

Holiday Video Game Gift Guide

Have a gamer on this year's shopping list? No worries. The DT's opinions editor to the rescue.

It's the start of the holiday season. Time to plan trips home, study for finals, and most importantly, figure out what awesome video games you're going to put on your Christmas wish list.

This is made increasingly difficult by the fact that more games were released in the past couple of months than Santa could possibly fit in his sleigh — and December promises at least a few more.

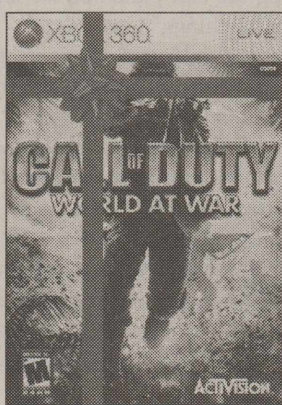
Britton Peele



But never fear! With this guide, it is my intention to at least help get your greedy gaming hands started.

Ignoring most games that came out much earlier in the year — really, people, you should have bought "Grand Theft Auto 4" and "Super Smash Bros. Brawl" already — here are some of the biggest and best games this holiday season, separated by categories better to suit your playing style.

THE ACTION GAMER



"Call of Duty: World at War"

Unlike "Call of Duty 4," which brought the series into modern warfare, "Call of Duty: World at War" goes back to the battles of World War II. However, it uses the same engine that made "CoD4" immensely fun and popular, delivering great gameplay and a fantastic online experience. For the 360, PS3, Wii and PC.

"Far Cry 2"

Set in Africa, this open-world first-person shooter is packed with action, mercenaries, guns and wildfires. While the plot may be lacking, players have a lot of choices of which directions they will take in any given scenario. For the 360, PS3 and PC.

"Gears of War 2"

"Bigger, better, and more badass" than the original, "Gears of War 2" combines adrenaline-laced gameplay with excellent graphics, a great story, and outstanding multiplayer modes. For the Xbox 360.

"Prince of Persia"

Coming in early December, "Prince of Persia" promises to build on everything that made the "Prince of Persia: Sands of Time" trilogy on the last generation of consoles such a success. With a new, cel-shaded art style, insane acrobatic feats have never looked this good. For 360 and PS3.

"Resistance 2"

The alternate-history war with the monstrous Chimera isn't over. This sequel to the best-selling first-person shooter is more hectic than ever, with a 60-player online deathmatch and eight-player online cooperative play.

THE ROLE-PLAYER

"Chrono Trigger"

On the downside, this is the same adventure you enjoyed on the SNES 13 years ago. On the upside, this is the same adventure you enjoyed on the SNES 13 years ago. It's got the same amazing plot and timeless gameplay that fans remember and love. Tons of extras and refinements make this the definitive version of the classic. For the DS.

"Fable 2"

This fantasy epic lets you become the world of Albion's greatest savior ... or its most feared villain. In addition to a main story featuring open-world gameplay and third-person combat, you're given a large variety of side activities and choices. You can hang out at the pub, buy houses, slaughter villagers, get married (to more than one woman if you so choose) and even choose whether to have protected or unprotected sex. The world is yours to play in. For the 360.

"Fallout 3"

In this post-apocalyptic open-world RPG, players are given absolute freedom to do whatever they want — even if they never want to follow the game's main storyline. Impactful decisions between good and evil are present, giving you choices that not only affect the story or individual lives but even whether an entire town will be saved or nuked. A rich story and possibly more than 100 hours of gameplay await. For 360, PS3 and PC.

"The Witcher: Enhanced Edition"

When "The Witcher" was released last year, it was welcomed with high acclaim and was heralded as one of the best PC RPGs in years. But a lot of people ignored the experience. Now, "The Witcher: Enhanced Edition" is the definitive "Witcher" experience, with a rewritten script and rerecorded voice acting, as well as upgraded visuals and fewer bugs. If you missed out on this dark fantasy epic before, don't make that mistake again. For the PC.

"World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King"

If you're already a "World of Warcraft" addict, you probably already have its second expansion pack, "Wrath of the Lich King." But if you've been holding back, don't miss out on the chance to explore the icy realm of Northrend or explore the intricacies of the new Death Knight class. For the PC.

