

# Patric, Pitt make Levinson's *Sleepers* an eye-opener

MOVIE: *Sleepers*

ACTORS: Brad Pitt, Jason Patric, Robert DeNiro, Kevin Bacon

DIRECTOR: Barry Levinson

If one plans to watch *Sleepers* based solely on the attraction of Brad Pitt, one is in for a surprise, albeit a pleasant surprise. Pitt appears for only a hour of the two and a half hour movie, but one hardly misses him. *Sleepers* is the latest film from Barry Levinson, and it is a powerful, gripping story about a horrifying topic — a film well-worth seeing.

The movie's plot revolves around the shattered innocence of four boys and the revenge they seek to avenge that loss. At the heart of the movie is the friendship between four boys: Michael Sullivan, John Reilly, Tommy Marciano and Lorenzo Carcaterra. Told in a series of flashbacks through the adult eyes of Carcaterra (Jason Patric), the movie can be divided into two distinct parts.

The first half of *Sleepers* sets the stage for the horror to come and depicts the lives of four boys as they grow up in Hell's Kitchen, New York, in the 1960s. For the first hour, their teenage lives are the main focus, and this glimpse into their daily lives reveals their characters and personalities, the importance of the Catholic church in their lives and the environment in which the four boys grow up. The audience sees the boys in a Catholic school, playing pranks on the nuns, and getting innocently involved with King Benny, the local mobster, as innocently as anyone can who dallies with organized crime. The four boys may not be perfect, but they are as good as children can be growing up and surviving in Hell's Kitchen. It is fitting then that it is a boyish prank on a hot dog vendor that

irrevocably changes their lives by sending them to boarding school.

The second half of the movie shows their lives in reform school in all its darkness and horror. It is there that the boys' innocence is shattered as they themselves are shattered by the other boys and the guards. The guards abuse the boy's faith, bodies, self-esteem and souls. If Hell's Kitchen was bad, the four boys sink into the pit of Hell now. It is in reform school that they sow the first seeds of revenge, inspired by *The Count of Monte Cristo* that Lorenzo reads to the others. The movie then fast forwards to 1981 when the boys are lost and broken adults, and Sean Nokes, a security guard from the school, is killed. This starts the ball rolling for the rest of their revenge. The rest of *Sleepers* focuses on the brilliantly complex and ultimate revenge the boys carry out.

The acting in *Sleepers* is superb, and it is an essentially ensemble cast. The actors playing the four boys are relatively unknown with Brad Renfrow (Michael), Geoffrey Wigdor (John), Jonathan Tucker (Tommy) and Joe Perrino (Lorenzo). These young actors steal the movie away from their more famous and experienced elders. Each of them manages to convey the friendship they feel, as well as the horror and shame at the abuses in the reform school. They seem like teenagers one minute and serious men the next.

But it is Perrino who stands out exceptionally. He is incredible as he makes us love him

and the other boys. He cries with real emotion, reveals mischeviousness, and shows fear, hurt and defiance all seemingly without effort. He is the quiet strength behind the group.

As Father Bobby, Robert DeNiro excels. He gives the priest a dynamic, three-dimensional personality as the boy's real father figure. Father Bobby is tough, loving and, most importantly, imperfect. His character plays basketball and understands Hell's Kitchen.

Minnie Driver is sadly underused in this boy's film, but she shines in the scenes she is in. Kevin Bacon is appropriately disturbing, greasy and evil as Sean Nokes. The four actors playing the boys as adults are stellar as well. Ron Elliard and Billy Crudup give strong performances as the adult John and Tommy. Pitt is very impressive as the adult Michael. His performance has genuine depth and emotion stronger than any of his other films. For the first time, Pitt explores a number of different characteristics, and he shows real talent as he endows Michael with soul.

Patric, however, gives the most impressive performance as the adult Lorenzo. His voice is heard from the beginning as he narrates, and he is literally the voice of the film. Patric's performance is low-key, but bottomless in its intensity. He reveals every subtle nuance, every thought and every emotion from pain to awkwardness. He is breathtaking to watch as his intensity burns like a candle.

