

Alfred Hitchcock Classic Sneaks Back Into Theaters

By JEREMY HURTZ
Staff Writer

Alfred Hitchcock's films are among the most psychologically captivating of all time. His precise direction and streamlined characterization are revered by critics. But Hitchcock is best known for one thing, of which the newly restored "Rear Window" is his most flawless example — sustained suspense.

Four-time Hitchcock leading man James Stewart plays Jeff, a photojournalist wheelchair-bound by a broken leg. He has little to do with an afternoon but watch his many neighbors from the rear window of his apartment. Adventurous but commitment-shy, he struggles to keep his socialite girlfriend (three-time Hitchcock leading lady Grace Kelly).

One night Jeff hears a scream from the window opposite his. When a neighbor's wife goes missing, Jeff becomes convinced that "something is terribly wrong" and seeks to prove foul play.

Most critics name the 1958 "Vertigo" as Hitchcock's best film. It's more intricate, from standpoints of narrative and psychology. But "Rear Window," made four years earlier, is equally stylish in a simpler fashion.

Every element in the film adds a remarkable sense of realism. The soundtrack is only music heard by the charac-

ters in the picture, with no separate score. Very few shots originate outside Jeff's apartment — everything occurring outside the window is viewed through it.

This realism is driven toward a single goal, sustaining suspense like no other film ever made. Hitchcock creates a palpable sense of danger and menace so subtly that we remain, like the protagonists, uncertain any wrong has been done, yet deathly afraid it has.

Stewart, the perfect everyman, and Kelly, the perfect socialite beauty, have chemistry enough to run DuPont out of business. Their relationship, intriguing and clearly defined, draws the audience in. Because the characters seem real, the suspense is genuine; because the setting seems real, the suspense is intense.

It's a classic, one of the finest films in existence. Why, though, is the 46-year-old film back in theaters? In short, to ensure its continued existence.

Film preservationist Robert Harris, who previously restored "Vertigo," has worked a miracle on "Rear Window." Any film this old requires extensive work to create a decent print, but this film reportedly was in horrible shape, and it now looks flawless. The color tones of dusk early on are breathtaking; the picture has only a fragment of the grain and fuzz one would expect. It's a miraculous thing to see such a perfect picture look pristine once again.

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.

Movie Lays Early Claim to Grammy Fame

By JUSTIN WINTERS
Staff Writer

It's only fitting that the hands-down best movie of the century thus far was released at a time when this year's Oscar statues were all scandalously missing.

Steven Soderbergh's newest magnificent gem of a movie, "Erin Brockovich," will have to wait until next year for its chance to legally steal the awards away from the rest of the competition.

MOVIE REVIEW

"Erin Brockovich"



"Brockovich," based on the true story of a single lower-middle-class mother who takes on a dirty water-utility company "Norma Rae"-style, is a film that might look and sound like any of the numerous courtroom dramas (namely 1998's overrated "A Civil Action") Hollywood has produced recently.

Luckily, Soderbergh, who directed another underrated classic in last year's "Out of Sight," doesn't play by the rules. A self-proclaimed independent director, he has made an un-Hollywood movie starring the planet Earth's hottest female star, Julia Roberts.

The script by Susannah Grant ("Ever After"), wonderfully written with sharper dialogue than any of last year's movies, takes a true rebel-rousing story and gives it a sharp kick in the butt.

Completely involving from beginning to end, every character in "Brockovich" serves a purpose to the story, unlike many movies who have numerous "cardboard characters."

Soderbergh has a knack for casting roles which truly challenge his "superstars."

Roberts, playing the single mom who dresses more like her character from "Pretty Woman" and talks with language more like Eddie Murphy's "Raw," lights up the screen with an unorthodox role that could have been easily underplayed or overplayed by a less capable actress.

Roberts has always been criticized for being too pretty or too girly to be a true actress. Playing a woman who really doesn't give a damn what people think of her, finally, Roberts' best line could be a wry reply to her sharpest critics.

Responding to her male employer's suggestion to wear less provocative clothing due to the complaints of her female co-workers, Roberts' character replies that she will instead proudly keep wearing whatever she wants as long as she has "one ass instead of two."

Roberts isn't the only one who gives a perfect performance in the film. Veteran actor Albert Finney ("Simpatico") surprises as Brockovich's boss and partner who undergoes a hilarious character arc from pediatric lawyer to a guy that you could just hug.

In the flick's overall whimsical scheme, Soderbergh's direction is the overall glue that holds "Brockovich" together throughout. He has given Roberts and Finney two roles that will undoubtedly garner them two deserved Oscar nominations in 2001. He should also be in good position for a "Best Director" award.

And he won't even have to steal it.

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Julia Roberts returns to the screen as a tenacious file clerk who plans to save a small town in tight skirts and heels.

BIZBUZZ ENTERTAINMENT NEWS

Who Wants to Win More Money?

Admitted "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" freak Rosie O'Donnell will tape a special celebrity version of the game show April 7, with all winnings going to charity. Rest assured that O'Donnell is familiar with the show's three "lifelines" format. But after her much-publicized stint as a phone-a-friend, will O'Donnell be able to live up to her reputation?

Buffy + Freddie?