THE STRATEGIST & PUZZLE-SOLVER

"Professor Layton and the Curious Village"

Exercising your brain is rarely as fun as it is when solving mysteries with Prof. Layton. In a great, stylish murder mystery in which players have more than 100 touch-screen puzzles to solve, this game should be on the wish list of anybody who likes to use their brain. For the DS.

"Spore"

From the creator of "The Sims," "Spore" gives you the task of creating a creature and guiding it through all the stages of evolution — from simple organism to space-faring powerhouse. The creature creator alone will be enough to satisfy, as it allows for near-limitless creativity. For the PC.

"World of Goo"

As a \$10 downloadable title, there's an outstanding value in "World of Goo," which has players using their Wii remotes to build crazy goo structures in order to help goo blobs reach their goal and escape imprisonment from an evil corporation. For the Wii.

THE TOE-TAPPER

"Guitar Hero World Tour"

The "Guitar Hero" name is a little less appropriate now, as "World Tour" follows in "Rock Band's" footsteps and adds drums and vocals to the mix. Along with a song creator, fans of the series will find a lot to love with this new addition. For PS2, PS3, 360 and Wii.

"Lips"

If you're a karaoke fan, this is the game for you. With a variety of songs out of the box as well as the ability to add songs from your own music library off of your MP3 player or Xbox hard drive, there's a lot of enjoyment to be had here. Wireless microphones included. For the 360.

"Rock Band 2"

More than just a song pack, "Rock Band 2" addresses a lot of the problems that fans encountered in the original, making it even more of an absolute blast to play both alone and with friends. For the PS2, PS3, 360, and Wii.

THE HORROR FAN

"Dead Space"

Taking the best aspects of classics like "Bioshock" and "Resident Evil 4," "Dead Space" is an extremely good and immensely terrifying survival horror game in which you have to cut off the limbs of undead aliens and discover the shocking fate of Planet Cracker class ship USG Ishimura. For the 360, PS3 and PC.

"Left 4 Dead"

It's zombies vs. humans in this multiplayer gore fest. A band of four human players must work together to survive hordes of human-controlled undead with explosive results. The game is a blast when played with friends, but avoid it if you never intend to play online with others. For the 360 and PC.

THE SPORTS ENTHUSIAST

"Motorstorm: Pacific Rift"

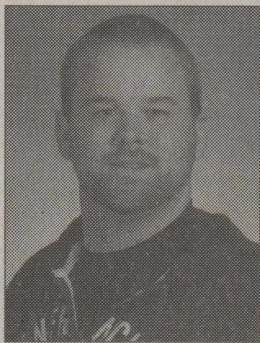
Continuing in the tradition of the gorgeous visuals of the PlayStation 3's launch title original, "Pacific Rift" takes things out of the desert and somewhat more lush scenery. With twice as many tracks as the original and great multiplayer, off-road racing fans should enjoy this one. For the PS3.

"Tecmo Bowl: Kickoff"

Remember "Tecmo Bowl" back from your old Nintendo days? It's back, and provides the beloved over-the-top, all-American football experience you would want. Easy to pick up and play — both alone and with friends, online and off — it's a football title that can be enjoyed by more than just "Madden" fans. For the DS.



