

Features

"Ninth Gate" a waste

By Lena Burns
Staff Writer

"The Ninth Gate" is supposed to be a thriller. Instead, the film proves to be a two hour long snooze-fest that leaves the audience with sore butts and backs, mumbling that they just wasted \$6.75.

The film, directed by Roman Polanski, is entirely too long, and lacks in dramatic momentum and special effects. The grim atmosphere of the scenery gives the film the darkness and mystery it needs, but the film is a total waste of time and money.

The film stars Johnny Depp, Lena Olin, Frank Langella, Emmanuel Sella (Polanski's real-life wife), James Russo, Barbara Jefford and Jack Taylor.

Polanski, John Brownjohn and Enrique Urbizu wrote the film. "The Ninth Gate" is based on the book "The Club Dumas," by Arturo Perez-Reverte.

Dean Corso (Depp) is a skilled "book detective" who researches and locates rare books for wealthy collectors. Corso is well known for his knowledge of books and the ability to locate them, so Boris Balkan (Langella), an avid book collector and expert scholar in demonology, hires Corso to do some dirty work.

Balkan has recently purchased a rare copy of "The Nine Gates of the

Shadow Kingdom," and wants Corso to locate the other two of the remaining three copies. Corso is to compare Balkan's book to the other copies because it is rumored that only one is authentic.

Supposedly, Lucifer himself co-authored the book back in 1666 (go figure) with another man who was burned at the stake with all the copies of the book. Only one was salvaged.

"The Nine Gates of the Shadow Kingdom" is a highly sought after book, because, supposedly, the book contains engravings that are signed "LCF" and, when interpreted, can summon Lucifer and open the gates of hell.

Review

Balkan sends Corso on an all-expenses-paid trip to Europe to locate the other two copies.

However, little does Corso know that the widow of the ex-owner of the book, Liana Teller (Olin), is stalking him. Teller will do absolutely anything, including seducing, assaulting and trying to kill Corso.

Guided by an omniscient guardian angel (Seigner), Corso narrowly escapes death throughout the film. His mission is dangerous and somehow people seem to turn up dead that have any association with Corso. Pardon the cliché, but all hell breaks loose when Corso gains possession of the book.

Ironically, the people die in the same order and fashion as the pictures in the book are. A complete

rip-off of "The Bone Collector," anyone?

The most depressing thing about this film is that I had high hopes for devilish special effects, hell fire and brimstone and demonic possessions, but no. The previews made it seem like some sort of "Devil's Advocate" or even "End of Days," but the actual movie was a letdown.

Polanski teases us with the hopes of suspense and seeing Satan in the movie, but instead our high hopes fall as the film digresses into a plethora of stalking, murder, car chases, beatings and unnecessary glimpses of Olin's and Seigner's body parts.

The closest Polanski got to special effects was when Balkan tried to summon Lucifer and... well I won't spoil it but that's about the extent of the special effects.

The only good thing about "The Ninth Gate" is the acting. It does not take much acting to run around cities trying to locate a 400-year-old book and escape death.

Each scene in "The Ninth Gate" makes it seem as though something really cool is about to happen, but instead it goes right back to that stupid book.

For a movie that is labeled a thriller, there are no thrills or feelings of suspense. About the closest I got to suspense is the car chase scene. Ooooooh.

Everyone left the theater completely disappointed with confused and empty. And let's not forget what I mentioned before—sore butts.

Experimental artist shows film talent

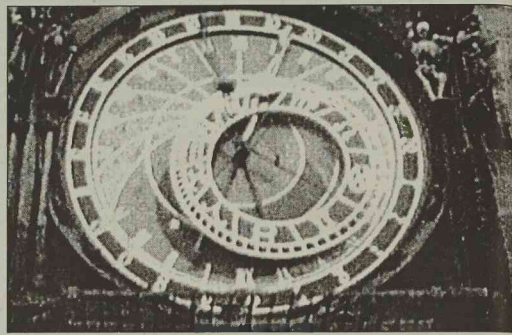


PHOTO COURTESY OF KIRSTEN PETERSON

Kirsten Peterson's experimental film, "Summer's Last Hurrah," was filmed in Europe in 1993. Peterson showed the film, along with "Asheville Hose," at the Asheville Pizza & Brewing Company on March 16.

