

ENTERTAINMENT

"The Natural": A review

by Dawn Wood

After seeing *The Natural* once again this weekend, I have an even greater appreciation for Robert Redford as an actor and leading man. *The Natural* is an enjoyable, well-made film about a small-town baseball player, Roy Hobbs, who after a lengthy setback tries to reenter professional baseball in his early thirties. Robert Redford's acting as Hobbs is so authentic that one is easily drawn into the part. Hobbs quietly endures the injustices and struggles one would naturally associate with a thirty-year-old man attempting to begin a career in professional baseball. But these things make us want him to succeed, and we live the part with the character even more.

Roy Hobbs is faced with many obstacles as he seeks to prove himself. Early in the movie Hobbs is forced to prove his pitching expertise when he is challenged by a current baseball star labeled "The Whammer." Soon after, Hobbs suffers a huge setback in his career and

reenters baseball sixteen years later seeking to prove himself once again.

During the course of the movie Redford is involved with two sharply contrasted women set up as deliberate foils. One, his hometown sweetheart Iris, played by Glenn Close, is the reflection of her feminine name— quiet, kind, and sincere. As the stereotyped girl next door, Iris waits for her man and remains faithful to the end. Memo, on the other hand, is appropriately stereotyped as an uptown city girl concerned with power and possessions far more than her relationship with Roy Hobbs. She is selfish and scheming in an attempt to outwit her supposed lover.

Roy Hobbs is an achiever. Because he is willing to heroically sit back and endure injustice, his achievements are only that much greater. The odds are against his success, and therefore we are compelled to cheer him on for his perseverance. In all his glory, Roy Hobbs never becomes self-righteous. He remains devoted to the cause of

baseball, rather than the monetary reward. He quickly earns the respect of his team members, managers, and baseball fans, not only for his ability, but for his extreme success at a comeback they thought impossible.

The film uses definite lighting effects to envelope the audience. Soon after the movie begins the film cuts to the introduction of Hobbs and "The Whammer" and his company a superior edge. Then Hobbs is cast in bright light when he strikes "The Whammer" out at the carnival in front of an audience of people. In third situation the film alludes to power in relationship to darkness. Roy approaches the office of his team's owner and finds him engulfed in darkness. After fighting this arrogant man for his rights, Hobbs exposes the owner with light, turning the table on the situation. Much of the film has a brown overtone, although frequently sharp contrasts of dark and light are used to show transmutations in plot or characterization.

When the lighting effects are

important, so are other effects used in the film. As a foreshadowing Roy Hobbs is briefly shown practicing baseball at the introduction of this film. This scene occurs once again at the end of the film as Hobbs practices baseball with his own son. The introductory scene quickly illustrates Hobbs' exceeding love for the sport.

Also, Roy makes a baseball bat bearing a lightning bolt and the words "Wonder Boy". The lightning bolt later becomes a symbol embroidered on the uniforms of all his fellow team mates— a symbol perhaps of the respect and admiration Hobbs so deservedly earned. And "Wonder Boy" is an early foreshadowing of his later success. Finally, Hobbs' success is vividly exhibited in one last scene. As Roy Hobbs steps up to bat, he skillfully and expertly hits the baseball directly into the lights, causing an explosion which brilliantly illuminates the entire sky. Hobbs is cheered by all. *The Natural* is a classic movie that can be enjoyed by adults and children alike.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

JENNIFER JACKSON

NOVEMBER 2, 1963

HAVE A SUPER

BIRTHDAY,

TWIN

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