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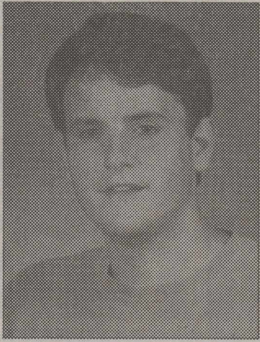
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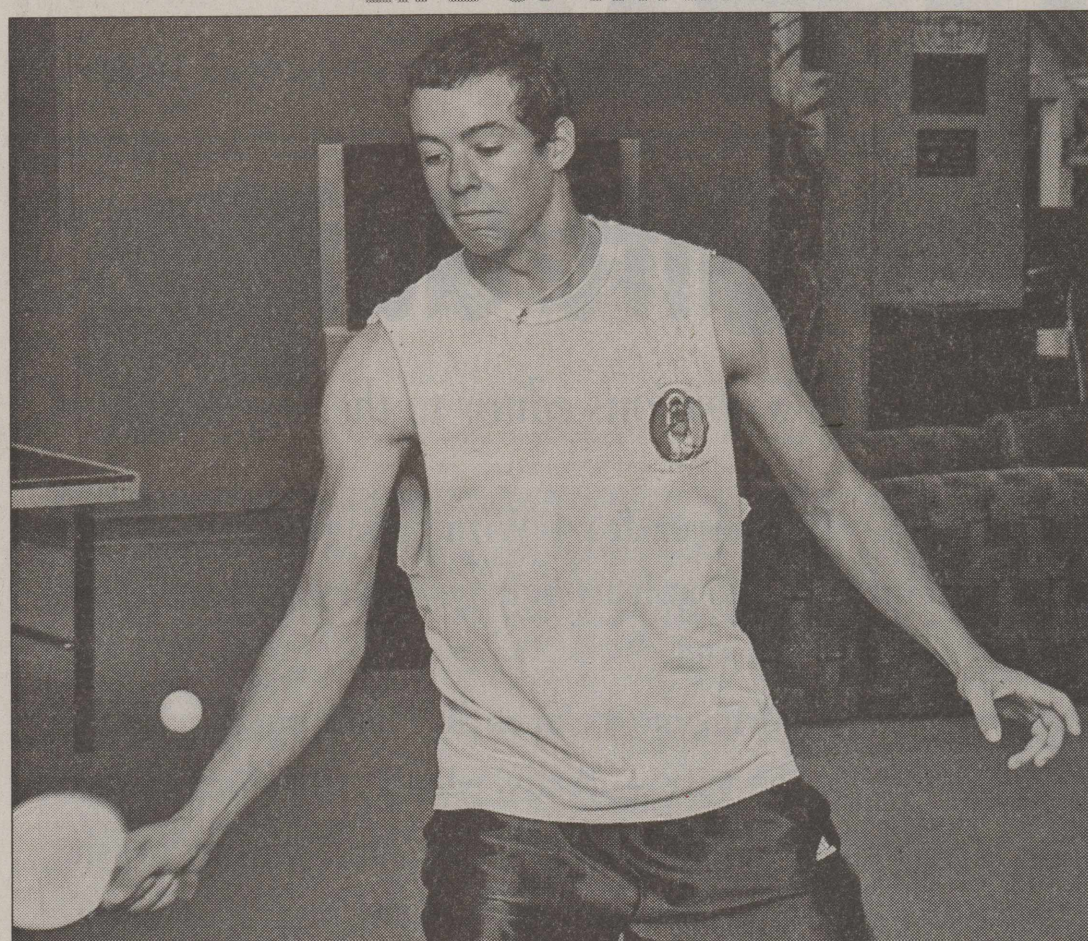


PHOTO BY KEN MUIR/The Daily Toreador

RYAN NIMRY, A freshman agricultural economics major from Lubbock, plays ping pong Monday at the Robert H. Ewalt Student Recreation Center.

U. Illinois students join 'No-Shave Novembeard'

By KELLY GUSTAFSON
DAILY ILLINI (U. ILLINOIS)

For some students on the University of Illinois campus, November marks a month of stoic rebellion; they put down their razors and participate in "No-Shave Novembeard" by growing beards, mustaches, and in some cases, mutton chops. While it is a fad that usually only affects the men on campus, women are also welcome to participate.

For Eric Anderson, sophomore in LAS, the month-long challenge offers him an excuse to skip the daily shaving routine. His steadfast determination to stick it out the entire month has persevered; he insisted he will not shave until Dec. 1, though he admitted the task proved to be more challenging than he originally anticipated.

"It itches like crazy, but I am

going to get the 'Kyle Orton neck beard,' I will not shave it," Anderson said.

Anderson's roommate and sophomore in Aviation, Kyle Johnson, is also braving the challenge. The pair views the month as an opportunity for friendly competition to see who can grow the longer, thicker, more grizzly-like beard.

"It's a testosterone-fueled event," Anderson said. "Our egos like to think we can grow a sweeter beard than the other guy."

Anderson said the money they save from shaving supplies this month is going toward the apartment video game fund.

Sophomore in LAS Sean Berbert said he is also participating for the first time because of the competition between him and his housemates.

"We figured it might be fun to

see who can come out on top, who can hold out the longest," Berbert said.

Both Anderson and Johnson first heard of the event while they were in high school but had not taken the idea seriously until this year.

