

# HER FAMILY / HIS™

## Reviewing Family Entertainment



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### You've Got To Have Heart

This is the month of dozens of roses and boxes of chocolates, paper Valentine cards and school dances. It is time to honor love and romance again. When you have been married as long as I have, love becomes something deeper than Valentines and roses- it becomes the passionate work that keeps a family together, the bond that connects generation to generation and the weave of the yarn that knits itself into a community. It is the collective memory of the past and the character of the present all condensed into the little word, "love." And wherever we find love, we find home. With all of that in mind, it seems appropriate to take this month to look at home entertainment. Home entertainment comes in many forms- Blockbuster, Netflix, Ipod, Game Boy, X-Box, HBO, DirecTV, and CD's, just to name a few. When you stop to think about it- every form of entertainment imaginable from Piñata to Play Station has invaded our homes. DVD's seem to be the most universal form of home entertainment, and I have two recent DVD experiences that I can recommend to anyone who celebrates love through family: *Together in Time* and *Napoleon Dynamite*.

*Together in Time* is an award-winning DVD narrated by Peter Coyote and distributed by Great Meadow Music, [www.greatmeadowmusic.com](http://www.greatmeadowmusic.com). The documentary is a tenderhearted romp about a dance born in 19th century America that was kept alive by the free-spirited and impassioned native sons of this ever-changing country- the Contra Dance. Contra is a blend of English country dancing with Celtic fiddling and French-Canadian rhythms, and was created in the USA. The storytellers and dancers span a hundred years in age from a 13 year-old musician to a 101 year-old dancer. This DVD is a provocative social history of how Americans have fun, and build communities on the strength of that fun. *Together in Time* is a love song for all of us Americans.

*Napoleon Dynamite* is a gift to every parent confused about his or her teenage child. Just as *Easy Rider* defined the soul of a generation, Jared Hess, director, and Jon Heder, playing Napoleon Dynamite, have collaborated to create the pulse-setting story of this kick back generation. With penetrating honesty and selfless humor, the film captures the essence of a teen nerd who somehow understands that friends and family, regardless of their flaws, are "Sweet" and worth their weight in gold. The film climaxes with a wonderful scene that shows the audience that all "sweet" moves don't belong just to the cool.

The film is a love story on many levels- the entire production team met at Brigham Young University Film School as friends and students; Jared and Jerusha Hess co-wrote the screenplay as a husband-and-wife team, and it was a totally independent film that was made a national hit by the love of its audiences. *Napoleon Dynamite* won the Sundance Film Festival in Comedy and went on to win for Best Feature Film Comedy at the US Comedy Arts Festival, and was the top selling DVD release this Christmas. Quite a journey in a single year

So enjoy February. Rent or buy a good DVD, snuggle up in the TV room, eat popcorn to your heart's content and celebrate all the wonderful things we call "love."

This month's focus is home entertainment and the ubiquitous DVD. Owning the DVD version of your favorite films makes your viewing pleasure more controllable, immediate and much more cost effective with repeated viewings. With a DVD's outtakes, bloopers and added interviews, this digital disk is simply too good a pastime to pass up.

The sleeper DVD hit over this past Holiday season was *Napoleon Dynamite*, a small independent film written by a young husband and wife team, Jared and Jerusha Hess. Jared directed this fresh and unpretentious feature film that plays so honest and true in depicting its overriding theme of teenage angst, that our teenage son and all of his friends talked on and on about it for weeks. We still periodically hear impersonations of Napoleon Dynamite's (the character of the film title) expressions like "Go-osh," "Idiot," and "Sweet" around the house - the telltale sign of success if you subscribe to the notion that imitation is an elevated form of flattery.

Fundamentally, this is a goofy film with a car load of physical gags and unusual subject matters including a time machine, a fascination with cows, tether ball, martial arts and oddball situations featuring deliciously eccentric people- but it is a ride worth your time and attention. Loosely based on the citizens of Hess' hometown of Preston, Idaho (pop. 4,682), the town's motto is "Vision, Spirit, Action!" - and this film explodes with all three. Watching *Napoleon Dynamite* feels a bit like hanging out with some nerdy friends who have a remarkable way of making things work out for the best at the end.

*Napoleon Dynamite* is a small, wonderfully focused film with unanticipated laughs and characters you will root for and care about. It doesn't reach to define anything about America's youth, but it brilliantly captures what many of them may be thinking or feeling - not a bad task for any film to pull off.

Another DVD worth watching with the family this month is *Together in Time: A Story of New England Contra Music and Dance*, a film by Steve Alves and narrated by Peter Coyote. "Not exactly my cup of java," you might think. Take some time to explore the origins of the wonderful and heart-felt contra music that still has people tapping their toes and kicking up their heels in towns and cities across America today. It's also fun to see people come together in humble surroundings and celebrate each other and their community.

This film has an educational yet entertaining approach to its specific topic, and there is an especially tender scene of a father playing a musical duet with his daughter on the violin and piano that is memorable and haunting. It serves to remind us all to communicate with our children through whatever tools, instruments or means possible.

Being February, it's the month of love, feelings and things of the heart. Happy Valentine's Day, and I hope you'll all find a DVD the whole family can view and love together!

*Both having degrees in theater and having studied in Oxford and Paris respectively, Suzanne and Chris Shoemaker now call Los Angeles their home, where they live with 2 sons and 2 grandsons.*

