

Young Star Becomes a Real 'Uptown Girl'

By Veronica Velasquez
Staff Writer

Brittany Murphy tosses her honey blond hair, a wistful smile on her lips, as she thinks about her lost love.

It was not so long ago that she was seen kissing and snuggling up to the handsome co-star in her latest film. Alas, the two young stars have recently had a parting of the ways.

"We were dear friends," Murphy says with a sigh. "We spent a lot of time together, but now he has a person who really loves him, and treats him so wonderfully."

Is Murphy being gracious about her sudden breakup with her "Just Married" co-star Ashton Kutcher and his just-as-sudden hookup with the older Demi Moore? Well, the guy she is talking about is a pig.

No, that is not reflecting upon Kutcher's demeanor. Murphy's latest co-star was, in fact, an actual pig. Her latest film, "Uptown Girls", scheduled for release August 15, stars Murphy, Marlee Shelton, Dakota Fanning, and

"Softy" the pig.

Visibly exhausted at the end of a five-city promotional tour of "Uptown Girls" across the nation, Murphy nonetheless had lots of smiles and great wit to offer the local college journalists at the Ritz-Carlton in San Francisco last week. She exuded glamour while exhibiting a casual friendliness that was instantly endearing.

"Uptown Girls" is a film about the spoiled daughter of rock star royalty who goes from the lap of luxury to being down-and-out in New York when her fortune suddenly disappears. The riches-to-rags movie, which is rated R, panders to the 8 to 20-year-old crowd. Murphy plays the star, Molly Gunn.

"Of the characters I've played, Molly is the one most like me," Murphy says, settling her petite frame at the press table and adjusting a sparkly shawl that she happily says was a gift from the Ritz.

"Every day is a constant growth process," she says.

"While I don't feel like I have arrived, I feel very wise, very blessed and very charmed."

It has been quite a long road for Murphy, who at 25 already has over 23 movies to her credit, with three more due out over the next three years. Besides her work on the big screen, Murphy has graced many television projects, most notably that of being the voice of Luann Platter, from "King of the Hill".

She has worked extensively with children's programs, including work on "Sister, Sister," "Blossom," "Boy Meets World" and "Pepper Ann." In "Uptown" Murphy works with Dakota Fanning, whose character is "8 going on 40." Murphy and Fanning became friends during "Uptown Girls", and the two got to hang out together.

"She reminds me a lot of Meryl Streep and Reese Witherspoon mixed together," she says of Fanning.

"There is a floodgate of people who are going to be greats in young Hollywood,"

Murphy says. "There are too many, of course, but we will definitely be hearing from Christina Ricci and Dakota Fanning."

Although she enjoys working with her famous co-stars - Kutcher, Eminem, and Angelina Jolie among the most noteworthy - Murphy also stays true to her love of independent projects.

"I have had the greatest experiences in both, and I have really treasured the work," she says. "Those who are in it are not getting paid the same as they do for work with major motion pictures, but they are there because they want to be there. But now I think the lines are becoming blurred. I love both; I always keep a foot in each door."

One such project that most people do not even know about is Murphy's work with "The Virginia Monologues," written and directed by feminist activist Eve Ensler. The live dramas have included such performers as Oprah Winfrey, Melissa Etheridge and Alanis Morissette. The production tours colleges annually, on

"V-Day," and features material on women's issues, as a campaign to stop violence against women.

"It was a very intense experience," Murphy remembers solemnly. "My segment was with Winona Ryder. We were the first act after the comedy section. We started going into our monologue, which was about rape. Two people had passed out and one person had had a seizure. It was one of those really weird experiences. It was very powerful."

The project she is most proud of is her work with the USO, as an entertainer to the troops overseas.

"It was an honor and a privilege," Murphy says. "We visited several camps a day. I'm pleased to support our troops who are fighting for our freedom in 140 degree weather - not to be superficial about it."

"Some of the camps were not able to make the shows, so we went out and visited as many of them as we could. We did about

four shows at about 7,000 people a show. It was really a life-altering experience."

The eclectic Murphy even has an album in the works, with recording due to start in November. She says it has been a work in progress for a long time.