"It's something I've always looked to do but never had anyone to do it with," Johnson said. "Plus, in high school you're still under the thumb of your parents, and my mom is not a fan of my facial hair."

Johnson said he recently told his mother of his commitment to the cause, but thinks he will be forced to shave for Thanksgiving.

"She will definitely see the damage that has been done," Johnson said.

Anderson added that he hadn't told his parents yet; his bear-like beard was going to be a "Thanksgiving surprise."

Chris Brown snags 3 American Music Awards while Kanye West collects 2

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Chris Brown was the big winner, but it was Kanye West's night at the American Music Awards.

Instead of his typical tantrum — a trend West started four years ago when he lost the favorite new artist prize — the rapper claimed two trophies Sunday and called on his colleagues to up their game.

"It's our responsibility as musicians to keep pushing each other," West said. "We will be the new Beatles, the new (Jimi) Hendrix. I want to be Elvis."

West was named favorite male rap/hip-hop artist and his CD, "Graduation," won favorite rap/hip-hop album.

Brown took the night's top honors — artist of the year — as well as favorite male artist in both the pop/rock and soul/R&B categories.

"I was shocked," the 19-year-old crooner said backstage. "I'm so thankful and grateful. I thought Coldplay should have won the award, but I'll take it."

Brown's gal pal, Rihanna — who wore chains and a leather corset to perform her love ballad, "Rehab" — was named favorite female artist in both the pop/rock and soul/R&B categories. Alicia Keys was another double winner: Her CD, "As I Am," was both pop/rock and soul/R&B album winner.

The American Music Awards traditionally centers on its performances, and Sunday was no exception. The show featured high-energy sets from Miley Cyrus, Ne-Yo and Beyonce, though a pair of lackluster medleys opened the program at the Nokia Theatre. Christina Aguilera channeled Madonna and the New Kids on the Block channeled an earlier version of themselves as each sang their latest singles and greatest hits.

Pink's new track, "Sober," was awkwardly introduced by slurring rocker Scott Weiland, formerly of the Stone Temple Pilots. Also performing were The Jonas Brothers, the Pussycat Dolls, Coldplay and

Annie Lennox, who won the Award of Merit.

"I never thought I would live to see the day that I could be 53 years old standing on a stage," Lennox said as she accepted the trophy from Justin Timberlake. "It's been an incredible journey. Music: my friend, my accompaniment through life."

Other winners included Brad Paisley for favorite country artist, Taylor Swift for favorite female country act, and Rascal Flatts for favorite country favorite band, duo or group.

"I didn't really think that I had a chance at winning," Swift confessed backstage. "I thought, yes, it's good to be nominated, but I honestly didn't think I was going to win this award. I can't believe that I did. I can't believe that the fans did that for me. Everybody on MySpace, they're the reason I am holding this award right now."

Fans chose the night's winners through online votes.

Boy George goes on trial for false imprisonment

LONDON (AP) — A Norwegian escort told a court Monday that Boy George manacled him to a bedroom wall and beat him with a metal chain after accusing him of hacking into his computer.

The former Culture Club singer is on trial for the false imprisonment of 29-year-old Audun Carlsen.

The 47-year-old singer, who is standing trial under his real name, George O'Dowd, denies the charge.

Carlsen told London's Snaresbrook Crown Court that he met the

singer through a Web site and went to his London home for a naked photo shoot. After the encounter Boy George sent a series e-mails accusing Carlsen of hacking into his computer, but Carlsen nonetheless agreed to return for a second photo session several weeks later in April 2007.

Carlsen told the jury that when he arrived Boy George and another man held him down and beat him before the singer handcuffed him to a hook in the bedroom wall.

"George was slapping me and

beating me and punching me and screaming things," Carlsen said.

Carlsen said he was able to escape by unscrewing the hook and running for the door.

"I took a bit of time getting the door open and he had a metal chain that he was hitting me with," Carlsen said.

Carlsen said he ran into the street clad only in his underwear. The court was shown photographs of red welts on Carlsen's head and injuries to his arm which he said had been inflicted during the attack.

