

Style

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C

Appreciation

Bruce Gary And the Riff He Drummed Into Your Head

By JOHN KELLY
Washington Post Staff Writer

You didn't know Bruce Gary. But I guarantee if you were capable of conscious thought in the summer of 1979, you knew Bruce Gary's handiwork. You may, in fact, have been driven to the brink of insanity by it.

Da da boom, da da boom, da boom, da da boom...

No? Let me supply the lyric:
"M-M-M-Y SHARONA!"

That was the Knack and that was Bruce Gary, the band's original drummer, who died of cancer Tuesday in Los Angeles at age 55.

Drummers everywhere — from Def Leppard's one-armed skins basher to amateurs whose only percussion is pencils-on-desks, fingers-on-steering-wheels — should mourn his passing. Few are the drummers who so resolutely pound their way into the nation's skull.

I spoke to Gary a few years ago for a profile of the Knack. The drums are not typically an instrument that attract the shy and retiring, and Gary, the son of a tile and linoleum salesman in Canoga Park, Calif., was a bundle of pre-Ritalin energy in search of an outlet. He found it in an older cousin's drum set. When the cousin got bored with the drums he gave them to Gary, who set them up at home and played along with his older sister's Little Richard and Ray Charles records.

A drum set in the house! His parents must have been thrilled.

"The reason they allowed that was that I was a very hyper kid and they thought that would help physically get that steam out," he told me.

It certainly got Gary out. He left home at 15, then played with the likes of Albert Collins, Jack

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When One Cosmic Door Closes...

Yesterday, scientists made it official: Pluto doesn't measure up. It has been stripped of its "classical" planetary status and demoted to "dwarf" planet, or planetette. But surely being kicked out of the Cosmos Club won't spell the end for our little neighbor 2.7 billion miles from Earth. Herewith, some suggestions of future roles for Pluto:

- Hacky Sack.
- Setting for new Discovery Channel documentary, "Starbucks: The Unconquered Territory."
- Off-off-offshore tax haven.
- New Red&Kias tackle.
- Rest area (no vending machines).
- Learn to accept self as useless giant snowball of methane, water and rock. And be the best darn methane-water-rock snowball you can be! — *Style Staff*



**INSIDE:
STYLE ON THE GO**

Now in color in its regular spot behind the comics, Style on the Go bids farewell to the region's outdoor events. | Page C11



Papale fills his home with mementos from his 1970s NFL glory days and from the new film he inspired. "He really was the real-life Rocky," recalls a Philadelphia newsmen.



Mark Wahlberg portrays Papale in the Disney version of his life.

Movies

A Rookie Revived

Philly Hometown Hero Vince Papale Revels in His 'Invincible' Life

By NEELY TUCKER
Washington Post Staff Writer

CHERRY HILL, N.J. How long does glory last? Can you bottle it? What if the apex of your life mirrors an American icon of film, and then, 30 years later, Hollywood makes a movie about you?

If you're just-south-of-Philly kid Vince Papale, a real-life "Rocky," the oldest rookie in NFL history and the subject of Disney's "Invincible," you'd wonder about these things on your deck in the late summer sunshine, a few days before the film's opening.

The phone is ringing off the wall, the

RickBerry is buzzing, the kids are begging you to take them to the pool, a photographer is calling for directions to the house, and you have radio interviews stacked up like planes in a holding pattern.

All this nearly three decades after the cheering stopped and Papale's life seemed to fall apart in divorce, bitterness and blown opportunities.

They leave that stuff out of the movies, you know, the part about the rest of your life.

And yet, somehow, here he sits, tall and athletic at 60, jeans and a knit shirt, barefoot, hair slicked back, big smile, sparkling eyes, light streaming through the huge picture window in the living

room: Larger-Than-Life Vince Papale. Glory, once again.

"It's just so incredible that, you know, in about 53 hours I'm going to be sitting in a movie theater in New York, watching a movie that is essentially about — me," he says. "When I heard that Disney had bought the rights to the film, I just went primal. Went out of my mind. I was going, 'Disney! Disney! The kids were in the car, they thought I'd lost it.'"

This time around, when Hollywood can gloss over the rough notes, it's almost better than the real thing.

In 1976, Vince Papale was a 30-year-old guy from Glenolden, a working-class

See PAPALE, C6, Col. 1

ALSO REVIEWED

■ "Invincible," the winning saga of Vince Papale's rookie season with the Philadelphia Eagles, and "Beerfest," a crude comedy about the Secret Beer Olympics | C6



■ "Factotum" and "Half Nelson," a pair of intriguing movies about struggling, down-and-out writers | C7



Antwan A. Patton, half of the group OutKast, struts with showgirls in "Idlewild."

