

everything from boards, wetsuits, and surf leashes to clothing, sunscreen, and sunglasses. The surf industry generates hundreds of millions in sales.

I was never a fan of surf contests. Judging imposes artificial standards that often make little sense when riding a wave. With the introduction of the super-fast and highly maneuverable short boards, contest wave riding now reminds me of someone performing a floor exercise in gymnastics. Surfers are required to perform a number of standard moves and then spice their routine with some originality—but none of it has much to do with the individual characteristics of the particular wave they are riding. The wave has become secondary to the routine.

I still surf, although I had a gap of nearly 25 years in my wave riding caused by the exigencies of playing Marine, pilot, doctoral student, professor, husband, and father. Adult things interfere with surfing because it requires a lifestyle, not just some allocated time every other day like going to a gym or running the trails. Nature is a fickle mistress: she will give you waves but the wrong wind and tide or perhaps a perfect offshore breeze and the right tide—but no waves. When the waves are pumping and conditions are right, a surfer must drop everything and hit the beach. A day late (or even a few hours late) will cause the tardy surfer to hear, “You should have been here yesterday.” I’ve been fortunate to catch some great days—I had the biggest surf of my life the week before Christmas in Hawaii—and am paid enough deference to have a few waves to myself. Maybe it’s my white hair. And I can still say, after all these years, there is nothing as stoking as a good wave. ■

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Senior Pentagon sources report that President George W. Bush has informed Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that his principal foreign-policy objective during his second term will be to change the governments of both Syria and Iran.

Per Bush, the U.S. cannot allow Iran to become nuclear-weapons capable, and all contingencies to deal with the problem must be developed premised on the expectation that nonmilitary efforts will be unavailing. Staff work is already underway at the National Security Council to develop a series of position papers that will articulate the new policy, particularly *vis-à-vis* Iran. Pentagon-generated analyses, largely blocked in the first Bush term by former Secretary of State Colin Powell, will provide the backbone for the new U.S. policy initiative, which will be openly articulated as regime change. New National Intelligence Estimates and studies on Iran’s weapons of mass destruction are also being prepared by the intelligence community. The new Iran policy has already been suggested in the president’s public remarks, particularly his State of the Union address, in which he promised solidarity with those Iranians who opposed the ayatollahs, though government spokespersons have avoided explicitly calling for regime change. The White House does not support European diplomatic efforts because it does not believe that they will lead to a verifiable Iranian agreement to cease all nuclear-weapons development efforts. As in Iraq, President Bush believes that only a military option to deal with Iran will bring about the desired result. Aggressive intelligence and reconnaissance activity directed against Iran is currently underway, including testing Iranian air defenses. New but still uncorroborated intelligence that Iran has acquired uranium hexafluoride from North Korea has added urgency to the situation. That material is precisely the step in the nuclear cycle that Iran was having serious difficulty in producing.



Pakistan has issued new rules of engagement permitting its army to fire on U.S. forces that cross the border from Afghanistan without co-ordinating first.

President Musharraf has been receiving angry reports from his military that U.S. forces have been engaging in hot pursuit across the border in violation of bilateral agreements. Musharraf is also unhappy about the recent abrupt withdrawal of Predators and other surveillance resources from Pakistan for transfer to Iraq for use against Iran. According to high-level Pakistani sources, Musharraf and his army chiefs expended a great deal of political capital in their support of the al-Qaeda hunt, clashing frequently with hostile tribesmen along the border. The U.S. Central Command’s January announcement that the drones and other supporting surveillance technologies that were being used against al-Qaeda would be withdrawn to support “elections in Iraq” was an unpleasant surprise, particularly when “in Iraq” turned out to be a euphemism for “against Iran.” The drones have not yet been returned, and many operations in the border areas are reported to be on hold. Musharraf has had a difficult time explaining to his own supporters in the military, and to the Pakistani public, why he continues to be so supportive of U.S. policies in the region.

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Arts & Letters

FILM

[*Bride and Prejudice*]

Austen in a Sari

By Steve Sailer

Each week in 1930, America's 123 million people bought 90 million movie tickets. There were no televisions, no home air conditioners, and little street crime, so many ladies went to the show in the evenings. Hollywood catered to their tastes with countless musicals and love stories.

