



Does no smoking = less smokers?

Massachusetts study suggests ban on tobacco use in restaurants influences fewer teens to light up

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Associated Press

A Massachusetts study suggests that restaurant smoking bans may play a big role in persuading teens not to become smokers.

Youths who lived in towns with strict bans were 40 percent less likely to become regular smokers than those in communities with no bans or weak ones, the researchers reported in the May issue of the Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine.

The findings back up the idea that smoking bans discourage tobacco use in teens by sending the message that smoking is frowned upon in the community, as well as simply by reducing their exposure to smokers in public places, said Dr. Michael Siegel, of Boston University School of Public Health, and the study's lead author.

"When kids grow up in an environment where they don't see smoking, they are going to think it's not socially acceptable," he said. "If they perceive a lot of other people are smoking, they think it's the norm."

In Georgia, state law prohibits smoking in most public places and restaurants, though exceptions are made for private clubs and bars.

Siegel and his colleagues tracked 2,791 children between ages 12 and 17 who lived throughout Massachusetts. There were no statewide restrictions when the study began in 2001 but about 100 cities

and towns had enacted a hodgepodge of laws restricting smoking in workplaces, bars or restaurants.

The teens were followed for four years to see how many tried smoking and how many eventually became smokers.

Overall, about 9 percent became smokers, defined as smoking more than 100 cigarettes.

In towns without bans or where smoking was restricted to a designated area, that rate was nearly 10 percent. But in places with tough bans prohibiting smoking in restaurants, just under 8 percent of the teens became smokers.

The study found that having a smoker as a parent or a close friend was a factor in predicting whether children experiment with cigarettes. But strong bans had a bigger influence on whether smoking grew into a habit, reducing their chances of becoming smokers by 40 percent.

"There is really no other smoking intervention program that could cut almost in half the rate of smoking," Siegel said.

Age was also a factor. Smoking bans had a greater effect on younger teens than on older teens.

The researchers said it's not clear whether strong bans would have the same effect in other states since local towns adopted their restrictions as part of an aggressive anti-smoking campaign throughout the state.

A statewide workplace smoking ban that included restaurants went into effect in mid-2004. Since then, high school smoking rates in Massachusetts have con-

tinued to decline, from about 21 percent of students in 2005 to about 18 percent in 2007.

Many restaurant owners fought the ban, saying it could drive away diners, according to Janine Harrod, director of government affairs for the Massachusetts Restaurant Association, which represents 2,000 restaurant owners.

While some restaurants were hurt initially, the effects have eased over time since the ban applies to everyone, she said.

Bill Phelps, a spokesman for Altria, parent company of cigarette-maker Philip Morris USA, said the study shows that the reasons teens take up smoking are complex.

"There is no single reason why young people engage in risky behaviors like smoking," he said. "We believe that there should be a multifaceted approach to address youth smoking."

At least 23 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico require most public places and workplaces, including restaurants and bars, to be smoke free, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Another nine states ban smoking in workplaces but have various exemptions for restaurants or bars.

"We already have more than enough evidence why we should pass these smoke-free laws, but certainly this study should help push them along," said Danny McGoldick of the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids.

ON FILM | Q&A

Fast-talking: Hirsch, Ricci on 'Speed Racer'

By **DAVID GERMAIN**
The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — "Speed Racer" stars Emile Hirsch and Christina Ricci are better known for smaller independent movies than summer blockbusters.

Yet they could not pass up the chance to work with Larry and Andy Wachowski on the brothers' first writing-directing effort after "The Matrix" trilogy.

Hirsch, who starred last year in Sean Penn's acclaimed drama "Into the Wild," plays Speed, the young phenomenon of the Racer family, who gets behind the wheel to take on a corrupt corporate honcho ruining auto racing.

Ricci, most recently seen as a pig-faced girl in the fairy-tale romance "Penelope," plays Speed's girlfriend Trixie, who flies the skies in her helicopter to scout out the race course.

Hirsch, 23, and Ricci, 28, chatted with The Associated Press at March's ShoWest theater-owners convention, where distributor Warner Bros. showed off footage of "Speed Racer." The movie opens Friday.

Question: Given the more serious films the two of you often do, a big summer action movie doesn't seem like an obvious choice.