'Idlewild:' A Rap Movie With Rapturous Originality

By TERRISA WELTZ
Washington Post Staff Writer

By all rights, "Idlewild," the much-promoted Prohibition-era musical starring the Grammy-winning OutKast, those quirky space-age rappers from the ATL, shouldn't work. Shouldn't work, wouldn't work, but somehow does work. For all its shortcomings, "Idlewild" also has something that few films can pull off: moments of such cinematic fabulosity, breathtaking dance

sequences and idiosyncratic 3-D animation flourishes that we are more than willing to forgive it for all of its sins.

Yes, it's a rap movie in that it's got rappers and rapping and gangstas and enough cartoon-level violence to make Will E. Coyote blanch. But "Idlewild" takes the rapping actor — or is it acting rapper? — genre and melds it with the gangster flicks of the '30s, mixing and matching influences for a startlingly

See IDLEWILD, C12, Col. 3

'Quinceañera': The End of a Neighborhood, And Childhood

By STEPHEN HUNTER
Washington Post Staff Writer

The good news in "Quinceañera" is that the kids are all right. Actually, they're better than all right; they're downright superb.

The kids would be the otherwise slight picture's two stars, Emili Rios and Jesse Garcia, who play Magdalena, about to turn 15 and evidently pregnant, though she's a virgin (you think you got problems!), and her cousin Carlos, 16 and gay in macho Angeleno culture.

The scene is the neighborhood of Echo Park in Los Angeles. In fact, "Echo Park" was originally the title of the film, and it's easy to see why. The young directors, Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland, are also interested in documenting the changing face of the neighborhood itself, and how do a good,

See QUINCEAÑERA, C12, Col. 1



FASHION
Tennis Players
As Stylish
Celebrities | C2

THEATER Chita Rivera to star in Signature's "The Visit" | C2

NAMES & FACES Ex-POW Jessica Lynch is expecting | C3

BOOK WORLD "Cut Loose," the agonies of dumped older women | C5



The Man Behind the 'Invincible' Myth

PAPALE. From *CI*

suburb just south of Philadelphia International Airport. He was Italian American, from a huge family (his parents had eight siblings each), his dad at the Westinghouse plant doing muscle work on nuclear submarine construction.

Papale had a degree in marketing from St. Joseph's College, taught business classes at his old high school, tended a little bar at a friend's place. He'd only played one year of high school football, but he was a track star in college and had made it into the World Football League as a receiver, playing two years at about \$800 a game before the league folded.

He was divorced, sharing an apartment with two other guys. Drove a beater. Ran six miles a day through the old neighborhood, staying in shape, one of these relentlessly enthusiastic guys you meet in a bar, telling you about his most recent game in a rough touch-football league — see, man, there was this pass across the middle

When Dick Vermeil took over the lowly Philadelphia Eagles, he held open tryouts. Of all the ex-jocks, wannabes and damn good athletes who turned out, only one man got invited to training camp: Vinny Papale.

He survived and became the oldest rookie in league history. Eagles fans went nuts, some guy coming down out of the stands and making the team, right there with Harold Carmichael! He was even captain of the special-teams unit. A sportswriter dubbed him "the INVINCIBLE Papale," and a legend was born. He'd get on the field and Eagles fans — proud of their reputation as some of the roughest in sports — would just go crazy.

"He earned every bit of it," Vermeil remembers in a telephone interview. "I always had a passion for those free-agent kids, I always liked making sure they got a real opportunity. He came in there and made it."

That same year, moviegoers saw Sylvester Stallone as one Rocky Balboa, also a working-class Italian kid from Philly, a lug of a boxer who also trained by running every morning (cue "Goona Fly Now"), and he gets the fabled one-in-a-million shot against the world champ.

"He really was the real-life Rocky, people would call him that," says Terry Ruggles, morning anchor on WCAU-TV, the local NBC affiliate, who covered the story. "There wasn't a bar in Philadelphia where people wouldn't buy him a drink."

Yo, Adrian! Yo, Vinny!
**ADDDRRRIIAANNNN!!! ROCKY!
 ROCKY! ROCKY! VVVIIINNNNNNYYYY-
 YY!!!**

1976, baby. Swimming pools, movie stars.

"I sent my jeans out to the dry cleaners," Papale laughs. "Man, that was big time."

There is a genre of films that turn sports achievement into myth, fable and underdog redemption tale — He Who Overcomes All to Win. "Chariots of Fire," "Hooiers," "Cinderella Man," "Miracle," "Remember the Titans."

