

'Fatal Attraction' writer pens new mystery

By RICHARD SMITH
Staff Writer

Writer James Dearden was in such a rush with "Fatal Attraction" that it's almost impossible to recognize **Pascali's Island** as his work. In the former semi-gothic over-rated nightmare, scenes blasted into each other with an unprecedented degree of false logic, and we missed out on all the good bits, the interesting linkage that explains motive, action and decision — the bits that are the hardest to direct, and hardest to write.

But Dearden's "Pascali's Island," is the opposite. This mystery-drama unfolds like a perfectly wrapped present. Each idea is slowly opened and relished, and you think you're going to be in for a great treat. Which, in many ways, you are.

The film is set in 1908 on the small Greek island of Nisi. And thus the island is a contrast in itself: its pure, bleached, marbled beauty is peopled with international expatriates who each seem to have their own conspiratorial plans to make the most of a long-time-declining Ottoman Empire — profiteers, gun-runners, the idle rich, are all attracted by Nisi's exquisite locale.

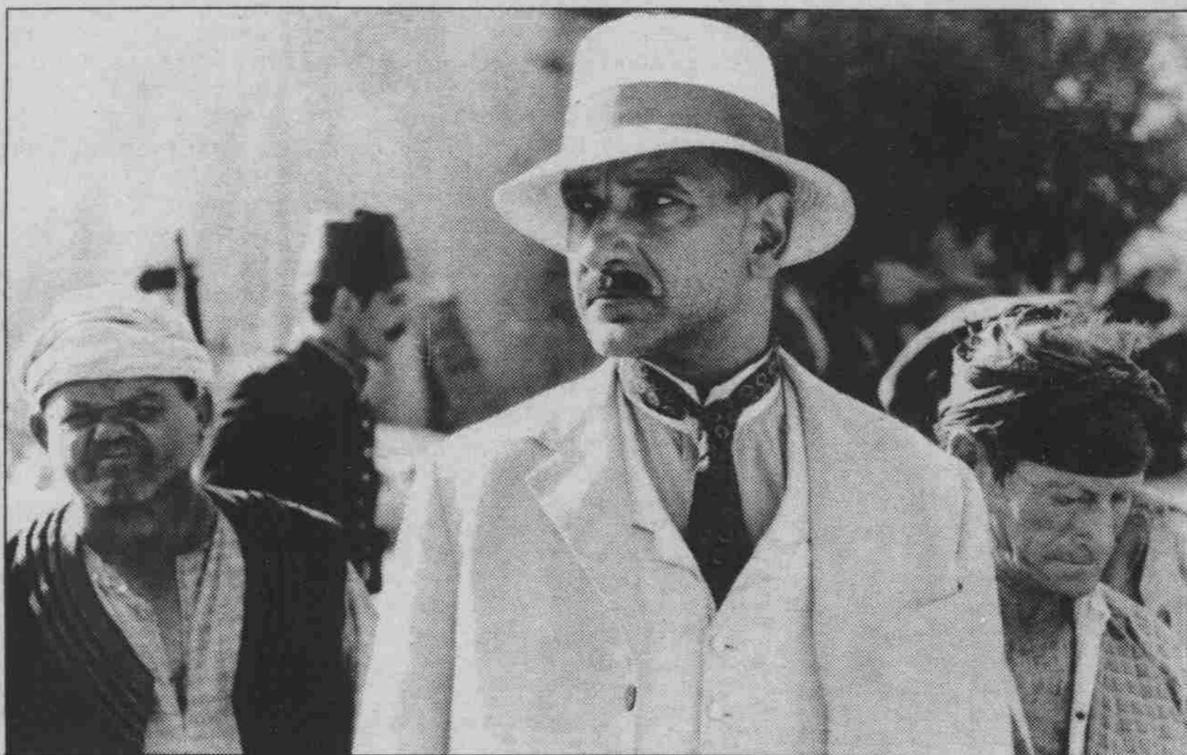
Basil Pascali (Ben Kingsley) is the story's main focus. For 20 years he has been a loyal spy for the Ottoman Sultan on the island full of resentful Greeks. He is the perfect spy; there is nothing that occurs on Nisi that he does not know about. Not that he is respected for it. His reports to the Sultan, 20 years of them, have remained unanswered and unacted upon, and the island's inhabitants know him enough not to confide in him. From the very

beginning, Pascali is a lonely, tragic figure.

