



"Games People Play" Wrestles its Way to #1

by Brian Brooks

indieWIRE:BOT™
for the weekend ending March 15, 2004

1. "Games People Play: New York"
2. "The Passion of the Christ"

James Ronald Whitney's risqué feature "Games People Play: New York" seduced its way to number one...grabbing the throne from Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ," which had reigned for two weekends.

indieWIRE:BOT™ For the weekend ending March 15, 2004 - full chart	
Top Ten Indies	
	Film
1.	"Games People Play: New York"
2.	"The Passion of the Christ"

The reality-esque "Games People Play: New York," a 'game film' about three men and three women vying for a \$10,000 cash prize by performing provocative stunts, took its place on the specialty box office crest, opening in Gotham...

"I was holding a can of Coke, and dropped it on my shoe because I was in shock," said director James Ronald Whitney via email to indieWIRE about his reaction to the film's opening after a producer friend of his called to wish him congratulations for being number one in the country based on per-screen average. "I had gotten calls from people in New York telling me that when they saw the movie, the theater was packed, and after the very first screening, the manager of the Cleaview chain called to tell me that he was moving 'Games' to the largest theater at Clearview's Chelsea 9 because the numbers were so strong, but I had no idea we would be number one for the weekend."

Whitney went on to say aside from winning an Emmy, it was the best professional news he had ever received. "Now anyone reading this better get his ass to the theater to see this unrated, totally twisted little movie that was made in just 72 hours." According to Whitney, the film will premiere in Los Angeles tonight and will begin its run there at the Sunset 5 beginning Friday. Over the next eight weeks, Artistic License Films & FabiLuce Films will open the film in a new city, then continuing until it has played the top 10 markets. Concluding, an obviously elated Whitney told indieWIRE, "My plan today is to buy new shoes."

May 12th, 2004

**"GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: NEW YORK"
IS #1 AT THE BOX OFFICE ONCE AGAIN!**

LOS ANGELES, PRNewswire - For the second time since it premiered theatrically in New York City, **James Ronald Whitney's** controversial new film, **GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: NEW YORK**, had the highest per screen average in the country out of all independent films. In fact, even after throwing the big-budget studio grosses into the mix, only Universal Picture's **VAN HELSING** beat **GAMES**.



Together, Fire Island Film's "**GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: New York**" and Universal's "**Van Helsing**" moved into that coveted first and second position topping the box office charts at nearly 15K per screen each, leaving the other top 7 studio rivals in the dust at averages grossing less than 3K.

In third place was Paramount's "**Mean Girls**" followed by Fox's "**Man on Fire**," Warner Brother's "**New York Minute**," Sony's "**13 Going on 30**," New Line's "**Laws of Attraction**," and Miramax's "**Kill Bill Vol. 2**."

As indieWIRE reported, in it's opening weekend, "**James Ronald Whitney's** risqué feature, '**GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: New York**' seduced it's way to #1...grabbing the throne from **Mel Gibson's 'The Passion of the Christ**,' which had reigned for two weekends."

"**GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: New York**" is being distributed jointly by FabiLuce Films and Artistic License Films, and it is the first reality film in **James Ronald Whitney's** trilogy. Last year, **Whitney** won the Emmy Award for another controversial film titled, "**Telling Nicholas**," about a 7-year-old boy whose mother was killed in 9/11. "**GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: New York**" will be followed by "**GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: Hollywood**," and "**GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: The Bible Belt**."

"**GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: New York**" received a "THUMBS UP" when it was featured on **Ebert & Roeper**, and after remarking that the film is "Compellingly Watchable!," **Ebert** further described it as "...a brilliant experiment in psychological manipulation (4 STARS)...!"

"**GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: New York**" has already opened in 8 of the top 10 U.S. movie markets, and beginning this weekend it will be playing in Atlanta, Dallas and Boston. Call **1-866-THE MOVIE** for theaters and showtimes, and for additional

information about the movie or about the soon-to-be-released DVD, visit www.GamesPeoplePlayNewYork.com.