But there is also a subgenre in which "winning" is a relative term. Rocky got the title fight but lost. In "Rudy," based on a true story, diminutive Daniel Ruettinger stays on the Notre Dame practice squad for two years before getting into the last game of the season. In "The Rookie," another real-life tale, high school baseball coach Jim Morris takes a dare from his teenage players, tries out for the majors — and makes it to the pros at age 35.

This is Papale's story, where the victory is in The Quest, though actual accomplishments are modest. Rudy played 27 sec-



PHOTO BY SARGALL, COURTESY OF THE WASHINGTON POST



Vince Papale at home with his wife, Janet, and children, 9-year-old Vincent and 12-year-old Gabriella. At left, Papale holds the first game ball awarded to him during his improbable Philadelphia Eagles career, which inspired the new movie "Invincible."

onds of a single game; Morris lasted less than a year; Papale managed to last three seasons on the field. He made some tackles on punts and kickoffs, caught one pass and that was it.

Still, you think people don't eat these stories up? "The Rookie" did \$75 million at the box office, sweetheart, even if Jim Morris lasted all of 15 innings in the pros.

"Vince's story is of a guy with tremendous heart, not unlike Rocky, a real scrapper," says "Invincible" director Ericson Core. "He was a character who got knocked down all the time, his wife left him, he lost his job, and his friends didn't think he could do it. . . . It wasn't until he was getting knocked down by players on the team that he really started to hit back."

Despite the movie's inventions (which are fairly sizable, such as some on-field exploits that never quite happened), things weren't really so glamorous.

Papale made just \$21,000 his first year and never more than \$45,000. He did an ad for a hip clothing company, but his only payment was the pair of jeans he wore in the shot. Before his fourth season, he blew out both shoulders.

The bright spot was that he parlayed his local celebrity status into a gig doing sports reporting on Philadelphia television. He had a contract to do it full time. He and Vermeil made a "collaborative decision," Papale recalls, that he would retire. He was 34.

"I was looking at that TV career, and it was looking pretty lucrative. I had the adoration of the Philly fans. I was a gunner [on the special-teams unit]. I went places, everybody knew who I was. Things looked good."

It was a disaster. Within weeks, the TV station changed management and the new brass dumped him. An emotional guy, he got angry. He burned professional bridges.

"I didn't handle it well. I said things I shouldn't have. I never got to do TV again."

He scrambled to get another job — as a sales rep at Frito-Lay. The Eagles went to the Super Bowl the next year — without him. His second marriage collapsed.

There he was, neighborhood Vinny on the bar stool, big shot no more, peddling potato chips.

Glory days / They'll pass you by . . .

"I'd had a taste of the champagne and honey, and I didn't want to let it go," he says. "The team was on the rise, and I wasn't on it. There was some depression there, it runs in my family. That's pretty much what did my mother in. I'm sure I wasn't very easy to live with. It took me a while to get my self-respect, my dignity back."

He did small-time local radio for eight years. He was a director of fitness for a corporation and then went back into the field of his college training, business management. He went into the mortgage business, where he met Janet Cantwell, a world-class gymnast turned real estate agent, who would become his third wife. (The movie shows them dating while he was trying out for the Eagles; in reality, there was a different marriage and a decade in between.)

He moved over to work as a vice president of a bank, then went to Sallie Mae as an account executive, the position he still has.

He and Janet had two kids, Vincent and Gabriella, and moved into a huge house in a nice neighborhood in this Jersey suburb of Philly. A nice life, much more stable, riding out the string.

And then, like a gift from heaven, "Monday Night Football" did a segment in 2002 about his Eagles heroics.

"Hollywood called the next day," he says, shaking his head.

Script, director, Mark Wahlberg to star, project green-lighted. He went to the set every day during filming. The kids took pictures with movie stars, getting cameos in the film (that's young Vinny as the kid on the playground wearing Papale's No. 83).

How cool is that? He's got pictures, man, videos, everything, from the filming. Memorabilia covers the pool table in the basement. He's got speaking engagements all over the country, signs autographs. People eat this story up like ice cream. And tonight, his name, his life story in lights: Vince Papale, real-life Rocky, Invincible.

Glory, lightning in a bottle, sweet nectar.

Sometimes, life is better than the movies.

A Few Flags on the Play, But We Have a Winner

'Invincible' Overcomes Some Cinematic Fumbles

By ANN HORNADAY
 Washington Post Staff Writer

Every critic brings to the table certain biases, predilections, reflexive reactions and otherwise maddening ticks: a weakness for Mark Ruffalo, for example, or an inexplicable failure to get on board the biopic craze, whether with "Ray" or "Walk the Line." But chief among this critic's soft spots has got to be the story of a real-life underdog who makes good in sports. "The Rookie"? Loved it. "Miracle"? Ditto. "Glory Road"? Glorious — despite what most of the other critics in America said.

