

# Film

## Fitzgerald's 'Last Tycoon' too nebulous for film

By Will Huffman

F. Scott Fitzgerald, like so many great authors, has always resisted successful transfer to the screen. The qualities and style which make his writing great seem to nebulous and unique to be captured on film.

Both *Tender is the Night* and *The Great Gatsby* have been previously filmed, the latter three times. However, all were considered both artistic and commercial failures. No matter the amount of talent and money lavished, the end results never quite measured up to the source material.

Sadly, the new film version of *The Last*

*Tycoon* (currently at the Cooper) must fit into the above description. It's sad because the film is a product of extremely talented people who evidently spent a great deal of time and care in adapting the novel. Producer Sam Spiegel, director Elia Kazan and writer Harold Pinter from a trio that literally radiates prestige.

*The Last Tycoon*, Fitzgerald's unfinished novel (he died in 1941 after completing approximately half the book) tells the saga of Monroe Stahr, a successful young Hollywood producer. Stahr is actually a thinly veiled portrait of Irving Thalberg, the "boy wonder" of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer before

his sudden death in 1936.

Stahr is presented as a hard-driving but compassionate individualist working in an increasingly impersonal industry.

Fitzgerald describes him thus: "From where he stood (and though he was not a tall man, it always seemed high up) he watched the multitudinous practicalities of his world like a proud young shepherd to whom night and day never mattered."

De Niro looks right

As portrayed by Robert De Niro (probably the most versatile actor in movies today), the Monroe Stahr of the film comes very close to the Stahr of Fitzgerald's novel. De Niro's performance is undoubtedly the best in the movie. He even bears a strong resemblance to Irving Thalberg and always looks exactly right in the role.

We watch Stahr run the mammoth studio with aplomb and skill. He plays nursemaid to an aging-matinee idol worried about impotence (Tony Curtis). He coaxes a volatile English writer (Donald Pleasence) into injecting more action into his scripts and efficiently but gently fires a veteran director (Dana Andrews) who is having trouble with a temptuous leading lady (Jeanne Moreau).

Stahr chances upon a young English girl named Kathleen Moore (Ingrid Boulting) who reminds him of his late wife, a famous movie star. Obsessed, he subsequently pursues her.

And then the film begins to run into trouble. Fitzgerald's brand of romanticism, as interpreted by Pinter and Kazan, comes across as soft and mushy on film. The long sequences between De Niro and Boulting just don't have the force of conviction to give the film the center it needs. Boulting possesses a unique beauty, but opposite

De Niro she comes off as too slight, quiet and subdued to arouse any intensity.

Matters aren't helped any by the insertion of a distracting and totally unnecessary 10 minute intermission right in the middle of the main De Niro-Boulting sequence.

Pressures mounting

Stahr, a doomed and tragic figure from the outset, begins to feel the pressures mounting from both sides at the studio. The tough studio chief (Robert Mitchum) and his shrewd New York lawyer (Ray Milland) can't understand Stahr's desire to make a prestige picture that may lose money. Meanwhile the studio's writers are aroused by a Communist organizer from the East (Jack Nicholson).

Stahr begins to lose his grip on both his personal and public lives, Kathleen leaves him. Deserted and defeated, in the final shot of the film we see Stahr quietly engulfed in the black shadows of a huge sound stage.

Despite De Niro's performance and able support from the other roles (the confrontation between Stahr and Nicholson's labor organizer is particularly sharp, compared to the rest of the film) much of *The Last Tycoon* seems to drift aimlessly. The film is long on character and atmosphere. What it lacks is overall coherence. The scenes at the studio and the scenes with Stahr and Moore never quite gel, with the result that the film seems fragmented.

The sets are elaborate, the photography lush and the music evocative, yet only occasionally does the film manage to truly get inside Fitzgerald—usually when De Niro is on camera alone. However, those moments are relatively rare. Too much of the time *The Last Tycoon* captures the look and the feel of Fitzgerald, but not the emotion.

## Marionettes to perform with adults in mind

His work has hold of him by the strings, but Albrecht Roser, master puppeteer does his work by manipulating his marionettes. He will perform his program "Gustaf and His Ensemble" in the Nebraska Union Ballroom Saturday at 8 p.m.

Roser's puppet carving career began shortly after World War II. His earliest success came with a marionette clown Gustaf. From Gustaf, Roser created the En-

semble which includes: Professor Doctor Friedrich Wilhelm Ambrosius, The Modern Singer Clown Punktchen and the Granny from Stuttgart.

"Gustaf and His Ensemble" appeared at the first International Puppetry Festival 1958 in Bucharest, Hungary where Roser received the gold medal for his performance.

The two hour show is composed of 14 vignettes. Each vignette features one marionette operated by Roser, who is dressed in black.

Through his marionettes, Roser explores human frailties and emotion by using humor, pathos and drama. He operates in full view of the audience on a slightly elevated platform.

His most famous marionette, Gustaf, is an impish clown that embodies all kinds of mischief.

The final vignette in the show features Granny, the only character who speaks. Granny sits in her rocking chair, knitting and chatting with the audience. Her comments are pointed—so much so that when Roser was invited to perform in Moscow last year, he was asked to leave her behind.

Roser's performances are designed for adults and it is recommended children under 15 not attend.

Tickets are available at the Union South Desk and Dirt Cheap: \$1.50 Students and \$2.50 General admission.

## out on the weekend

Films and TV

*Not a Pretty Picture and Rape Culture* 3, 7 and 9 tonight and Saturday

Films on the Arts: *Lichtenstein in London and Art in Revolution*, 3 p.m. Sunday

UPC Foreign Films: *Playtime*, 7 and 9 p.m. Sunday

Howell Theatre

*When You Comin' Back, Red Ryder?* 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday

Kimball Recital Hall

Symphonic Band, 4 p.m. Sunday

Other Events

Albrecht Roser, puppeteer, Union Ballroom, 8 p.m.

## Band highlighted

The UNL Symphonic Band will present two public concerts in Kimball Recital Hall, today at 3 p.m. and Sunday at 4 p.m.

Today's concert will feature Joseph Wagner's "Concerto Grosso", James Christensen's "Trombone Country" and "Three Dance Episodes" from the ballet "Spartacus".


Highlights of the Sunday performance will include Moussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition" and Milhaud's "Concerto for Percussion".

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starring Robert De Niro

Tony Curtis Robert Mitchum Jeanne Moreau  
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Ray Milland Dana Andrews  
and introducing Ingrid Boulting

PG Technicolor A Paramount Release

PLAZA 3

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