Morgan Spurlock's "Super Size Me" had a Big Mac of an opener over the weekend ... grossing more than a half million dollars, instantly becoming a shining star from the

Sundance class of '04; although "GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: New York" edged it out of the top spot on our chart based on per-screen average...taking the top spot (for the second time).

indieWIRE:BOT™		
For the weekend ending		
May 10, 2004		
Top Ten Indies		
	Film	Per Screen Gross
1.	"Games People Play: New York"	\$14,388
2.	"Super Size Me"	\$12,601

James Ronald Whitney's reality-show-esque film "GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: New York" went down on Atlanta over the weekend soliciting some serious cash. The racy feature debuted in Dixie taking in \$14,388...to top our chart!"

-by Brian Brooks

NYPOST



Yellow Punch



**James Ronald Whitney &
Monica Lewinsky**

- Photo by: Andrew Baker

MONICA Lewinsky had a good time at Sunday's unusual wrap party for **James Ronald Whitney's** newest film, "**GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: New York.**" Mimicking the crazy antics in the movie, the Tribeca Grand waitresses served drinks wearing nothing but towels. Toilet paper substituted for napkins, hunky young men served yellow punch in urine-sample cups, and masseuses performed shiatsu on several of the uninhibited cast members - many of whom opted to go topless for their rubdown. Lewinsky kept her shirt on.

The Washington Post

"Games People Play" director James Ronald Whitney is holding a D.C. casting call.

Are you attractive? In shape? Uninhibited? Wanna get naked in a movie? Here's your shot at fame -- not in a porn flick, but in the latest incarnation of the "reality" entertainment craze. It's a movie relying on hidden cameras and racy competitions, directed by James Ronald Whitney, an Emmy-winning filmmaker. He's auditioning performers for the third installment of his "Games People Play" franchise, which features unknowns vying for screen roles and a \$10,000 prize.



There are 11 a.m.-6 p.m. casting calls today and Friday for "Games People Play: The Bible Belt" at Washington's Flashpoint Theater, 916 G St. NW. (The other two films were set in New York City and Hollywood.) "There's no sex in these films whatsoever and ultimately they're comedies," says Whitney, who rolled into town to promote Friday's opening of "Games People Play: New York City" at the E Street Cinema. "I would be scared to death if I sat next to somebody and they got aroused watching any of the 'Games People Play' series."

But, said Whitney, "I don't think you have to sugar-coat nakedness. We're all naked every day when we take our showers." Which brings us to another of the qualities the director wants: "It's very hard to get undressed when you're wearing a hidden camera. So a certain expertise will be necessary for the actors."

-James A. Parcell

January 16th, 2004

VARIETY

CONGRATULATIONS

Power-couple **Margaret Bastick & J. David Luce** of FabiLuce Films, Hollywood's newest and hippest film-distribution company, are releasing...

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

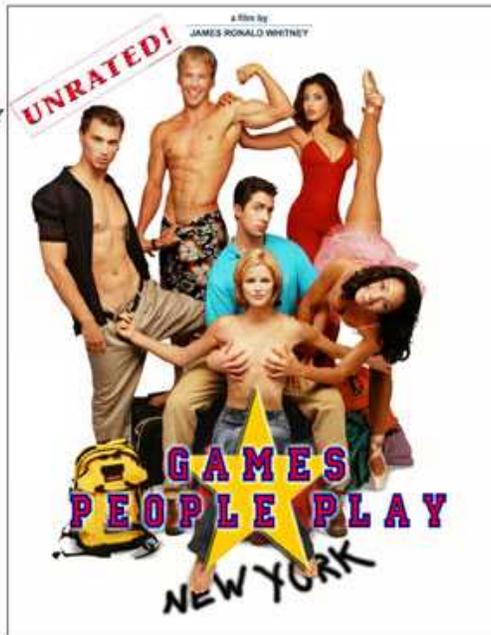


"4 stars...A Brilliant, Damning Satire...!"