*Sleepers* excels technically also. Levinson

directs an arresting, moving film that tells a story at its own natural, appropriate pace. He reveals himself to be a master story teller as each detail is fleshed out to importance. The sound effects are wonderfully illustrative. The movie begins with the four boys sunbathing on a roof while a Beach Boys' surfer song plays in the background, an interesting juxtaposition of innocence with the harsh, steamy, seething reality of Hell's Kitchen. In the second half, the main sound effects are haunting cries and screams, sounds that seem to echo and haunt the characters even when they are out of reform school.

The style of the film is formalistic with the occasional black and white shots and play on light and dark. *Sleepers* also cleverly uses flashbacks to gain maximum emotional impact, such as in the scene in the church when Patric prays and remembers yet another demoralizing atrocity the guards brought about. The film also shows irony in its flashbacks. At the end of the movie, the boys are reunited and all bodes well. However, Patric's narration tells the audience that is not so as he reveals what does happen.

*Sleepers* is as beautiful a film as it is horrible. It drains you, hurts you and makes you cry. I cried four times. You ache for these boys, what they were and what they become because of their experiences. The film is ultimately about the bonds of loyalty and friendship, and the final image in the film reveals the whole meaning of the movie. A scene is shown of the boys in Catholic school, happy together and triumphant, but as Patric's voice speaks on, the viewer knows the bitter truth to come. Their Eden is gone, and so are they. You won't sleep through this film, which is good because it is one film everyone should see.

## DOLE: continued from page 1

June to pursue his campaign for presidency, she remembered how Republicans and Democrats alike expressed respect for "his word as his bond."

The Dole-Kemp economic plan, she said, vows "to cut taxes and balance the budget" in an effort to give the money back to the American people in the form of a 15% tax cut across the board and \$500 per child tax credits. Combined, these would provide the average American family with \$1,555. "Money better spent by your family than by the government," Dole said.

Dole also mentioned her father plans to enact a 50% capital gains cut, which she hopes will mean more jobs from the private business sector. This would enable businesses to create more jobs, an asset particularly for young people.

She said her father is "committed to making schools safer and returning control of the schools back to the local community, teachers and parents." In addition he wants to provide parents with the opportunity to send their children to the school of their choice, she said. Dole said her father would like to use the presidency as a chance to deter teenage drug use.

"I want with all my heart for my father to be president, but that will not elevate him in my eyes for he could stand no taller than he does now. But I believe with all my heart that America will stand taller economically, morally and militarily with Bob Dole as president," she said.

Dole told the crowd of about 100 students and media how as a child her mother made red poodle skirts for her and her friends during a campaign. Each skirt featured a blue elephant, but Robin's carried a special banner which proclaimed "I'm for my Daddy, are you?" "My message started out that way and it's still the same today," said Dole.

Liz Denny, a 1992 Meredith College graduate, accompanied Dole as her advance representative. Denny routinely serves as Dole's trip coordinator.

## Angels for the Environment

By Katie Robinson

"Measure your health by your sympathy with morning and spring. If there is no response in you to the awakening of nature, -if the prospect of an early morning walk does not banish sleep, if the warble of a bluebird does not thrill you, -know that the morning and spring of your life are past. Thus may you feel your pulse" (*Journal*, February 25, 1859, Henry David Thoreau)

The next AFE meeting will be November 15 at 10am in 107 Hunter. Group pictures for the yearbook will be on November 12 at 6:30pm in the Rotunda; we hope all members will be able to make it. Thank you to Carolyn Parnell, Sherry Miller, Amanda Sundstrom, Courtney Stallings, Danielle Mir, Nicole Farley and Katie Robinson for helping plant flowers on Saturday, October 26, to beautify our campus. A special thanks to Harry Cadman, who prepared the site for us. We now have pansies by the front entrance to the campus and Jones Auditorium to welcome the new autumn season. The next project will be planting trees which will take place before Thanksgiving, when the weather is colder.

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