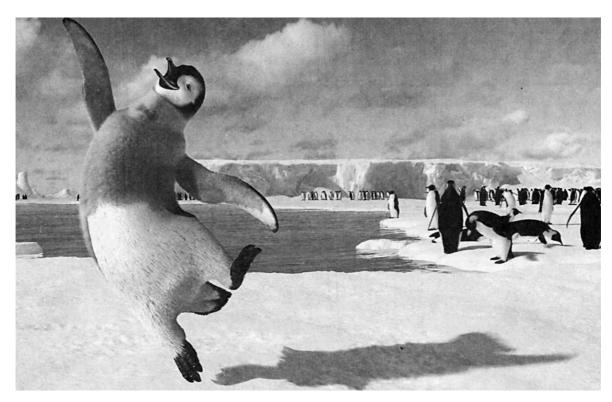
Tony Walton, London N12

Sir – I suppose those who want to ban Christmas and all it stands for, but who work in firms that pay Christmas bonuses, will not be taking them. **Ron Clarke,** Sutton, Cambs

Sir – In staging a traditional Nativity, it is not possible for everyone to be Mary or Joseph. Still, there are many other good parts and five-year-old Felix was delighted to go home and tell his mum he was going to be "a piece of paper" in our Nativity, to be staged in Hereford Cathedral. He is a page.

Tim Lowe, Headmaster, Hereford Cathedral Junior School

The Daily Telegraph



Soft-paw shuffle hides an environmental kick

By Nigel Andrews

is time we sorted these penguins out. They have never been the same since falling over backwards while watching planes fly overhead in the Falklands. More recently, they were caught in a debating crossfire over the meaning of *March of the Penguins*.

Happy Feet had to be a refreshing change. Here penguins get to sing, tap dance and be dubbed by Robin Williams. The digimation is gorgeous: craggy icescapes, sapphire seas. The lines of white-and-black birds resemble picturesque queues of head waiters. The songs are wall to wall. And when the little chick Mumble, who grows up to be voiced by Elijah Wood, endeavors his first soft-paw shuffle, the audience delivers a mega number of "oohs" and "aahs".

Mumble's eccentric dancing talent is tut-tutted over by his parents, though applauded by the young Latino penguins led by Ramon (Robin Williams). Then there is the lonely sage and rock hopper Lovelace (Williams again), who thinks conformity is for the birds and a greater truth exists beyond that prescribed by the penguin tribal elders. Mumble and his pals duly trek to the extreme edge of the world to learn the secret of life, death and existence.

The story. So – what do you know? Although slightly muddled, this Christmas-timed family film written, produced and directed by George Miller (Mad Max, the Babe saga) turns out to be another fable about God versus Not-God. Happily, though, it is more. Its philosophy is holistic¹⁾ rather than holy, with health warnings for the future of all human beings, saintly or

secular. After a sequence of accidents has landed Mumble in a seaquarium, the film becomes near-surreal. It ends on a *Clockwork Orange* note as kindly human terrorism, the fascism of "care", brings its deadly warmth to the South Pole.

By now the "kidflick" sticker is peeling off the tin and tots in the audience are beginning to wonder what is hitting them. A little girl in the row behind me, at the public preview, turned to her companion and said: "I thought this

was a film about tap-dancing penguins."

They stayed the course, though. So will adults, many of whom will admire the film's courage in seeking a northwest passage from children's fare to grown-up fairy tale. Although early scenes trade on coochy-coo sentimentality, the last act sets the mind dancing as well as the feet. Better the brave than the banal, the occasionally puzzling (though persistently picturesque) than the implacably preachy.

The Financial Times

noot 1 holistic: gelovend dat alles in de natuur met elkaar samenhangt

thelondonlistings



Accepted (12A)

Rejected from every college, Bartelby (Justin Long) not only fakes an acceptance letter – but a college to go with it. Sure enough, others start to join this anything-goes school. Bit like American Pie – without the cast; bit like Animal House – without John Belushi. And a bit like a film. Without a script. (93mins)

On at these cinemas:

10, 45, 55, 59, 60, 72.