-- Erik Childress, CHICAGO FILM CRITICS ASSOCIATION

Emmy Award Winning filmmaker **James Ronald Whitney's** critically-acclaimed, boldest, most shocking and most controversial film yet, featuring my good pal, **Keith Collins**, opens in theaters this March in America's Top 10 Movie Markets!

"GAMES PEOPLE PLAY is fresh, moving, outrageous, smart ...unlike anything you've seen before!"
--REX REED



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Congratulations
To You All,
Mario Cantone

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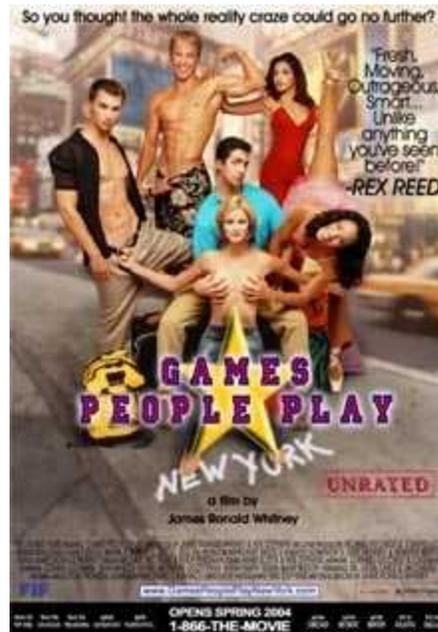
Censorship Games

How bad have things gotten in post-Janet Jackson America? Just ask the man forced to jump through hoops to market his new reality feature *Games People Play*.

By Richard Horgan

So far, only one vendor has allowed filmmaker James Ronald Whitney to present his poster artwork for *Games People Play: New York* as it was originally intended. That company is NPA, which, in support of the movie's opening last weekend in New York and this Friday in Los Angeles, plastered ads around construction sites in both cities as part of a marketing practice known as "wild posting."

It seems to have helped: this past weekend, *Games People Play* had the largest per screen totals of any movie in the United States, \$12,346, beating out something called *The Passion of the Christ* by nearly \$3,000...quite a triumph for someone who has been repeatedly ordered to tone down print advertising for his movie.



Poster, uncensored version

And surely the nadir of silliness so far is the insistence of one billboard company that a naked male torso be covered up before the artwork could be displayed on university campuses such as UCLA, USC and the University of Pennsylvania.

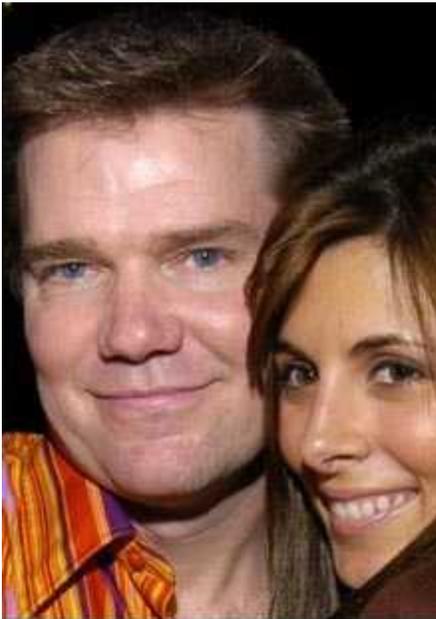
"It's innocent, pseudo-provocative artwork that is being censored [see image above]," suggests Whitney. "In the case of actor Josh Coleman, who's wearing long swim trunks and no shirt, we literally had to take the tip of a star [logo] and bring that all the way up his torso, so that he would not appear bare-chested on the poster."