People magazine reports that Sarah Michelle Gellar and Freddie Prinze Jr. of "She's All That" fame are rumored to be dating after a romantic dinner in Malibu. Can you picture the reaction of the teenybopper crowd? Oh my GAWD, aren't they a CUTE couple?

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Oscar Oops

With the Oscars coming up Sunday, this has been a banner year for blunders. Not only did the U.S. Postal Service lose eight bags of ballots, but a crateful of Oscar statuettes yet to be inscribed were stolen en route to Los Angeles. The statuettes, with an estimated worth in the tens of thousands, were found in an Los Angeles dumpster. Guess they're making sure to provide host Billy Crystal with a lot of material.

Turn Out the Lights ...

After six years of melodrama and slowly slipping ratings, FOX's "Party of Five" has finally bitten the dust, and the "Party" spin-off "Time of Your Life" is in danger of being canceled.

And FOX's troubles promise to continue. "90210" is leaving the air in May after 10 years, and it's still not certain whether powerhouse "The X-Files" will return for an eighth season.

If You Weren't Scared the First Time

The filmmakers who brought "The Blair Witch Project" to the big screen last summer are busy filming the sequel, ingeniously titled "Blair Witch 2." They reportedly aren't planning to do any filming in the now-famous Burkittsville, Md., and the success of the first film ensures that they aren't suffering from a low budget this time. Maybe they'll have enough money to purchase a Steadicam.

— Compiled by Allison Rost

'The Cup' Fuses Buddhist Themes, Western Setting

By MATT MANSFIELD
Staff Writer

If "The Cup" pours a new breed of filmmaker onto the Hollywood scene, traditional Buddhist robes will replace devil-red silk dresses and sacrilegious polyester suits.

MOVIE REVIEW

"The Cup"



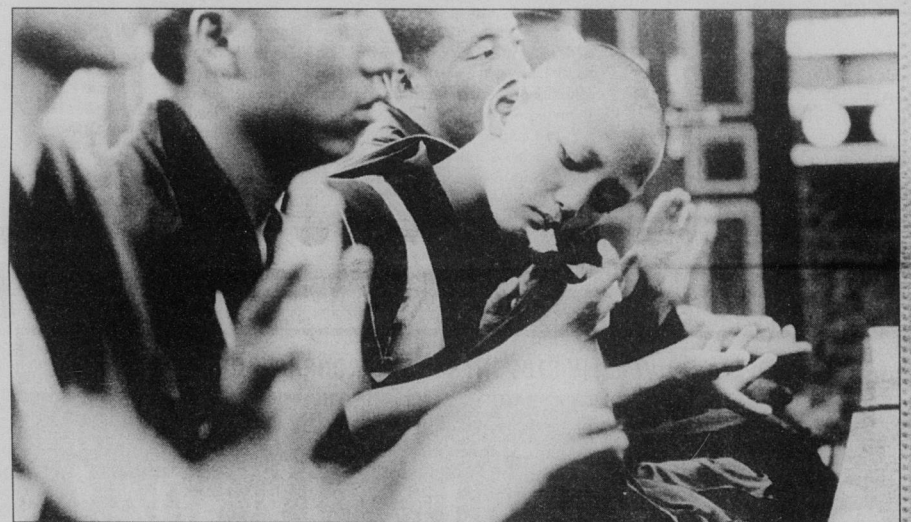
The film, written and directed by Buddhist monk Khyentse Norbu, combines two unlikely subjects: Buddhism and soccer.

Aspiring monks Palden and Lodo try to escape the monotony of chanting to watch the 1998 World Cup.

Palden strips off his monks robes for his other spiritual garb — a jersey of a famous Brazilian soccer player that Palden made from a T-shirt.

Norbu mixes the two themes well by having the monks root for countries that support Tibet's liberation from China. He also emphasizes the clash of two cultures within one civilization: refugees who have grown up in India and recent immigrants from Tibet.

The conflict between Palden, a refugee his whole life, and two recently arrived refugees adds needed tension in the film that lacks only one thing —



Jamyang Lodro stars as Orygen in "The Cup," a film that explores both religious and secular spirituality. Director Khyentse Norbu depicts the story of monks who love soccer.

moving drama for Western audiences. The film tries to teach a lesson in true Buddhist form. In the middle of the film, a Buddhist lesson is interrupted by the soccer game.

At the end of the movie, Palden asks how the story concludes, and the monk replies, "Why must there always be an end to a story?"

This ironic statement tells the audi-

ence that a story does not end at an absolute moment, making the audience aware that the characters exist beyond the film's end. This conjures up the Buddhist notion that nothing ends and that people and things exist eternally.

However, this maxim ironically gives the film a concrete resolution, showing Norbu's talent as a storyteller. Norbu also exhibits his versatile ability to cast visually appealing shots. He presents awe-inspiring nature shots of the Indian Himalayas.

He also conveys the pomp and cir-

cumstance of Buddhist ceremonies with a symmetrical shot casting over the abbot monk's head, down the aisle lined by monks and straight out of the temple door.

Norbu's dissolving scene changes leave the audience enraptured. One fades from a Buddhist shrine of candles made from modern-day Coke cans to an ancient Buddhist statue. The effect eloquently adds to the clash of modern civilization and Buddhist tradition.

Although lacking in dramatic excitement, "The Cup" provides valuable lessons and powerful cinematography, generating a truly original foreign film that could transform Los Angeles into a giant Hollywood monastery.

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