

# The Critical List

Reviewed by Henrietta Walmark

## SUNDAY

**CBC News: Correspondent Newsweek**, 8 p.m. *Newsweek* expands its documentary repertoire with this weekly program featuring international news stories from journalists around the world. The series premiered tonight with Carol Oly's *Of Fatwas and Deadly Queens*. Oly, a longtime CBC reporter, tells the story of young fatwa journalist Iyad Kadhim whose coverage of the Miss World pageant in Nigeria in 2002 sparked bloody riots and forced her into exile after a threat was issued against her life. Upcoming stories include Paul Weinman's look at teenage taking her life and Joe Schwinger's *Crucible of the Arctic: What Alas is Bringing (The Perseus Eye)*, 10 p.m. *Newsweek*, a rather standard story of an adopter's search for her biological parents evolves into a touching account of an entire nation in search of their peace more than 25 years after the Killing Fields of the Khmer Rouge claimed one and a half million Cambodian lives.

## MONDAY

**Fine Print 2004 Giller Awards Special Rogers**, 10:30 p.m. Host Carolyn Weaver dispels the notion that bookworms are bookish and dowdy in this post-hangover salute to Canada's literary prize, the Giller Award. Building on the mini-controversy created by her attention-grabbing Killer Giller dress at last year's gala ceremony, Weaver upped the glitz and literary ante this year in her black-and-white strapless gown printed with prominent Canadians holding their all-time favourite Giller-nominated books. Tonight, the choices of those 23 book lovers, everyone from CBC Radio's Avril Benoit to *Maclean's* Anthony Wilson Smith, are revealed.



Style council: Carolyn Weaver does the Gillers

## TUESDAY

**Frontline**  
**Is Wal-Mart Good for America?**  
**PBS**, 8 p.m. The American public broadcast center has a noteworthy double bill of documentaries tonight. *Wal-Mart's* retail domination rests on its reputation for bargain prices, but the hidden costs are high according to tonight's *Frontline* doc. *Wal-Mart* used its considerable power to pressure manufacturers into reducing costs. The result: Eighty per cent of *Wal-Mart's* suppliers are now based in China and that's meant big job losses in the U.S. Then at 10 p.m. on *Independent Lens*, the first Afghan women to be trained as journalists in more than a decade reveal the reality of women's lives under the Taliban in Afghanistan. **Alas!** The beautiful (you know who you are) can speak through the airwaves at 200 Queen West if they can't get inside to see the young *Nigella Lawson*, as the British goddess of the kitchen drops by *Clyde* (10 a.m., *CBC*) to share recipes while promoting her latest cookbook. Try not to drool if she takes her fingers, darling. For a different kind of drool, the only really show still worth watching returns tonight as 11 new pairs of contestants begin the latest *Amazing Race* (9 p.m., *CBS*, *CTV*).

## THURSDAY

**Rough Cuts: Pleasant Street**  
**Newsweek**, 10 p.m. When *Granola* Gery Rogers goes into hospital for her second mastectomy, she discovers that two of her neighbours are also patients there. Linda has melanoma and Ken has pancreatic cancer and both have been given about six months to live. Gery records their lives, at home on *Pleasant Street* and in treatment, with the same gentle and sometimes depressing intimacy that defined her acclaimed personal film, *My Left Breast*. Cancer is a great equalizer. Ken marries his longtime girlfriend and has his sperm frozen. Linda's one wish other than good health is to know what it's like to fall in love. Rogers records it all with a sensitive but unflinching eye. **Alas!** *Pleasant Street* with *Maple Spring Film in Canada* from 8 to 10:30 p.m. on *CBC's* on *Opening Night*, an award-length documentary from Peter Ross, has enough fascinating facts to keep you from clicking away. It certainly isn't for lack of talent that the country has a legitimate movie industry. Shame by business and bad politics, but don't blame the long lineup of Canadian film grants acknowledged here that includes everyone from *Harbour's* Florence Lawrence, the world's first movie star, to recent Canadian hero, director Zacharias Kunuk (*Atanarjuat*).

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## Digital Highlights

By Scott Colbourne

## SUNDAY

**The Office Specials**  
**BBC Canada**, 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. The double-episode event is truly special - I would never say important. *The Office* was created by Stephen Merchant and Ricky Gervais, who also stars as the underdog caricature David Brent, in 2001. Two scathingly funny seasons were produced (both are available on DVD), and the special will be released



Ricky Gervais drops the truth of comedy for tragedy when he returns to *The Office*

this week). In 2003, Merchant and Gervais decided to kill off the series with a two-hour instalment that reveals the small-town paper merchant *Michael Higgs*, which Brent horribly mismanaged before being fired. The original show was structured as a mock documentary, and the special assumes that the resulting film was shown on the BBC. Brent, of course, thoroughly humiliated himself, as did *Tom Martin Freeman* in his failed efforts to win the office recognition, *Down Lucy David*. In the new office set-up, Gervais, an incompetent accountant played by *Michael Cook*, has assumed control and *Down* has fled to Florida with her family. Once and for all, the writers dispense with the total comedy - this is tragedy, and Gervais (bitterly perhaps Brent as self-detested, alienated and over so well. He makes pathetic public appearances on the back of his semi-celebrity and loses his shirt on a self-made music video (which is so bad it's great). But the ending - well, the ending had me standing and cheering, and I'm not ashamed to admit it. Only a show as ultimately dark as *The Office* can offer such a cathartic experience. It takes you to the stops, stops for the weekend, and then shows you what it takes to make things better.

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