Ricci: But this is the coolest, because it's the Wachowski brothers, and also, it's not your average cheesy big blockbuster. It's really awesome.

Hirsch: There's something just so wonderfully rebellious about the idea of being like some serious actor and having to just do those kind of movies, where I wanted to spit on the idea and just do something so wrong. But it's so right.

Ricci: And so much about choices for me is about what's going to be fun. This sounded like so much fun. You get to go do an action film and a really stylized character. That's fun.

The racing sequences were created by computer animation. Was there any actual driving involved?

Hirsch: I'd skateboard around set, but I don't think I actually drove a car once the entire time. ... But the thing they put us on, they put us on this thing called a gimbal, which is basically a braced piece, like a rollercoaster car, suspended up in the air with a hydraulic rig. I think I spent a total of 20 days on the gimbal.

Out of how many days?

Hirsch: Out of 60.

Ricci: I was only in there one day, in the gimbal. ... It happened to be a Saturday, so the brothers were in charge of how fast and hard the car was getting punched, instead of, like, a second-unit director. And they got really into it. I actually had to get out of the car and vomit and get back in.

Are you car enthusiasts?

Ricci: I used to be, but I'm not anymore. It's too much work. I had a '67 Firebird, and my first car ever was a 1964 Ford Falcon Futura station wagon. Then I had the Porsche 911, the year 2000 model. I was kind of into cars, but it's just too much work. The vintage ones break down, and they don't pass the smog-emissions checks.

What do you drive now?

Ricci: I won't say. It's bad for the environment.

Emile, car enthusiast?

Hirsch: Only the new-technology cars that are absolutely good for the environment. I have a Toyota Prius.

Ricci: See, I got my three-year lease on my car before I saw the AI Gore movie ("An Inconvenient Truth"), then immediately went, "Oh, no." So I'm waiting for my three-year lease to be up, and I'm going to get a green car. I got my car because I thought it was hilarious ...

Hirsch: What, do you have like a clown car?

Ricci: No, I have a really big sedan like some old, fat Italian grandfather would have. I think it's hilariously funny, but it's not worth the humor. Not a lot of people get the joke, so it's not worth abusing the earth for it.



Emile Hirsch, left, and Christina Ricci of the new movie "Speed Racer," appear on the NBC Today show Monday.

DOWNLOAD THIS | CHRIS BRENNAMAN

Everything old is new again, if not very good



It seems lately everything old is new. At least when it comes to new music.

Some are hits, while others are a little more than off. Yeah,

it must be hard for aged musical acts, deciding when to tweak the sound and when to give into something new.

Thankfully I'll never have to add that to my list of worries.

But enough about my musical skill-set (or lack thereof), let's see what we have this week in Download This:

Madonna Hard Candy — It may just

be me, but Madonna seems to be getting a little too old for whatever sound and look she's going for. Her last album, "Confessions From The Dance Floor" was at least able to hook the listener from the get-go with fun beats and catchy songs, but not so with "Hard Candy." Here the beats sound tired, with a been-there-done-that feel. Even the lyrics seem shallow, even for a Madonna song. All around, this outing seems flat and uninspired. Hopefully, we're not witnessing the end of the former queen of pop's reign. But another album like this may guarantee it.

Def Leppard Songs From The Sparkle

Lounge — Unlike Madonna, Def Leppard has never set out to do anything other than rock, and they continue to do just that with Sparkle Lounge. This is an album for the fans, though, and if you've never really dug these guys, then just move along. For those true believers out there, the fans who have been shouting "pour some sugar on me" for years, then this is a treat. There's a lot of solid work here from everyone involved, but drummer Rick Allen really shines. The guy just knows how to handle drum duties for a rock band. Good things all around here.

The new Dark Knight trailer — Yep, there's another trailer for the next

installment of the Batman franchise and this one includes not only more Batman goodness, but more Joker goodness and a little hint of Two-Face himself. If you weren't already primed for this movie, then this will all but guarantee that the next few weeks until the movie's release will be all but unbearable for you. A quick search on YouTube should turn this gem up.

So there you have it. Hope that tides you over for another week, or at least steers you away from buying something you ought not be spending your hard earned money on. Until next time, keep those e-mails coming to downloadthis@excite.com.



Chris thinks Madonna is getting a little old for whatever "sound" she's going for.