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"Darwin: The Evolution Revolution"

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BY DAVID BALZER March 26, 2008 16:03

"DARWIN: THE EVOLUTION REVOLUTION" CONTINUES TO AUG. 4. \$14-\$20. SAT-THU 10AM-5:30PM; FRI 10AM-9:30PM. ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM, 100 QUEEN'S PARK. 416-586-8000. WWW.ROM.ON.CA.

Walking into the ROM's new "Darwin: The Evolution Revolution" exhibit is like walking into a giant Grade 8 textbook. Panels are written in decidedly simple language and printed in big, colourful fonts, with significant passages in bold. (If you go on a weekday afternoon, you'll no doubt see groups of students dangling assignment sheets from their hands, presumably very glad for the boldface.) Suffice it to say it's underwhelming for educated adults, though it's worth noting that, even after a thorough dumbing-down, an exhibit on Darwin can feel like a trudge. Something requiring this much reading seems better absorbed privately, on a page or

computer screen.

It follows there's little aura to be had. A caricature of a young Darwin by a fellow beetle-collector is cute; a fascinating letter from Emma Darwin to her husband about her difficulties with the spiritual ramifications of his findings is a facsimile. Darwin's objects — everything from his copy of the New Testament to a full reproduction of his study — barely come off as relics. An exception is a wall of Galapagos plants Darwin collected on his HMS Beagle journey: the very specimens that led one of the modern world's greatest minds to his greatest conclusion.

"Darwin: The Evolution Revolution" was organized by the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, and it shows. A final section, titled "Darwin's Legacy," is geared towards the intelligent design/creationist debate, and seems quaintly foreign; a timeline detailing unfolding responses to the "theory" of evolution is populated almost entirely with US bugbears. It's a testament to the exhibit's clear-as-day mandate to offend, and to challenge, no one.

Email us at: LETTERS@EYEWEEEKLY.COM or send your questions to EYEWEEEKLY.COM

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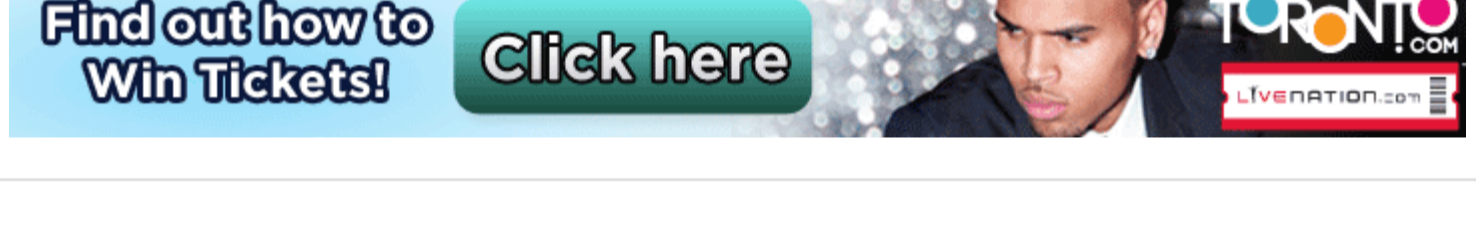
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