

# Los Angeles Times

## Steered in the right direction

Because James LeGros had a crush on a girl who auditioned for a play, so did he. And a career was born. Now, he's appearing in 'Sherman's Way.'

SUSAN KING

If it hadn't been for a girl, James LeGros may not have become one of the stalwarts of independent cinema.

Though he's not quite a household name, the 46-year-old actor has consistently given complex and daring performances for the last two decades in such indie films as "Drugstore Cowboy," "Living in Oblivion," "Lovely & Amazing," and can be seen in a new comedy, "Sherman's Way," which opened in theaters on Friday.

And along the way, he's also appeared in such mainstream flicks as "Zodiac" and TV series such as "Sleeper Cell" and "Ally McBeal."

Flashback to the early 1980s. LeGros — who was born in Minneapolis and raised in



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**WHEEL LIFE:** In "Sherman's Way," Palmer (James LeGros), right, gives a student (Michael Shulman) a lift.

Redlands — was going to college in California but "I didn't really know what I was going to do" for a career, he said over his cellphone from a chair lift going up to a ski slope in Jackson Hole, Wyo., where LeGros, his wife and two sons have lived for the last eight years.

"I thought I was going to be a photographer. Some girl I liked was trying to get one of these apprenticeships for [South Coast Repertory]."

Because there were open auditions, LeGros decided to try out with her. "I didn't know any better," he said. "Out of the hundreds of far better choices, they picked me. And it turned out to be a life-changing event for me. It was a year of employment. They had me come back as a member of the company next year. I continued to work."

Eventually, he left Orange County and came to Los Angeles to try his hand at film and TV. "I kind of crashed on various people's couches and took

*continued*

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### REGENCY THEATRES

Buy Tickets Online  
www.regencymovies.com

#### LOS ANGELES COUNTY

##### AGOURA HILLS 8

29045 Agoura Road 818-707-9966

**THE LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT** R (12:30, 3:00, 5:30, 8:00, 10:25)  
**RACE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN** PG (12:00, 2:20, 4:40, 7:00, 9:20)  
**WATCHMEN** R (12:15, 1:15, 3:45, 4:45, 7:15, 8:15, 10:30)  
**THE INTERNATIONAL** R (2:30), 8:20  
**MILK** R (11:50), 5:15  
**TAKEN** PG-13 (12:30, 2:40, 4:45, 7:10, 9:20)  
**SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE** R (1:00, 4:00), 6:45, 9:30  
**THE READER** R (1:30, 4:15), 6:55, 9:40

##### FAIRFAX CINEMAS 3

7907 Beverly at Fairfax 323-655-4010  
\$5.00 Matinees • \$1.00 Hot Dogs

**THE INTERNATIONAL** R (1:00, 4:00), 7:30, 10:10  
**THE WRESTLER** R (12:00, 2:30, 5:00), 7:45, 10:15  
**WALTZ WITH BASHIR** R (11:45, 2:10), 7:15  
**DOUBT** PG-13 (4:50), 9:30

##### REDONDO BEACH 3

1509 Hawthorne Blvd 310-371-4567  
All Seats \$3.25

**UNDERWORLD: RISE OF THE LYCANS** R 12:30, 3:00, 5:15, 7:45, 10:00  
**HOTEL FOR DOGS** PG 12:10, 2:40, 5:00, 7:20, 9:40  
**YES MAN** PG-13 11:55, 2:20, 7:30  
**TWILIGHT** PG-13 4:45, 9:55

#### VENTURA COUNTY

##### WESTLAKE VILLAGE TWIN

4711 Lakeview Canyon at Agoura Rd. 818-889-8061

**SHERMAN'S WAY** NR (11:45, 2:15, 4:45), 7:15, 9:30  
**TWO LOVERS** R (12:00, 2:30, 4:55), 7:30, 9:55

##### PASEO CAMARILLO 3

390 N. Lantana at Daily 805-383-2267

**GOMORRAH** NR (12:30, 3:45), 7:00, 9:55  
**THE CLASS** PG-13 (12:45, 4:00), 7:30, 10:00  
**SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE** R (12:15, 3:30), 7:15, 9:55

##### BUENAVENTURA 6

1440 Eastman Ave. at Telephone Rd. 805-658-6544  
All Seats \$3.00 • \$1.00 Hot Dogs

**PUSH** PG-13 1:00, 7:10, 9:45  
**REVOLUTIONARY ROAD** R 3:45, 9:50  
**UNDERWORLD: RISE OF THE LYCANS** R 12:45, 2:45, 5:15, 7:45, 10:00  
**HOTEL FOR DOGS** PG 11:50, 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10  
**BEDTIME STORIES** PG 12:00, 2:20, 4:40, 7:20, 9:40  
**MARLEY & ME** PG 4:00  
**YES MAN** PG-13 12:10, 2:35, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00  
**TWILIGHT** PG-13 12:30, 7:00

#### SAN GABRIEL VALLEY

##### ACADEMY CINEMAS 6

1003 E. Colorado Blvd 626-229-9400  
All Seats \$2.00 before 6pm • \$1.00 Hot Dogs

**MILK** R (12:45, 3:45), 6:45, 9:30  
**REVOLUTIONARY ROAD** R (1:15), 7:00  
**THE WRESTLER** R (1:00, 4:00), 7:15, 9:45  
**HOTEL FOR DOGS** PG (12:15, 2:35, 5:05), 7:20, 9:40  
**THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON** PG-13 (12:30, 4:00), 7:30  
**DOUBT** PG-13 (12:00, 2:25, 4:50), 7:10, 9:50  
**YES MAN** PG-13 (4:15), 9:55

