The Daily Tar Heel

DIVERSIONS

'Blair Witch' Sequel Lacks Scares, Originality 'Lucky Numbers' Misses

By JUSTIN WINTERS Staff Writer

Considering its unbelievable hype and successful pedigree, it's scary how good the uber-sequel "Book of Shadows: Blair Witch 2" could have

Last summer's "Blair Witch Project" was the most profitable movie of all time, and "Book" review/ to the "Book of Shadows: screen, expecta-Blair Witch 2' extremely tions

high, with a ne director, larger budget and a whole new

vision. Sometimes, more really is less. Director Joe Berlinger, who directed the truly creepy documentary "Paradise Lost: The Child Murderers at Robin Hood Hills," makes his feature film debut by taking all that was original or scary about the first "Blair" and totally trashing it in order to make a jaw-drop-pingly bad homage to '80s horror. The movie's introduction starts out,

promisingly enough, on the right foot. Using real clips and news footage, it recounts the happenings of the first film while highlighting its humorous effect on the small town of Burkittsville, Md., its unfortunate location. Then, the credits roll, Marilyn Manson growls the opening tune and "Book" really begins to blow.

It tells the story of a group of "Blair" film-obsessed 20-somethings who decide to trek out to the site of the first film in order to drink and smoke weed. The group inexplicably blacks out for



The cast of "Book of Shadows: Blair Witch 2" succumbs to '80s horror movie scare tactics in the misguided sequel to 1999's much-hyped smash hit "The Blair Witch Project."

five hours and wakes up in deep doodoo, metaphorically speaking. Their oodles of camera equipment hold the only key to what happened. Unfortunately, "Book" truly fails in

ery way that its predecessor succeeded. It is unnecessarily gory, while the first had little violence. Its characters, who also use their real names, do not carry an inkling of believability. The

whole film is pretty much just the characters watching a television over and over again. Nothing really happens that would ever be interesting. It doesn't even contain one mention of a Book of Shadows. Is that allowed?

Any mystery or fright that was asso-ated with the first film has been ciated replaced with a glossy horror movie that is similar to a bad "Friday the 13th"

entry (with the boring woods setting, stu-pid young people and even worse direc-tion). The militant government wants an example of entertainment that is bad for children and adults? Look no further. This "Book" should have been left on the cutting room floor.

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

By Allison Rost Staff Writer Here's a tip: For those of you who

The Jackpot With Script

might need some extra cash, don't try to rig a state lottery. Or, if you do, at least attempt not to

be as stupid as the characters in "Lucky Numbers." John Travolta "Lucky Numbers" ★★1/2 Russ

plays Russ Richards, a popular, egocentric weatherman at a local TV station in Harrisburg, Penn., who weatherman at a local aspires to be a game show host w fame and fortune of Dick Clark. ost with the

He adds to his wealth and local renown with a strip-mall snowmobile dealership, but the city experiences an unprecedented winter heat wave, and Richards finds himself unable to maintain his lavish weatherman life

Enter Crystal Latroy (Lisa Kudrow), the girl who draws the lotto numbers for Richards' station, and Gig (Tim Roth), a strip club owner involved in all kinds of criminal activity. The trio hatches an extensive scheme

to rig the lottery involving asthmatic cousins and hit men, and while the crime goes as planned, the ensuing paranoia inevitably brings the whole operation down.

In this way, the plot isn't anything new, taking a page from last year's much better "A Simple Plan." However, the movie's darkly comedic twists and

turns do keep the audience guessing until the end. The film starts out very slowly, but perks up with Bill Pullman's first unnearmeet as an inext Harithurg appearance as an inept Harrisbu police officer. His hilarious performan-orightens the second half of the film ar brightens the second half of the film and makes it much easier to stomach than

Kudrow is also excellent as the sadi tic Crystal and Michael Rappaport adds his deft comedic touch in his role as a hit man, even as the writing painfully falls short.

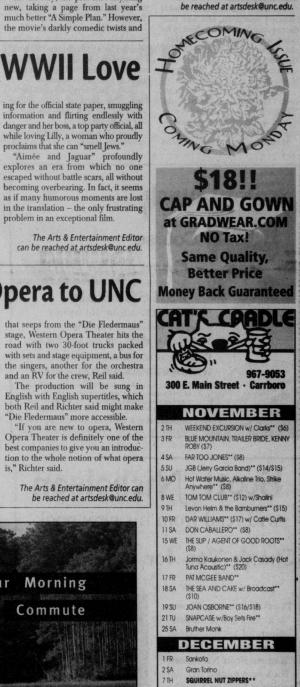
The writing, incidentally, is the film's Variations on the orst quality. plot have been done many times before, but "Lucky Numbers" was on its way to an entirely new interpretation before the plot got off the track.