"I have been meaning to do it for about 25 years, but I got mixed up in this first," she says with a laugh. "I love my job. The other thing I love is gay karaoke. I'm serious; when you sing 'Cabaret' in a gay karaoke bar, it goes over so well."

Like her character in "Uptown Girls," Murphy takes on the ups and downs of her work with an optimism that seems impenetrable.

"Things can be challenging for a variety of reasons," she says. "Sometimes it can be a challenge because you have to wear heels all day, the content of the role, or perhaps because the people you are working with may be unpleasant, which has only happened to me twice out of 30 pictures - fortunately."

'Greasepaint' To Open in CSUH Theater

By Bridget Love
Staff Writer

Song and dance will take center stage at Cal State Hayward's Studio Theatre when the Broadway musical, "The Roar of the Greasepaint, the Smell of the Crowd" opens Friday Aug. 1.

The musical will run for two weekends, Aug. 1 and 2, 8 and 9 at 8 p.m. as part of the Highlands Summer Theatre Program. There also will be a matinee Aug. 10 at 2 p.m. Ticket information is available from the CSUH Box Office, open noon to 1 p.m. and 4-6 p.m. Monday through Friday only up to a week before the shows.

"The Roar of the Greasepaint — The Smell of the Crowd" is a musical filled with big songs, big ideas and bigger-than-life characters.

This '60s classic is a timeless fable of friendship, hardship, and one-upmanship. Nothing was changed from the original

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score for this production. Roles that aren't particularly gender-specific and simple musical selections that demand little vocal training make this musical ideal for the summer program.

The action takes place on a colorful, game-board stage designed by Doug Cattaneo. The action centers on the battle of wits of Sir and Cocky, who maneuver and mistreat each other every step of the way.

Sir represents the establishment while Cocky represents

the individualistic part of society, fighting against the system", said Professor Edgardo De La Cruz, the play's director.

For most of the game, Sir has control, forcing Cocky to grovel and grouse with outrageous rules and cheating tactics. Both emerge from the mental competition a bit battered and beaten, but a lot wiser.

The almost extinct musicals and Broadway productions of the '40s, '50s and '60s have given way to hip-hop songs and rock

videos. The score of "The Roar of the Greasepaint, the Smell of the Crowd," written in 1965 by Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley, features at least four tunes that will be familiar to anyone who was alive back then: "A Wonderful Day Like Today," "Where Would You Be Without Me?" "Who Can I Turn To?" and "Nothing Can Stop Me Now!"

"Greasepaint" itself, notwithstanding the nature of its songs, is a kind of primitive ancestor of what we nowadays call the concept musical, a show built around a notion rather than a story, which then assumes a particular shape to suit that notion. Form dictates content, rather than the other way round.

"The audience will leave the production knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt that life is a game. Either you play by the rules or break the rules, but you will still play the game", said De La Cruz.

Ticket information is available by phone at (510) 885-3261.

Exhibit ask Patrons Question Of 'Half Full/Half Empty'

By Vivian Williams
Staff Writer

Fremont's Olive Hyde Art Gallery opened the exhibition "Half Full/Half Empty" last week.

The weather was warm and the wine was flowing as guests entered the gallery to view a large, group show with the theme of containers.

"This show has had a good turnout," said gallery Director Sandra Hemsworth. "More than half of the visitors are local, and we still see new faces. I especially enjoy when students come."

One item on display was Deborah Yaffe's high-heeled shoe made of web-like fibers. It holds pebbles.

Yaffe said, "I'm inspired by nature and animal-built shelters. I like using natural fibers, dirt, stones and flax."

First-time exhibitor Jo Jo Ra-

zor produced a number of works in mixed media, featuring "found objects."

"This show is so wonderful," Razor said. "I've never shown in Fremont. I'm so excited about all the art."

The showcase contained a variety of items from pottery to gourds. Most pieces are for sale. Prices range from \$65 to \$900.

