

'Dresser' easily earns Academy nominations

By JEFF GROVE
Arts Editor

Palpable and intense, the aura of live theatre leaps from the screen in *The Dresser*, the film adaptation of Ronald Harwood's play about an aging Shakespearean actor and his dresser.

Dressers have gone the way of the Model T, so the term may require some explanation. In the days when a play's star was the entire show, any actor with visions of greatness had a dresser, a servant whose duties included helping the performer into and out of makeup and costumes.

Other duties, not specified in the dresser's contract, might include serving as nurse, psychiatrist, pep club and confidant to the star, and so it is in *The Dresser*.

Norman works for an actor known only as Sir. In England during the heat of World War II, Sir and his band of actors — mostly old men and cripples, Sir complains, because all the young men are in the army — travel the provinces performing.

Primarily, *The Dresser* shows Norman cajoling Sir through a performance of *King Lear* while the actor suffers a physical and mental breakdown similar to Lear's. In the course of the performance, the many aspects of Norman and Sir's love-hate relationship come to the fore.

Certainly the film as a whole is an experience to be treasured; it richly deserves its nomination for this year's Best Picture Oscar. But the acting is superior to the vehicle.

Albert Finney as Sir and Tom Courtenay as Norman are both up for this year's Academy Award for Best Actor, but their performances take entirely different paths.

Finney, one of the greatest living British actors, chews up the scenery in his part. He does not exploit blind rage, though. Sir is a multi-shaded character; he is spoiled, demanding and obstinate yet vulnerable, child-like and pitiable.

Courtenay's work, more genteel and more detailed, is arguably better. Watch his hands in any scene. They are never still, always expressing something. Courtenay, who originated the role of Norman in London's West End and on Broadway, is a marvelously controlled actor, achieving subtleties of voice, expression and posture in almost every scene. His is a performance to be seen twice; too many nuances can be missed in a single viewing.

Eileen Atkins plays Madge, the company's stage manager, in a powerful display of repressed emotions. The part of Sir's common-law wife, known as Her Ladyship, suffers in translation to the screen because it



Albert Finney as Sir is attended to by his faithful dresser (Tom Courtenay).

has been pared down and sanitized — no reference to the fact that Sir never divorced his first wife or that he never really married Her Ladyship. Zena Walker is unable to fill in many of these ideas with her low-keyed acting.

The other characters are mostly bit players, with the acting uniformly impressive.

Peter Yates is a "hit and miss" director — that is, his films are as likely to be very bad as very good. Among his hits he numbers *Bullitt*, *The Hot Rock*, *For Pete's Sake* and *Breaking Away*; among the misses, *Mother, Jugs and Speed*, *The Deep* and *Krull*. *The Dresser* belongs firmly in the hit category, rivaling *Breaking Away* in its skillful leadership and blending of diverse characters and character types. Yates also has been nominated for an Oscar for *The Dresser*.

Harwood adapted the screenplay himself, earning the film its fifth Academy Award nomination. While certain details are, regrettably, obscured, the play does gain a little in the translation.

Such details as the widely-held actor's superstition of

Macbeth's being a jinxed play were more fully explained in the stage version. The film only glances at them, and audiences unfamiliar with the theatre may be put off momentarily.

The portrait of the theatre company, however, is more carefully painted in the film. Harwood himself served time as a dresser in a touring company, and his experiences provide a rich palette.

Cinematographer Kelvin Pike perfectly captures the squalid settings so the audience can almost smell the mildew of the backstage facilities. A set and costume staff of 15 technicians headed by Production Designer Stephen Grimes earns laurels for its recreation of Britain in the '40s.

While the technical work is impressive, it is not obtrusive. The script and, more importantly, the acting are allowed to carry the film, and they carry it to perfection, never mind the theatrical mumbo-jumbo, thank you very much, ducky, as Norman might say.

'Strange Invaders' is a tribute to '50s sci-fi flicks

By JEFF GROVE
Arts Editor

It's sad when a film distributor writes off a good movie just because it fails to rake in millions of dollars in profits right away.

Such is the shabby treatment Orion Pictures has accorded Michael Laughlin's *Strange Invaders*, an excellent film in its own right but also a fine tribute to science fiction films of the 1950s.

Released last fall, the film received general critical praise with some mixed reviews, but it was slow to build solid box-office business. It is only now making its North Carolina premiere, and that is in the form of a late show. Orion has purposely dragged its heels in promoting the film, making things difficult for would-be exhibitors.

There is no good reason for this to happen, although it is almost understandable because some critics, usually more perceptive, misread and misrepresented the film to their readers.

Strange Invaders features a stalwart hero, Charles Bigelow, fending off an invasion from space.