As an informant, Pascali is naturally intrigued by the presence on the island of the elegant, mysterious Lydia (Helen Mirren). And of course he notices when the tall, blond Englishman, Anthony Bowles (Charles Dance), arrives on the island — apparently as an archaeologist. Pascali is attracted to them both, not just because of the enigma they present him, but because they are beautiful people. In this exquisite setting, they could be works of art in themselves.

And it is a work of art that eventually ensnares them all. Bowles's scheme to con the island's governor — a plan that Pascali has somewhat unwittingly fallen into — goes awry when the land which he has only purported to hold important archaeological finds, suddenly turns up trumps with the discovery of an ancient bronze statue. The triangle of beauty is finally set up: Bowles lusts for the statue, Lydia has fallen in love with Bowles, and Pascali remains transfixed by them both, until . . .

Dearden gives this classical mystery the classic treatment. If there is a problem with "Pascali's Island," it's one of stake. With such an intelligently drawn and gloriously slow build-up we are led to expect a bigger ending, a climax of greater consequence than the small lives of the film's main characters.



Ben Kingsley stars as a spy for the Ottoman Sultan in James Dearden's new film, "Pascali's Island."

The film's greatest strength lies in its stunning performances by the three leads. Ben Kingsley, best known and highly respected for his Oscar-winning role in "Gandhi," is among the greatest of today's actors. In his hands, Basil Pascali is a multi-dimensional character whose fascination with the island's newcomers and defiant and des-

perate loyalty to the Sultan in Constantinople holds the entire movie together.

Charles Dance ("Jewel in The Crown," "White Mischief") gives one of his better performances. Bowles is a more subdued, below-the-surface character, which suits the Englishman well. Helen Mirren is seductive and charming enough

to make her demise the cruelest of them all.

"Pascali's Island" is a beautiful film about beauty and the rot it attracts. It's the sort of film they don't make much anymore, and good enough to forgive (but not forget — how could we forget?) Dearden for his dreadful "Fatal Attraction."

General College

Here's the update on UNC's one and only super soap: "General College" on STV. This is by no means a squeaky clean group; its members continually wallow in their suds.

Mary Catherine is finally out of the hospital after her miscarriage. Her loving husband Brendan says so sympathetically, "Gee, guess we don't need to set

up the nursery." Good observation.

What does Brendan care anyway? He's been hooked and is getting reeled in by his glitzy, slutty neighbor. She's lonely for a man and Brendan's bedroom eyes are saying "YES, YES, YES."

Meanwhile, sex is also on Kyle's mind. The young freshman jock has been deprived for four days. What a pity! He asks his roommate Ken to let him borrow the

room at least until 11:30 p.m. Quickie huh?

Back in the swing is Meg Philips, a rape victim. She's turned in her gray sweats for some real clothes, and she looks great. With a new lease on life she has put the rape out of mind.

The beloved interracial couple, Courtney and Jason both suffer abuse for their relationship. Courtney's sorority sisters accuse her of dating a "cracker." Jason

really gets the bad end of the deal when he is attacked by his true blue Tri Psi brothers dressed as the Klan. Jason shows up at Courtney's door with blood oozing from his face, and she rushes to call an ambulance.

Tripp, the blue-blood frat boy, tries to charm Alexia with an exquisite dinner. Tripp, who is going to be president of his frat, asks Alexia to be his "first lady" for the occasion. But does she really want to go?

There's only one way to find out. Watch "General College" Monday through Thursday at 11 p.m. on Carolina Cable 11.

Compiled by staff writer Anne-Renee Rice.

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