O'Donnell plucks teen from obscurity for TV movie

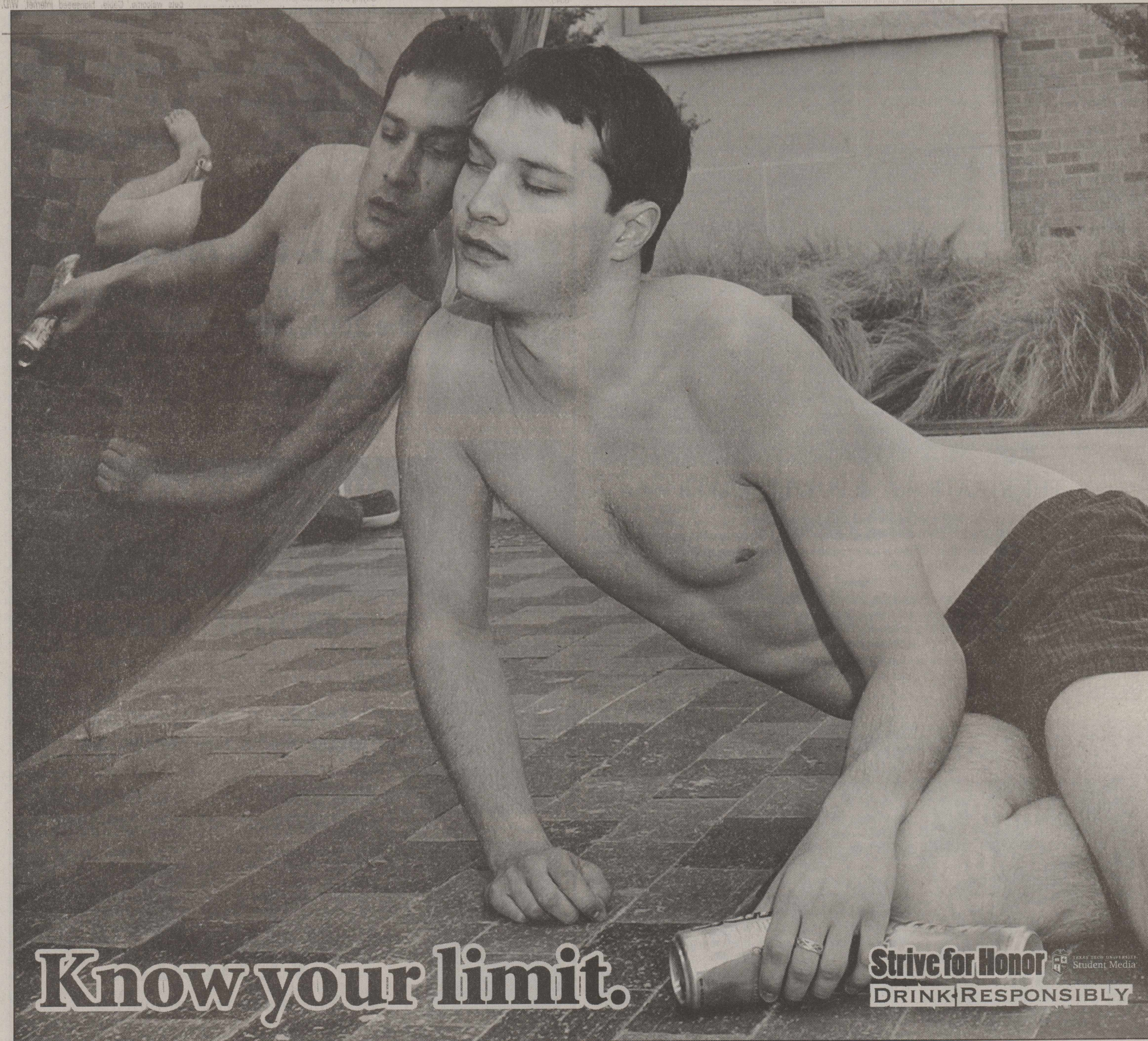
DETROIT (AP) — Rosie O'Donnell saw a teenager at a Detroit restaurant and thought he had a face that belonged in pictures.

Now 17-year-old Philip Johnson has the lead role in "America," a

Lifetime network movie also starring O'Donnell and Ruby Dee that is set for broadcast in February.

Johnson, a senior at Cass Technological High School, was eating lunch at Small Plates, a

popular downtown eatery, when O'Donnell spotted him and asked whether he would be interested in trying out for a film. He took a screen test the next day and won the title role.



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