Bigelow, an entomology professor at Columbia University, investigates the apparent disappearance of his ex-wife in the archetypal small town of Centerville, Ill. Stumbling onto an alien plot against the earth, he high-tails it back to New York.

Along the way, Bigelow enlists the aid of scandal sheet reporter Betty Walker and mental patient Willie Collins. They are menaced by one Mrs. Benjamin, an official of a government center established to study Unidentified Flying Objects, and by Arthur Newman, an old man who runs a boarding house in Centerville.

The story has been called a spoof of the "invaders from space" genre popularized by such films as *The Thing*, *The War of the Worlds*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still*.

While *Strange Invaders* owes much to these films, sometimes making direct references to them, it is not a send-up of them. The film takes itself seriously, never indulging in the self-mockery of movies like *Airplane!* or *Young Frankenstein*. It is a film for the '80s shot in the style of the '50s.

And it's a whale of a good time in the theatre.

Strange Invaders benefits from its

strong cast. Several of the actors have worked under Laughlin's direction before, so it's easy to see why things click so well between them.

Like the movie itself, Paul LeMat's performance as Bigelow gets off to a slow start. As the film's style gels, so does LeMat's, and he soon has the audience rooting for him.

Nancy Allen makes a lovely, lively heroine. She also offers trenchant insights on the world of tabloid journalism.

Michael Lerner's resolute Willie holds a few surprises for the audience. A character actor of the first rank, Lerner pulls off the twists with cool expertise.

In the roles of Arthur Newman and Mrs. Benjamin, Kenneth Tobey and Louise Fletcher provide villains who are fun to watch in spite of their evildoing. Fletcher, a UNC graduate, picked up an Oscar in 1975 for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

The part of Bigelow's ex-wife, Margaret, calls for a catatonian performance. Diana Scarwid, seen earlier this year as Cher's lover in *Silkwood*, does the role justice.

Fiona Lewis, Wallace Shawn and June Lockhart are also good in their smaller roles. Veteran character actor Charles Lane is a riot in the mandatory Voice of Scientific Reason role. He's the one who gets to say things like, "Son, I've been an astronomer for 40 years, and I've seen some mighty strange things, but..."

Laughlin's direction shows that he has the '50s technique firmly under control, especially when he depicts Bigelow's trip to Centerville by superimposing a road map onto shots of Bigelow driving.

Laughlin collaborated with William Condon on the script, which also displays evidence of a careful study of sci-fi films of the '50s. The dialogue is often intentionally unintentionally funny, and it's frequently punctuated just a little too much by John Addison's ominous music.

The special effects are competent but, again intentionally amateurish in places.

Anyone who remembers staying up to watch the local TV station's late-night reruns of old science fiction and horror movies will have a blast with *Strange Invaders*.

But the film isn't all borrowing and homage. It stands well on its own with legitimate shocks and thrills, so even the uninitiated can enjoy it.

Eddie Murphy's Grammy winning album is funny

By LOUIS CORRIGAN
Staff Writer

Slick and bursting with an irresistible confidence, 22-year-old Eddie Murphy weaves a hilarious collection of impressions, stories and observations on his second album, *Eddie Murphy: Comedian*, recorded live at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C.

Comedians are judged on their ability to uniquely capture themselves and their culture in performance, so it is no mistake that Murphy's *Comedian* recently won a Grammy Award as Best Comedy Recording.

Review

Born in Brooklyn, Murphy rose to fame as a member of the revamped *Saturday Night Live* cast on the 1980-81 season. Murphy recently announced plans to leave the show. He has also co-starred in the movies *48 HRS.* and *Trading Places*, both huge successes.

Murphy, refusing to do any of the SNL

routines live, performs only new material. Perhaps the best of this new material is the series of fantastic impressions that illustrate Murphy's ability and creative genius. Feigning the sensitive Michael Jackson, Murphy sings a few lines from Jackson's "She's Out of My Life" and reaches the highs perfectly. He does impressions of Teddy Pendergrass and Elvis Presley as well.

The most hilarious moment on the album is Murphy's James Brown imitation. Murphy says the R&B great is proof that you don't have to be able to talk to sing.

Murphy also addresses and even imitates people who complain that his Stevie Wonder impression, a *Saturday Night Live* highlight, is in poor taste. He says he has told Wonder, a personal friend, that he is not impressed by the musician's singing or piano playing. "You want to impress me, take the wheel for a while," Murphy insists.

The second side of the album opens with a story called "The Barbecue," about relatives seen once a year at the

family barbecue. There is pyromaniac Uncle Gus, who demands to be in charge of building the fire — and uses two gallons of gas. There is Gus's wife, Aunt Bunny, who has such a thick mustache that the six-year-old Murphy refuses to kiss her. Hit with a shoe by his mother, Murphy flees to his room, where in childish anger he cries what every child has cried once in his life, "God, please kill her!"