"I actually emailed [the company] photos of the poster used in Rocky, where Sylvester Stallone is shirtless, as well as the Bruce Lee movies, where Bruce Lee is bare-chested, and Conan the Barbarian, where Schwarzenegger's bare-chest is shown," Whitney continues. "But they didn't care. They said, 'No, no, no, we can't have a half-naked man.' So now, it's out of my control."

Indeed it is. We've all become accustomed to the daily headlines involving Britney Spears' revised music video plans, radio commentator Sandra Tsing Loh's dismissal from Los Angeles NPR affiliate KCRW and Howard Stern's battles with the FCC, but the fact that it is trickling down to this level underscores the breadth of these Orwellian times.

Remember that famous 1993 Rolling Stone Magazine cover showing a topless Janet Jackson strategically covered up from behind by an unidentified pair of male hands? Well, a similar image at the center of the *Games People Play* poster involving actress Sarah Smith was another one of the principal elements Whitney was asked to cut and paste over.

"In one circumstance, Sarah's breasts were completely taken out of the picture and they would only let the very tips of the fingers show, cropped much closer--almost at her shoulders," Whitney recalls.



FabiLuce Films

Whitney enjoying NY preem

"In another situation, they wouldn't allow David to touch Josh's belt loop on his swimming trunks. So they covered David's hand with a censorship star [logo]."

"The irony there is that it now looks nasty and dirty, you don't know what's going on under that star with his mysterious hand," he adds. "Similarly, somebody else did something with Sarah's hand on David's belt. They wouldn't allow that interaction, so they blocked Sarah's hand with another censorship star. In fact, they cropped her entire forearm, so you don't know where her hand even is, it could be inside David's zipper for all we know."

Whitney is a proud member of the school of extreme reality nurtured out of HBO's New York offices by Sheila Nevins (promoted last month to President, HBO Documentary and Family). His 2000 documentary *Just Melvin*, premiered on HBO after *The Sopranos*, while his Emmy-Award winning follow-up a couple years later, *Telling Nicholas*, was slotted right behind of *Six Feet Under*.

In *Games People Play: New York*, which has its official Los Angeles premiere tonight, three men and three women compete against each other in a variety of saucy games in order to win a \$10,000 cash prize. Whitney is currently busy editing a sequel, *Games People Play: Hollywood*, while open casting calls began today in Los Angeles for a third

episode he plans entitled *Games People Play: The Bible Belt* .

“Whether it’s the reality of my grandfather who molested my whole family (*Just Melvin*) or a little boy who lost his mom on 9/11-- a boy whose daddy has to tell him that mommy is dead (*Telling Nicholas*) , Sheila Nevins accepts the extreme and does not attempt to censor it,” says Whitney. “That’s why I’ve always been in the HBO family and not the NBC family.”

“I love what she has done with *Taxicab Confessions* , for example, because it is real, and it is raw,” he continues. “But I wanted something that went even further than the excitement and voyeuristic element of *Confessions* . I wanted to see what people would do when challenged with their inhibitions – both physical and emotional.”

It’s likely that people like Whitney and the Gantz brothers (Joe and Harry), the creators of *Taxicab Confessions* , will have to rely more than ever on ingenious means to get their “pure reality” products out there. In the case of Whitney, this means self-funding the picture in partnership with two executive producers and relying on the income from his latest Wall Street job at Wachovia to pay the bills.

As far as the Gantz brothers are concerned, they have for a number of years now been trying to create an online clearing house for the rest of their output at CrushedPlanet.com.

More chillingly perhaps, the *Games People Play* censorship whirlwind has extended well beyond movie theater lobbies and daily newspaper entertainment sections. The New York Transit Authority, the Chicago Transit Authority and BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) all made changes to Whitney’s artwork as well.

However, in order to prevent any similar concessions with the film's content, Whitney wisely chose to release *Games People Play* in an unrated version, thereby avoiding the stigma of an NC-17 or the constraints of a compromised R rating from the good folks at the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA).