Bargain Showtimes in ( )

##### THE NEW FOOTHILL CINEMA 10

854 E. Alosia Ave. at Citrus 626-334-6007

### All New Love Seat Style Stadium Seating

All Seats \$5.00 before 5pm

**THE LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT** R (12:00, 2:30), 5:15, 7:45, 10:15  
**MISS MARCH** R (12:50, 3:20), 5:40, 8:00, 10:20  
**RACE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN** PG (12:20, 2:40, 4:55), 7:25, 9:50  
**WATCHMEN** R (11:45, 1:00, 3:30, 4:30), 7:15, 8:15, 10:40  
**TYLER PERRY'S MADEA GOES TO JAIL** PG-13 (12:00, 2:30, 4:45), 7:10, 9:35  
**CORALINE** PG (11:40, 2:00, 4:15), 6:40, 9:00  
**TAKEN** PG-13 (12:30, 3:10), 5:30, 7:50, 10:10  
**SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE** R (1:00, 3:45), 6:45, 9:20  
**PAUL BLART: MALL COP** PG (12:10, 2:50), 5:10, 7:30, 9:45

#### ORANGE COUNTY COASTAL

##### HISTORIC LIDO THEATRE

3459 Via Lido at Newport Blvd. 949-673-8350

**TWO LOVERS** R (12:30, 2:45, 5:05), 7:30, 9:50

##### LAGUNA SOUTH COAST TWIN

Broadway/S. Coast Hwy. 949-497-1711

**RACE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN** PG (12:30, 2:45, 5:00), 7:20, 9:40  
**TAKEN** PG-13 (1:30, 3:30), 5:45, 8:00, 10:05

##### SOUTH COAST VILLAGE 3

At South Coast Plaza/Sunflower & Plaza Dr. 714-557-5701

**CROSSING OVER** R (11:30, 2:00, 4:45), 7:30, 10:05  
**THE SECRETS** R (1:00, 4:00), 7:00, 9:45  
**HARVARD BEATS YALE 29-29** NR (12:00, 2:30, 5:00), 7:20, 9:50

##### RANCHO NIGUEL 8

Rancho Niguel Road 949-831-0446

**EVERLASTING MOMENTS** NR (12:40, 3:45), 7:00, 9:50  
**GOMORRAH** NR (12:30, 3:30), 6:30, 9:40  
**TWO LOVERS** R (12:15, 2:40, 5:00), 7:25, 9:45  
**THE CLASS** PG-13 (2:15), 7:30  
**MILK** R (11:15, 2:00), 5:30, 8:20  
**SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE** R (11:00, 1:45, 4:30), 7:15, 9:55  
**LAST CHANCE HARVEY** PG-13 (12:00, 4:45)  
**THE READER** R (12:45, 4:00), 6:45, 9:30  
**DOUBT** PG-13 (2:20), 7:10, 9:40  
**MOSCOW, BELGIUM** NR (12:00, 5:10), 10:15

##### CHARTER CENTRE 5

7822 Warner Ave. at Beach 714-596-3456  
All Seats \$3.00 • \$1.00 Hot Dogs

**THE UNINVITED** PG-13 9:45 PM  
**DEFIANCE** R 12:45, 3:45, 6:45  
**HOTEL FOR DOGS** PG 12:00, 2:20, 4:45, 7:15, 9:40  
**BEDTIME STORIES** PG 11:45, 2:00, 4:15  
**THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON** PG-13 12:30, 4:15, 7:45  
**MARLEY & ME** PG 11:30, 2:10, 4:50, 7:30, 10:10  
**TWILIGHT** PG-13 6:30, 9:15

Showtimes for March 14

showers at the YMCA," he said. "I lived out of my truck and tried to make a go of it."

And LeGros paid his dues, doing guest shots on the original "Knight Rider," "Punky Brewster" and "Rosanne," and appearing in such horror films as "Phantasm II."

"They were terrible movies and terrible jobs," he said. "I was terrible in them. But the good news is that I learned. Slowly I got better."

And the roles got better, especially his acclaimed comedic turn in Tom DiCillo's 1995 comedy "Living in Oblivion" as Chad Palomino, an acting diva who doesn't seem to realize he's working on a "B" movie. "I was kind of on the ropes at that point," LeGros recalled. "They were willing to take a chance"

But he's never plotted or planned his career. "Honestly, I just make it up as I go on," he said.

LeGros decided to do the coming-of-age road comedy "Sherman's Way" because he thought it was a very endearing story. And he definitely steals the film as Palmer, an eccentric, washed-up former Olympic skier who is estranged from his grown son and family and makes a living doing personal appearances in small towns. Palmer ends up meeting an uptight college student named Sherman (Michael Shulman), who is stranded on the West Coast and agrees to drive him to Beverly Hills so the young man can get an internship at a law firm. But their trip doesn't turn out quite the way Sherman plans.

LeGros didn't have to look much farther than the slopes of Jackson Hole to do research for his role.

"He reminded me of some fellows I refer to as 'professional hand shakers' that you find in Jackson Hole," he said, laughing. "The place is lousy with them"

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