Nowhere is Murphy's power of observation and ability to bring a simple occurrence to brilliant living color as radiant as in "Ice Cream Man." The ice cream truck bell sounds, and a younger Murphy cries, "The ice cream man is coming! The ice cream man is coming! Mom, throw down some money!"

After chasing down the truck, the younger Murphy, with the ice cream melting onto his hand, looks to the kid who doesn't have any ice cream and sings, "You don't have no ice cream. You didn't get none. 'Cause you were on the welfare and can't afford it, and your father is an alcoholic." America is alive

and, if not well, then real.

The second half of Side Two breaks down into a series of observations or social comments on a range of topics from politics to race relations to films.

Murphy refers to movies like *Pollergest* and says, "Why don't white people just leave the house when there's a ghost in the house?" In a funny white man's voice used several other times, Murphy mimics the actor finding blood in the toilet in *The Amityville Horror*. "That's peculiar."

Comedian offends surprisingly few people. The most blatantly assaulted group is the gay community. Murphy says, "I kid the homosexuals a lot, 'cause they're homosexuals." The language used in this routine, however, should offend most listeners.

Eddie Murphy: Comedian captures a hilariously funny performance by one of America's hottest comedians, but it is truly sad to hear the best resorting to prejudice and the use of graphic profanity like it was drinking water.

Why is good humor inevitably trashy?

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RECRUITERS WILL BE ON CAMPUS MARCH 20, 21 AND 22. SIGN UP FOR INTERVIEWS IN THE OFFICE OF CAREER PLANNING AND PLACEMENT, HANES HALL AND ATTEND A PEACE CORPS RECEPTION ON MONDAY, MARCH 19 FROM 1PM UNTIL 6PM IN GRAHAM UNION.

Campus Calendar

The Carolina Student Fund/DTH Campus Calendar will appear every Monday and Thursday. Announcements to be run on Monday must be placed in the box outside the Carolina Student Fund office on the third floor of South Building by 3 p.m. the Friday before they are to run. Announcements to be run on Thursday must be placed in the box by 5 p.m. of the preceding Tuesday. Only announcements from University recognized and campus organizations will be printed.

Today

- 3:30 p.m. UNC Pre-Law Club meeting in Union.
- 3:45 p.m. Nutrition and Behavior seminar by the Department of Nutrition, 231 Rosenau, School of Public Health.
- 7 p.m. Northwest IVCF large group meeting in the Chapel of the Cross parlor.
- Sports Club Council meeting in the Union.
- Maranatha Christian Fellowship will show "Chariots of Fire" in Hamilton 100.
- 8 p.m. South Campus IVCF meeting in Avery Social Lounge.
- 9 p.m. University of New Hampshire Exchange informational meeting in Union.

Friday

- 5:30 p.m. Campus Y Dinner Discussion at the home of Charles Jenner.
- 7 p.m. IVCF Off-Campus Chapter Meeting in the basement of the Bible Church.
- 7:30 p.m. IVCF Northeast Chapter Meeting at Chapel of the Cross.

Saturday

- 9 a.m. P.E. majors will sponsor a Jump Rope For Heart in Woolen Gym. Call the American Heart Association at 968-4453.
- 9:30 a.m. Anglican Student Fellowship breakfast at Chapel of the Cross.
- 7 p.m. Maranatha Christian Fellowship Worship Service in Room 224 of the Union.

Sunday

- 7 p.m. Baptist Student Union Choir Rehearsal at BSU.

Monday

- 2:30 p.m. "Behavioral Approaches to Obesity," Seminar by the Department of Nutrition in 231 Rosenau Hall.
- 7 p.m. UNC Audience for Jazz meeting in the Union. Music Critic for *Down Beat* magazine will speak. Sociology Club will show "Killing You Softly" and have a discussion. Place to be announced.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

National Teacher's Exam is April 14. Specialty Exam Only. Late registration accepted if received by Monday, March 19. Last specialty exam until November. Forms available in Nash Hall.

Dental College Admission Test is April 14. Registration must be received by Monday, March 19. Forms in Nash Hall and 201D Stere.

Applications are now available for students interested in serving on a CAA committee. Pick up applications at Union Desk.

Applications will be available until March 28 for Assistant Attorney General, Attorney General's staff, and Undergraduate Honor Court. Applications available at Union Desk and in Suite C.

A demonstration of Videotex Technology to coincide with the Videotex display in the lobby at noon during March in Room 201 of the Health Sciences Library. Free. Group discussion with graduating students about life after college in 218 Union, Wednesday, March 21 at 3:30 p.m.

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