Dimitrios Kambouris/WireImage.com
HBO President Nevins

“I left it unrated because the MPAA were going to force me to either blur or edit around the three erections in the film,” Whitney explains. “For some reason, it’s okay to project a 30 foot vagina in your audience's face, But if you put a penis on the screen, God forbid. Going into the film, most people have heard that the twisted mind in charge of *GAMES* is an equal opportunist when it comes to the exploitation of uncovered genitalia.”

“But what has happened with the artwork is very disconcerting for me, because people automatically assume that the people behind the movie are the ones adding these stars and these [other] bits of censorship,” adds Whitney. “The impression they’re going to have is, Why is the moviemaker or distributor putting stars over belt loop touching? This makes no sense, that’s kind of stupid.”

Back in the late 1980s, Whitney and his then-wife, a tightrope walker for the Cirque du Soleil, operated a retail store at the corner of Santa Monica and Robertson Boulevards in West Hollywood called Oscar’s Wilde, where shoppers browsed underneath the couple’s intermittent acrobatics. The 40-year-old filmmaker’s other careers include that of professional dancer/cast member of Chippendale’s and perennial TV game show and variety competition champ, with numerous wins as an undefeated champion on Body Language, Scrabble, Dance Fever and Star Search, to name a few.

Judging by the early success of *Games People Play*, Whitney appears as likely as anyone to forge the big screen’s first successful reality franchise, one whose only predecessor was last year’s putrid *The Real Cancun*. With Rex Reed as one of his primary boosters and another imminent reality feature release, "[TheWorkingGirl.com](#)," about a cyber sex industry single mom, Whitney appears determined to keep it real.

“In *Games People Play*, we deal with very heavy issues – Tourette’s syndrome, bulimia, molestation, incest,” observes Whitney. “A lot of people have said to me, ‘You can’t put those elements into a game and bring that into this genre of reality entertainment.’ “But I just feel that these are facts of life,” he adds. “Molestation is a fact of life, eating disorders are a fact of life, and *GAMES* is a game of life. So as long as these facts remain, they will be eligible for entry into the game.”



Linda Lenzi



Games People Play: New York Premiere

Broadway colides with Hollywood at the premier of Emmy Award winning filmmaker James Ronald Whitney's critically-acclaimed, boldest, most shocking and most controversial film yet - *GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: NEW YORK*. ([more...](#))



HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

FabiLuce playing 'GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: New York'
By Ian Mohr

NEW YORK -- Newly launched indie banner FabiLuce Films has acquired the indie feature "Games People Play: New York" from production outfit Fire Island Films.

"Play: New York" is the first chapter in a "reality movie" franchise, in which contestants are filmed by a hidden camera exercising their acting talent to compete for a cash prize of \$10,000. "Play: New York" features three men and three women competing by performing risqué pranks and offering shocking confessionals in an attempt to win the prize money.

FabiLuce also plans to rollout two sequels, "Games People Play: Hollywood" and "Games People Play: The Bible Belt." The distributor is eyeing a March theatrical release for "Play: New York" in five markets.

"Play: New York" was written and directed by James Ronald Whitney, who produced the film along with Neil Stephens. J. David Luce is the project's co-executive producer, with Richard Reichgut. Margaret Bastick served as co-producer.

Said Luce: "Whitney's film has broken the barrier for the reality-programming genre," Luce said, "and has set a brand-new standard on reality movies."

The director's credits include HBO's "[Telling Nicholas](#)."



Hot Pick for 2004

"Games People Play: New York, Emmy Award winning director James Ronald Whitney's look at what people will do for money, will be released in March by FabiLuce Films. This wild and uninhibited film tells the story of how far actors will go to win \$10,000. Hint: they will go *verrrrrrry* far."