The Aryan Couple (12A)

Doom and gloom courtesy of eponymous couple, which see a wealthy Jewish magnate relinquish his worldly possessions to the Nazis in exchange for the safe passage of his family to Palestine. Unfortunately the appealing premise is ruined by an appalling script and ridiculously over-the-top score. (119mins) 12.66.

The Black Dahlia (15)

Anyone who reads James Ellroy will know that his stories are as dark and convoluted as noir gets, but The Black Dahlia will leave you mostly in the dark.

Brian De Palma lets style triumph over substance, though the sultry appearances of Hilary Swank and Scarlett Johansson provide at least some thrills. (120mins) 5,10,18.

Brothers Of The Head (18)

Twins Tom and Barry are plucked from the wilds of England by an impresario who wants to turn them into teen stars. But there's a twist – they're joined at the stomach. What starts as intriguing soon feels self-conscious, phoney and aimless. (93mins)

Children Of Men (15)

Britain, 2027 and the human race faces extinction. No babies have been born for 18 years and immigrants are the scourge of a fascist police state. Clive Owen must protect the last pregnant woman or, well, no need for Mothercare. There are nice action sequences and interesting ideas, but ultimately, the film is cold and superficial. (109mins) 4,5,7,8,26,31,34,35,38,39,44,45,46,48,50,51,52,54,55,56,58,59,63,65,69,71,73.

The History Boys (15)

Sheffield, 1983. This brilliant adaptation of Alan Bennett's National Theatre play sees the eponymous lippy sixth-form students returned for one last term to hone themselves for Oxbridge. Bennett's screenplay drips with intelligence and frequent laugh-out-loud lines – by rights these boys should be nauseating, but they're anything but. (109mins) 6,8,9,10,14,15,19,25,26,27,30,31,33,34,35,36,38,39,42,44,45,46,47,48,49,50,51,52,53,54,55,57,58,59,61,63,64,65,66,67,69,70,71,73,76.

Little Man (12A)

Heavens, how do they think them up? A fully-grown but very small man pretends to be a baby, resulting in absolutely no hilarity whatsoever – unless you're 13 and high on Panda Pops. From the Scary Movie and White Chicks guys, of course. (97mins) 39,57,59.

Open Season (PG)

Furry animals? Check. All-star voice cast? Check. Hip humour littered with familiar pop-culture references? Er, check. Martin Lawrence and Ashton Kutcher trade dreary wisecracks. Billy Connolly's aggravating squirrel actually makes you nostalgic for his National Lottery ads. (86mins) 10,23,26,32,35,36,38,39,43,45,46,47,48,49,50,52,53,54,55,56,57,58,59,60,61,69,71,72,73,74,76.

World Trade Center (12A)

Nicholas Cage stars in Oliver Stone's 9/11 cover version of Michael Buerk's 999. OK, not really – but this true-life tale does have a hint of made-for-TV recreation about it, telling the tale of Port Authority Police trapped in the Twin

Towers rubble, praying for rescue. Average film, breathtaking tales. (129mins) 1,12,38,39,45,51,54,55,57,58,59,63,71,72,73,76.

Shut up! (Tais Toi!) (12A)

Diverting yet irritating French farce as Ruby (Jean Reno) double-crosses kingpin Vogel (Jean-Pierre Malo). Before Vogel can exact his revenge, the cops arrest Ruby and put him behind bars where he befriends Quentin (Gerard Depardieu), who has a hare-brained scheme to break out and collect the cash. Shut up? You wish they would. (87mins) 34.

Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning (18)

This bloody prequel to the cult favourite rewinds to the summer of '69, where a bunch of kids are scheduled to meet their maker via Black & Decker. Yet the exercise ends up being pointless: all this mayhem just because he was born in an abattoir and bullied at school? (90mins) 8,10,12,26,32,35,38,39,45,46,49,50,51,5 3,54,55,56,57,58,59,60,63,69,71,72,73,74,76.

The London paper