So it will surprise few to know that I like "Invincible." Hailing from the same team that brought us "The Rookie" and "Miracle," this is a film that clearly invokes those wonderful movies, albeit with mixed success. The story of Vince Papale, who in 1976 tried out for the Philadelphia Eagles on a whim and wound up not just making the team but helping it overcome a demoralizing losing streak, "Invincible" touches on irresistible themes — determination, guts and proletarian grit — that evoke the American Dream at its most scrappy and appealing. If "Invincible" succumbs to the conventions that so often bedevil Hollywood's attempts at bringing true stories to the screen, even those predilections and maddening ticks can't get in the way of a terrific story.

Papale (pronounced pa-PAHL-ee) was a recently out-of-work substitute teacher and part-time bartender when former UCLA football coach Dick Vermeil arrived in Philadelphia to try to resuscitate the falling Eagles, whose woeful record only magnified the economic and social malaise that had gripped the city in the 1970s. Hated by foes and fans alike, the Eagles were famously scruffy, wearing beards and glaring menacingly under their long hair. Enter the clean-cut California boy Vermeil, who staged open tryouts at Veterans Stadium more as a publicity stunt to get fans excited than anything else. But when Papale — who never played college football — ran a 40-yard dash in 4.5 seconds, Vermeil took notice. It turned out that the 30-year-old Papale also had a pair of sticky hands. But as "Invincible" portrays it, Vermeil decided to keep him not just because of his skills on the field but because "he has heart."

As cliché as that line sounds, Greg Kinnear — who plays Vermeil in yet another note-perfect performance — delivers it with understated subtlety. But the chief problem with "Invincible" is that Mark Wahlberg, who plays Papale, hasn't yet had a chance to exhibit the heart Vermeil is talking about. As a man whose life has pretty much fallen apart (he's not only lost his job but he's been dumped by his wife, and one by one his family and friends are hitting the skids thanks to layoffs, strikes and bad luck), Wahlberg delivers a performance that is so diffident and emotionally muffled that he's almost a cipher.

Moving numbly from the bar where he works to a digitally re-created Veterans Stadium, Wahlberg's Papale barely utters a word, suffering his teammates' derision and jealousy with proletarian stoicism; he's readable mostly through the furrows in his forehead.

Still, Wahlberg is convincing, even if he's chosen a role in which, if the footage that appears during the closing credits is any indication, the real-life guy is better-looking than the actor playing him. And when Wahlberg's Papale does get a chance to interact with the other Eagles, whether Vermeil or training camp roommate Denny Franks, the scenes hum along with a wry, low-key humor. "I'm a center," says Franks, played by former NFL free agent Stink Fisher. "I hate everybody."

That's one of the few laugh-out-loud moments in a movie that could probably use a few more of them, and fewer '70s-era music cues and slow-motion effects. "Invincible" marks the directorial debut of cinematographer Ericson Core, whose roots as a cameraman are both a strength and a weakness: He does an outstanding job of evoking Papale's tribal community of South Philly, yet he too often reverts to over-pretty, stylized flourishes. A scene of a rain-drenched pickup football game plays like an overlong here's-to-good-friends beer commercial.

There's a love story involving Papale's fellow bartender (played by the blandly blond Elizabeth Banks), but the soul of "Invincible" lies in the football scenes, which crackle with the crunch and oomph of on-field action (Core approximates Papale's speed through the aforementioned visual effects, with mostly effective results). And by the time Papale makes his winning stand at the season home opener — after an underwhelming debut in Dallas — filmgoers will be rooting not only for the down-and-outer made good but for the town that pinned its hopes on him.

A scene midway through "Invincible," in which Papale jogs for hours through his blue-collar streets, will surely remind viewers of "Rocky," the nickname his teammates bestowed on the real-life Papale. But as a hymn to the working class and the most mythologized values it embodies — physical toughness, quiet endurance, integrity and loyalty — "Invincible" recalls Bruce Springsteen (maybe the only person whose songs don't appear on the soundtrack). There's a wonderful sequence that exemplifies all the rue and promise that "Invincible" gets right: Papale has just made the team, but his car won't start. As his friend arrives to give him a jump, Papale stands there with the Rust Belt crumbling behind him, quietly aching to prove that amid the thwarted dreams of all the mooks and the losers and the clock punchers, maybe he was born to run.

"Invincible" (99 minutes, at area theaters) is rated PG for sports action and some mild profanity.



BY PHILIPPS — GARY ENTWISLER

Greg Kinnear, left, as coach Dick Vermeil and Mark Wahlberg as rookie Vince Papale.