DAILY NEWS
The Front Page

Side Dish

Warren Beatty and **Barry Diller** huddled with **Sen. John McCain** (R-Ariz.) at The Grill in Beverly Hills. Looking on from another table was **Gray Davis**, whom **Arnold Schwarzenegger** terminated as governor ...

Ex-prez Bill Clinton, **Sen. Hillary Clinton**, **Bill Bradley**, **Mario Cuomo**, Harold Ickes and Maurice Tempelsman were among those spilling out into the hallways at the funeral for William Bettridge, husband of former Clinton aide Susan Thomases, at Frank E. Campbell's Thursday ...

Britney Spears likes her wardrobe to be ready as fast as she can say, "I do." The ditzy divorcee had a shoemaker named Uriel on W. 26th St. make her a pair of black boots within a few hours, a job that usually takes a month. Gossipy customers at Zocalo Restaurant on E. 82nd St. said Spears gave him the design herself, and paid \$1,000 for the job ... **Demi Moore** spent part of the holidays at Parrot Cay in Turks and Caicos with ex-husband Bruce Willis and current beau **Ashton Kutcher** ...

Alan Cumming, actor Archie Kao and director **James Ronald Whitney** partied till 4:30 a.m. at **Keith Collins'** "Shhh" party at Nocturne...

"GAMES PEOPLE PLAY: New York" SELLS OUT!



Both screenings for James Ronald Whitney's latest film, "GAMES PEOPLE PLAY : New York," an extreme-reality film that made it's premiere at the CineVegas International Film Festival 2003 as part of the Jackpot World Premiere line-up in Las Vegas, resulted in sell-out crowds. "Hundreds of people were turned away, but a bunch of us got in anyway and just sat in the aisles. The movie was awesome, but my ass hurts like hell!" said one thrilled movie-goer. "Games People Play" entered the festival with quite a buzz--VH1 has been profiling the director's work as part of an extreme-reality piece slated for August. In addition to VH1, Whitney did radio and network television spots, segments with Starz/Encore, and a red carpet interview with ET.

For festival photos, visit
www.wireimage.com



LOS ANGELES, CA

FabiLuce Films gets reality movie for US distribution

New York-based Fire Island Films' Games People Play: New York has been picked up for distribution by the new production and distribution house FabiLuce Films and is scheduled for US release in March 2004.

Games People Play: New York is the first instalment in a reality movie franchise conceived, produced, edited and directed by Fire Island founder and president James Ronald Whitney.

The series follows three men and three women as they take part in an uninhibited acting contest involving pranks and risque challenges for a \$10,000 cash prize.

Subsequent episodes are entitled Games People Play: Hollywood and Games People

Play: The Bible Belt. FabiLuce Films will finance distribution for the entire franchise.

Whitney and Neil Stephens produced the film, with FabiLuce Films president J David Luce and Richard Reichgut serving as executive producers. Luce's partner Margaret Bastick served as co-producer.

"Whitney is an ingenious, passionate and prolific film-maker. We are thrilled to be working with him and look forward to bringing the critically acclaimed Games People Play: New York to the theatres," Luce said in a statement.

"Whitney's film has broken the barrier for the reality programming genre and has set a brand new standard on reality movies."

Whitney started making films in 2000 and has completed five features in three years – the award-winning documentaries Just, Melvin and Telling Nicholas, as well as TheWorkingGirl.com.

Luce and Bastick will also co-produce Whitney's first narrative feature.

--Jeremy Kay



MOVIE MOGUL

NOT all models want to be movie stars. Wilhelmina beauty Margaret Bastick has become a co-producer. "Games People Play," directed by James Ronald Whitney, premieres Tuesday at Chelsea Clearview Cinema. It shows six actors competing for \$10,000 in "Candid Camera"-type stunts, including one that involves trying to entice a total stranger into a threesome. Full-frontal nudity is the least outrageous part of the picture, which Rex Reed calls "fresh, moving, outrageous, smart, and unlike anything you've seen before."