By Kay Alton
Staff Writer

Because I love kaleidoscopes and all things beautiful, my evening spent with the crowd at the Asheville Pizza & Brewing Company on March 16 was an eye opener.

The event was a film presentation of two experimental films produced by Kirsten Peterson of Asheville. When I mention that Kirsten graduated from Asheville High School, we should be very proud to have a native who has developed her film artistry so quickly. Peterson attended Bard College, in New York, on an academic scholarship. She earned a degree in filmmaking.

The two films presented were very different. The first, "Asheville Hose," was filmed in black and white 16mm film. It takes the viewer on a chaotic ride through a virtual tornado of images from locales in and around Asheville. Peterson did her filming during 1997 and 1998.

A lot of energy went into the editing of the film. It was about 15 minutes long. The images blurred and intersected into one another at breakneck speed, presenting a very disturbing dark mood.

Eerie black and white jagged edges, outlines of buildings, graveyard tombstones and stately, dilapidated and abandoned factories, dirty interstate underpasses, and huge antennas were overlaid in various tones of shadowing patterns. Through the use of overexposure, all these elements were gathered into the final seconds to represent a scene reminiscent of a

nuclear holocaust. I'll leave the interpretation to another.

The musical mix accompanying the silent film magnified the dark mood. James Anthony Owen, from Hendersonville, produced the score. He improvised during the viewing by playing different percussion instruments. Owen played intermittent loops of fraped samples as well as pre-recorded tapes by Asheville artists.

Because the music was equally as dominant as the visual film on the movie screen, it made an impact on the audience.

Owen said he used "dark, spooky and sometimes noisy" tapes. "I have recorded NASA magnetic tape noise from outer space," said Owen. He also used music from Celtic chants and from a circumcision ritual in Uganda.

"This should give you a clear understanding of the assault launched on the ears of the audience."

The second film, "Summer's Last Hurrah," was first shot in Super 8 film and transferred to video just as the first one had been. Peterson said that she shot the footage in 1993, during a vacation in Europe.

"Summer's Last Hurrah" was filmed in color. Oh, what color. Peterson said the film was so good that her editing process produced the rich water color images. But those are not the only renderings achieved in the film. Stain glass windows filmed in ancient cathedrals displayed brilliant hues of clear, jewel tones through which light shone. First, light and shadows played between diffuse and stark representations of architectural appointments in a collage. Then, spiraling kaleidoscopic gargoyles

heads intersected with statues of angels in earthen tones.

Peterson captured shapes and sculpted them into Picasso-like cubic representations. Some developed into tile-like repetitions while whirling in a constant motion.

Especially powerful was Peterson's use of hard metal grids (maybe the Eiffel Tower) and railroad tracks, which she skillfully balanced with hard boulder surfaces and delicate colors from beautiful dancing liars dancing aloft.

While viewing the 30-minute film of "Last Hurrah," I could not resist thinking that Peterson has achieved in her filmmaking an artistic dimension painters strive for to interpret their ideas. A compulsion overtook me, almost, to be standing inside a virtual reality demonstration of the sights and movement of this film. What an experience of flooding rainbow colors and images the senses could enjoy.

Again, the music was like nothing I've ever experienced. At least, no sound I purposefully would select. It closely replicated a screeching cat perched on a metal trashcan. You know what I mean. It was the kind of noise that wrinkles your bones and makes you want to drop a piano on its head.

However, the films showed the work of a talented person. Peterson will be seen more in this area, and as well as in a wider audience. Her artistry as a filmmaker is undeniably brilliant. This young adult has innate talent. It was clearly demonstrated in these two films that she produced this year. We will hear about her and should keep an eye on the film releases for a long time to come.

Review

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Freida Roos-Van Hessen, a Dutch opera singer and Holocaust survivor, will speak at UNCA on March 29 from 7-9 p.m. in the Humanities Lecture Hall. The event is sponsored by the Baptist Student Union, and is free and open to the public.