Today, the average American purchases a ticket less than one-seventh as often, and moviegoers are predominantly male and young. Hollywood therefore specializes, at vast expense, in blowing stuff up.

Foreign film industries can't compete with our \$100 million evil-robot-onslaught flicks, but they can make women's movies. The leading supplier to semiliterate Third World ladies is the Indian movie business, Bombay-centered "Bollywood."

India is an apt setting for complicated love stories because it has barely begun the slow transition from arranged marriages to love matches, what Samuel Huntington calls "the Romeo and Juliet revolution." The conflict between a complex social order and true love might be the most compelling and fertile subject in all of literature, which is why Jane Austen's novels have been filmed so often. But Westerners now have so much sexual freedom that they dither their lives away, unable to commit because somebody better might always come

along. This makes for clever comedy, as "Seinfeld," "Friends," and "Bridget Jones's Diary" attest, but paltry passion.

In contrast, because the maidens in Bollywood movies, which don't even show kissing, can't have sex, and their parents have vetted their beaux' financial prospects, they are free to bask in romance.

Since dumping Fabian socialism in 1991, India has been on the rise. Many Americans guiltily worry that they really ought to learn something about this ignored giga-country, but the subcontinent is dauntingly convoluted to the point of sensory overload, as exemplified by the dazzling opening chapter of Kipling's *Kim*.

But now a guide is at hand, offering a relatively painless way for Westerners to see a quasi-Bollywood movie adapted to our politically correct tastes.

Gurinder Chadha, a Kenyan-born Sikh raised in Britain, directed the surprise low-budget hit of 2003, "Bend It Like Beckham," a cliché-ridden girl-power movie about a teenage London Sikh lass who would rather head soccer balls into the goal than play a role in her big sister's marriage ceremony. Call it "My Big Fat Sikh Heading."

Yet seeing an Indian wedding sounded like a lot more fun than your typical nil-nil soccer match, and Chadha must have agreed because her new film, "Bride and Prejudice," a Bollywoodized English-language musical version of Austen's classic transplanted to Amritsar, features three glittering weddings, each of which must have cost a zillion rupees.

Actually, the budget for "Bride and Prejudice" was only \$7 million, one-ninth of the typical American studio effort, but for that sum you can hire all the top talent in Bollywood, including its most idolized actress, green-eyed Aishwarya Rai, the Miss World of 1994. She

plays, curiously enough, the Elizabeth Bennett role of the witty but not beautiful daughter. (Interestingly, the ravishing Miss Rai weighs about 20 pounds more than she would if she were working in America. Apparently, Indians don't find Hollywood's mandatory famine-victim diet alluring.)

Cinematographically, even India's best can't begin to compare to what Chinese films like "Hero" are doing, but the costumes and sets of "Bride and Prejudice" are so extravagant that the artlessness of their presentation hardly detracts. Likewise, Bollywood choreography, which the film's rich American Mr. Darcy (Luke Wilson look-alike Martin Henderson) describes as screwing in a light bulb with one hand while patting the dog with the other, is ho-hum, but the Indians endearingly don't care, and you will have more fun if you don't either. Bollywood is blessedly free of irony.

As a writer and director, Chadha is a hack, but her movies are interesting precisely because of her crowd-pleasing commercial instincts. She overlights the swirling colors and when in doubt about what to shoot always opts for another close-up of her lovely leading lady. Her attempts at crafting spunky retorts to Mr. Darcy produce merely resentful post-colonialist cant, third-hand renditions of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. Mercifully, it's soon time for more dancing.

Fortunately, Nitin Ganatra is hilarious as Mr. Kholi, Austen's insufferable unwanted suitor. Here, he's a San Fernando Valley accountant with preposterous hip-hop affectations in the Ali G tradition. He can promise American green cards not just to the heroine, but, eventually, to her entire family, which shows how our inexplicable immigration laws encourage the loveless arranged marriages our movies oppose. ■

Rated PG-13 for one barnyard expletive.