

Sharon Ellis' movie review

# 'Gatsby' is entertaining but disappointing

The most eagerly-anticipated, most talked-about film of this year is now playing at the Valley I theatre. It is, of course, "The Great Gatsby." Based on F. Scott Fitzgerald's memorable novel about the Jazz Age and the careless and wealthy people who inhabit it, the movie is a veritable spectacle of mansions, costumes, and automobiles -- and unfortunately little else.

**ROBERT REDFORD**

Criticizing "The Great Gatsby" is rather like casting aspersions on Mom and apple pie and just about as dangerous! However, the movie was simply prophesied to be much better than it really is. The director, Jack Clayton, seems to have relied to heavily on the star appeal of the wonder boy of the screen today, Robert Redford, and on Mia Farrow's star status. Many scenes seemed carefully and ingeniously designed merely to show off Redford and his physique. (Clayton evidently succeeded here, for whenever Redford

appeared on the screen the girls in the audience seemed to suddenly suffer cardiac arrests). Redford plays the role of Jay Gatsby, Fitzgerald's enigmatic and mythic hero who throws ostentatious parties that he himself never attends.

Redford brings his own special charisma, a charisma that exudes sex appeal, to the role, but little else. He doesn't act in the movie; instead, he seems merely to inhabit the movie, moving from scene to scene without ever radiating any intensity of emotion. That his acting wasn't up to par is regrettable, for he is capable of much more as evidenced by his performance in "The Way We Were." Mia Farrow as Daisy Buchanan, the delicate and ethereal golden girl whom Gatsby is obsessed with, suffers from the same dilemma acting-wise. Her costumes are stunning; her acting is adequate at the most.

**SUPPORTING CAST**

The movie is saved by a supporting cast that give exceptionally good per-

formances and by a set that is flawlessly faithful to the mid 1920's. Lois Chiles is believable as Jordan Baker, a society golfer and Daisy's friend, and Bruce Dern is rather good in his portrayal of Tom Buchanan. The truly superb performances, however, come from Scott Wilson, Karen Black, and San Waterston. Karen Black is Myrtle Wilson, Tom Buchanan's vulgar and hot-tempered mistress who desperately wants to escape her social caste. In a remarkable performance she not only conveys the undercurrent of anger in Myrtle, but also the anguish. Her performance is equalled by that of Scott Wilson who plays her husband. Wilson is entirely convincing as the "wronged husband" who has loved and trusted his wife with a blind, dog-like devotion.

**WATERSTON EXCELLENT**

The force that pulls the movie together and give it substance is Sam Waterston as Nick Carraway. Nick Carraway remains on the

fringes of the fast-moving society that swirls around Gatsby and Daisy. As such, he is an impartial observer, a narrator of the action. This suggests a somewhat dull and mediocre performance on his part. "Brilliant" would more adequately describe it. Waterston has a talent for suggestion. Various emotions can quickly fleet across his face, each one carrying powerful connotations. The bewilderment and apprehension of Nick Carraway when he is first ushered into Gatsby's presence, the wry humor that surfaces during a meeting with one of Gatsby's not-so-respectable friends, the controlled contempt and anger that Nick harbors for Daisy and Tom and all they represent in the end, all this Waterston achieves.

**IMPRESSIVE SET**

The movie would almost be worthwhile (even at \$2.50 per person) simply for the set. The opulent houses with their grand fountains and long, airy rooms, the profusion of flapper costumes, and those utterly magnificent automobiles all transport one to a luxury setting in the 1920's. It's all rather impressive.

And so "The Great Gatsby" is entertaining; the luxury of costume and set will dazzle the eye, and if that fails Redford's slow smile will certainly win one over. En-

tertaining, but disappointing. Even good supporting actors and actresses can't carry off a movie whose screenplay does not measure up to the quality of the book and whose major stars aren't up to par. The book is a classic; the movie isn't.

## Personals

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## All dating was chaperoned? Times have changed since 1951

by Cathy Bland

With the latest surge in 50's parties, movies, and styles, you sometimes nostalgically ask, "Hey, whatever happened to the good ole days?" In January of 1951, the life of Meredith's approximately 700 women was quite different from today. Dr. Dorothy Knott Preston, math instructor here at Meredith, and her twin sister, Doris Knott Talley of Knightdale appear in the photograph below taken during mid-semester exam week of their freshman year at Meredith in January 1951.

It was a time when the Meredith girl's life included required chapel five times a week, Saturday classes, faculty members living on the halls, lights out at 11 o'clock,

phone calls only before 7 p.m. or between 10 and 11 p.m., and eating with the whole community, family style of course, at 6:15 every evening. (The other two meals were served cafeteria style.)

Of course, the campus has grown, undergoing some changes since 1951. The classroom buildings were located where the new dorms, Heilman and Barefoot, are today. Weatherspoon Gymnasium, the Cate Center, and Campbell Library have also been built since Dr. Preston's days at Meredith. The infirmary was located on fourth Faircloth. Dr. Preston noted that if you were over ill that you were more sick and even exhausted by the time you climbed up to the infirmary!

Dr. Preston also noted

that the social regulations have greatly changed at Meredith. Dating rules were strict. A freshman had to be chaperoned -- first semester by an upperclassman and her date, and after that she could double date with any other couple. Meredith girls never dated alone.

Another big change at Meredith is the cost. Dr. Preston and her sister, Mrs. Robert Talley, came for \$1,500 their senior year. That is \$750 apiece is a long cry from the \$2,800 Meredith students must pay now.

Dr. Preston and her sister are looking forward to their class's twentieth re-union which will be Class Day, May 11.



This picture was made during Meredith's mid-semester exam week January 1951. L to R, Dorothy Hart, Ruth Ann Simmons, Jean Joyner (all three juniors), Doris Knott Talley, and Dorothy Knott Preston (both freshmen).

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