And while the film picks up a great deal of steam in the second half, leading deal of steam in the second half, leading up to the entertaining ending, the dia-logue is ridiculous and unbelievable. The talented cast is able to salvage

plenty of laughs, but there are too many places where it's obvious the audience supposed to laugh and doesn't. "Lucky Numbers" tries very hard to

win the audience over, but lacks the necessary charm and quirkiness that have made similar comic capers so endearing.

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



'Aimée and Jaguar' Paints Poignant Portrait of WWII Love

By KAREN WHICHARD Staff Write

With the Battle of Berlin raging, two unlikely lovers, a Jew and a Nazi, try in vain to separate themselves from the realities of day-to-day life in Nazi Germany

and uncertainty abound in "Aimée "Aimée and larguer" "Aimée and Jaguar" ★★★ and Jaguar," a riveting love story set at the center of a monumental event of

the 20th century.

"Aimée and Jaguar," an award-win-ning German film based on a true story, depicts the love between spunky Jewish writer Felice (Maria Schrader) and Lilly (Juliane Köhler), a Nazi housewife whose husband rarely appears home from the front lines. The film, directed by Max

Färberböck, expertly blends the crisis of war and persecution with Lilly's life-altering decision to forsake her husband and live with the mysterious Felice, the true love of her life

Färberböck subtly uses Nazi radio propaganda, Allied bombing runs and

top-level Nazi party functions to paint a picture of the uncertainty felt by even the most rabid Nazi sympathizer.

The film resists the temptation to force the crimes of Nazism and the terror they inflicted into the forefront, and instead manipulates their suffocating presence as a constant backdrop, creat ing a profound sense of the dangers facen the most ardent Nazi.

The crisis and drama of these histor ical events could easily have dominated the film, but Färberböck instead focuses on a small group of underground Jewish lesbians who do their best to live

lavishly and somehow survive the constant threat of concentration camps

In a film dominated by the dark colors of war, the entrance of these women colors a bleak landscape with the hope that the merriment of life can pull one out of even the bleakest corner.

They are a heroic group, involved in secret dealings of resistance movements. Felice undoubtedly is its center, exuding a bold personality dripping with mys tery. Much of the movie passes by without a clear understanding as to who she really is, and what her intentions are.

problem in an exceptional film

Felice's complicated life includes writ

San Francisco Opera Center Presents Strauss' Comic Opera to UNC

Western Opera Theater brings Johann Strauss' tale of deceit, "Die Fledermaus," to Memorial Hall tonight.

By DANIELE EUBANKS

Prepare to delight in a bit of cham-pagne-doused debauchery, adultery and deceit when Western Opera Theater, the touring arm of the San Francisco Opera Center, presents "Die **Die Fledermaus** Memorial Hall Fledermaus" at Memorial Hall Tonight 8 p.m. tonight in Memorial 8 p.m. Hall \$16-\$36 English, In

"die fledermaus" means "the bat." The comic opera by Johann Strauss relates the foibles of Baron von Eisenstein. His friend Falke arranges a farce at a mas

Want

querade ball to exact revenge on the baron for abandoning him at the previ-ous year's ball and making him walk home the next day in a bat costume.

A web of deception ensnares wives, lovers and miscreants, but of course, in classic comedic style, suffering is minimized and revelry reigns supreme. The performance serves as the season pener of the 2000-2001 Carolina

pener Union Performing Arts Series, which in past years has brought world-renowned artists such as Dance Theater of Harlem and Bobby McFerrin to UNC.

and Bobby McCerrin to UNC. And the Western Opera Theater is no stranger to the series. This year marks the fifth consecutive season the Western Opera Theater has included Chapel Hill in its three-month-long national tour, and UNC keeps recruiting the company because audiences have shown a sur-prising affinity for opera, Carolina Union marketing manager Lyndsay Richter said.

Dijon?

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"Looking at ticket sales the past four years, opera is one of the higher student-selling performances," she said. "About 40 to 50 percent of ticket sales are student tickets

Students might relate to the youthful quality of the company, which serves as an avenue for burgeoning performers to gain experience and recognition, Richter said. "The cast is serious about launching their careers, so they give a good performance," she said. "It's really a display of vocal talent –

the quality is not something you'd find on the street.'

ferent parts of the opera, and the per-formers shift roles periodically so they

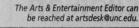
can experiment with interpretation and keep from getting stale, Richter said. "Western Opera Theater is sort of their training ground - they're getting seaoned with road experience so they can go on to the Met or San Francisco Opera in the future," she said.

lings, said Jennifer Reil, marketing and public relations coordinator for Western Opera Theater. Usually between the ages of 21 and 34, all have completed the Merola Opera Program, required for entrance into the prestigious San Francisco Opera, and most have their

that seeps from the "Die Fledermaus" stage, Western Opera Theater hits the road with two 30-foot trucks packed with sets and stage equipment, a bus for the singers, another for the orchestra and an RV for the crew, Reil said.

English with English supertitles, which both Reil and Richter said might make

"If you are new to opera, Western Opera Theater is definitely one of the best companies to give you an introduction to the whole notion of what opera is." Richter said.





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