

Preview
KIDS

The movie your kids will want to see; the Chelsea Piers Sports Complex; pre-loved teddy bears

If summer is savored for its vagueness and simple pleasures, fall is the season when the great march of progress resumes and every kid clamors for the latest gadgety bauble. The likely hit family movie of the season, **Toy Story** (opening November 22), plays out the tension of the old favorite toys and the shiny new interlopers. Tom Hanks is the voice of Woody, a cranky old pull-string cowboy doll whose life is thrown into a tizzy by Buzz Lightyear (voice of Tim Allen), a grandiose new space action figure who is under the delusion that he truly is the intrepid defender of the galaxies—and both compete for the affections of their 6-year old owner, Andy. Ironically, *Toy Story* is the first-ever full-length animated feature whose creators discarded colored pencils and worked solely on computers.

Let suburban parents spend their afternoons cooped in minivans as they carpool to one child's ice-hockey practice and another's gymnastics lesson. Urbanites will soon have it all right here at one location, where vast harbor buildings in Chelsea have been renovated into a glass-steel-and-concrete exercise mall. The **Chelsea Piers Sports and Entertainment Complex**, nearly complete, brings a huge new sports center to four piers that jut into the Hudson River between 17th and 23rd Streets. One of the four piers is a membership-only operation, the other three are pay-as-you-go, but all four are accessible with a \$25 day pass. Two adjacent ice rinks with spectacular views have already opened, with seating for 1,800. Inline-skating rinks (\$2.50 for children, \$3.50 for adults) are next to a breezy park with picnic tables and views of the Empire State Building and the Statue



of Liberty. There's nothing in the way of racquet sports, but what *is* at the piers tends to be



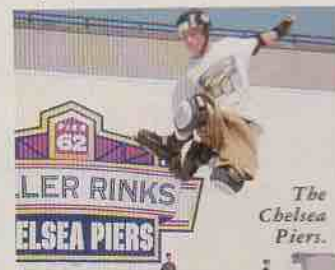
much better than what we've grown used to. The gymnastics facilities, scheduled to open later this month, are among the largest in the country, and the indoor jogging track (to open in January) is being billed as the world's longest, at a quarter-mile. Youth (and adult) leagues are forming now to compete in games of roller hockey, indoor lacrosse, field hockey, basketball, ice hockey, and indoor soccer. (The cost of joining most competitive leagues is between \$100 and \$150, depending on the length of the particular season.) By January, the entire 30 acres of restored piers (which also

house an expanded film-and-television production studio and, eventually, four restaurants) will be up and running.

The gracious, 95-year-old Victory Theater—which in its final years was reduced to showing sub-par pornography—reopens December 11 as the **New Victory**, a venue for children's and teenagers' shows. It's the first of the theaters on 42nd Street to undergo their long-awaited rehabilitation. The curtain goes up on **Cirque Eloize**, a quirky Canadian circus whose members were formerly with Cirque du Soleil. Shows planned for next spring include *Deuces are Wild*, a Bill Irwin-curated production, and a youth film series curated by Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese.

Barbie, that ever-popular bosomy piece of plastic, is both muse and whipping girl at **Art, Design, and Barbie: the Evolution of a Cultural Icon** at the Liberty Street Gallery in the World Financial Center, opening December 1. Barbie-related pieces of art in-

clude works by artists William Wegman, Andy Warhol, and John Baldessari and architects Zaha Hadid and Robert A. M. Stern. The show also looks back at Barbie's precursors—Lilli, a slightly risqué novelty doll that was popular with men in post-World War II Germany and was an inspiration to Mattel's co-founder—and other Barbie ancestors, fashionable dolls from other places and times.



Shepard illustrations and photographs of the real Christopher Robin as a child with his stuffed Pooh bear.

If all the new teddy bears in the stores seem like stiff and soulless *arrivistes* by comparison, you can now actually buy an heirloomish, pre-loved one for your child, although they aren't quite as ubiquitous as faded denim or prestressed leather. **Beary There Teddy Bears** (below) are at, where else, ABC Carpet and Home, that fortress of funky good taste where many, many things are aged to perfection. In this case, that perfect bear that's already lost some of its stuffing or has mismatched eyes fetches \$95.

And just when you thought—tutored by your child, Steven Spielberg, and the American Museum of Natural History—that you knew everything there was to know about prehistoric life, comes **Monsters of the Deep**, opening October 7 at the Liberty Science Center, giving us lolloping aquatic creatures that seem like they're straight out of a cartoon. Enormous moving robotic versions of the Dun-

kleosteus, the Tylosaurus, and the Thalassomedon (a Loch Ness Monster lookalike) will swim about menacingly in the museum's third-floor Environment section along with the more familiar great white shark and giant squid.

BARBARA ENSOR



Photographs: top to bottom, Andrew Goldberg, courtesy of Diannation, Jonathan Gross.