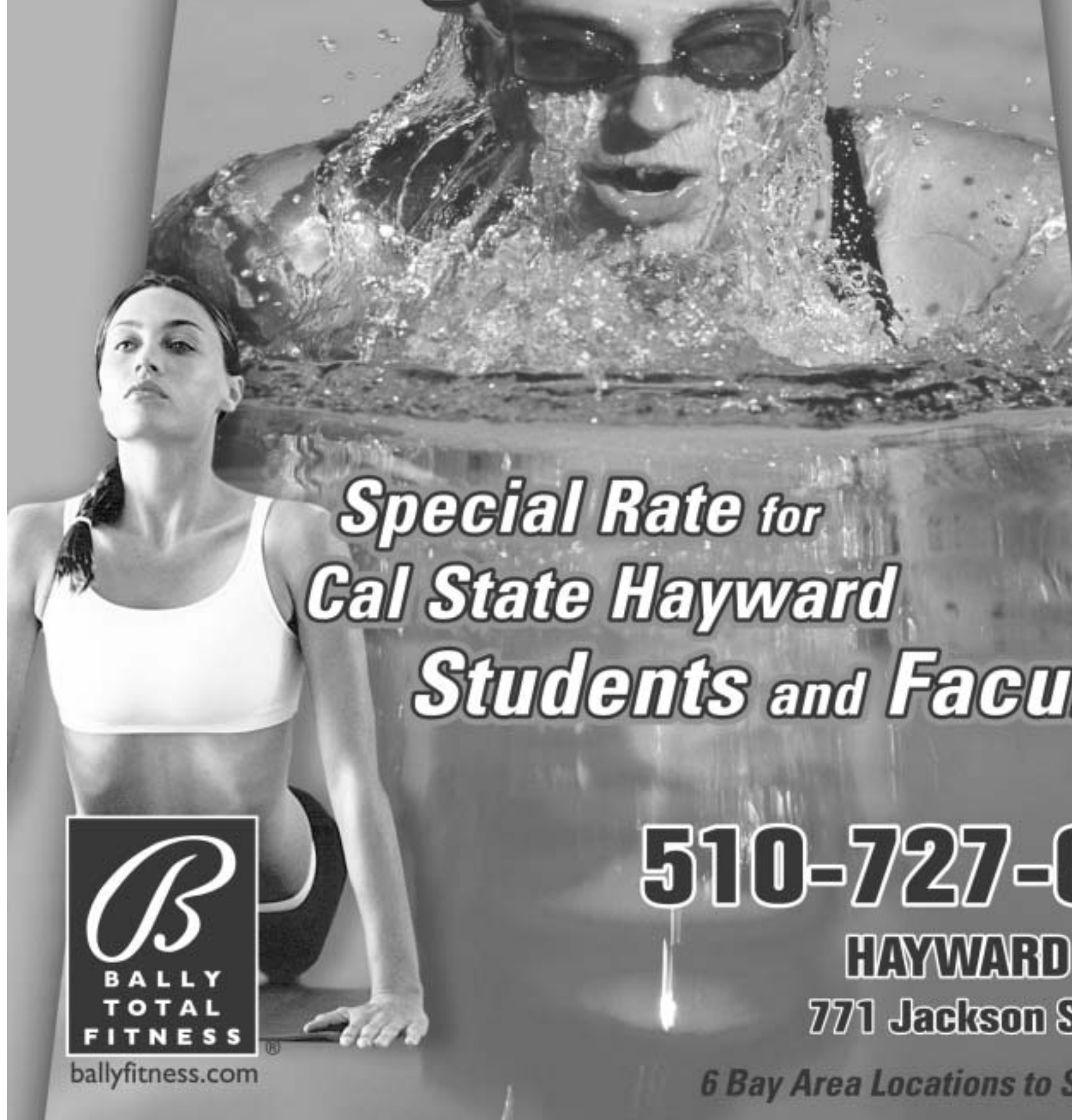
Kay Hille-Hatten has been exhibiting her works for the past 12 years.

"I feel great about this show," she said. "I like to mix it up."

The bulk of the artists are professionals, while some are still at the amateur level," said Hemsworth. "All of the artists are very passionate."

The show, at 123 Washington Blvd., runs through Aug. 9. Gallery hours are Thursday through Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. More information is available at (510) 791-4357.

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