

'Sgt. Pepper's' not bad movie

By L. Kent Wolgamott

Any movie which includes two of today's hottest recording acts, performing music written by the premier group of the last 20 years and is backed up by appearances of popular stars is bound to be a commercial success.

The surprising thing about Robert Stigwood's *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, is that it is not a bad movie.

The movie, which stars Peter Frampton and the Bee Gees as the title's band, creates a fanciful, if predictable plot through the use of music written by John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison.

Writer Henry Edwards and musical arranger and director George Martin wove their selections of the Beatles' music into a story which is supported by a minimum of dialogue.

Almost all of the spoken words come from George Burns, as Mr. Kite, the mayor of the town of Heartland where the story takes place.

This spares us the agony of watching rock stars attempt to struggle through speaking parts and allows the director much more freedom to use innovative production techniques to enhance the story.

Through the use of special effects, varied camera angles and imaginative sets, director Michael Shultz manages to hold the movie together despite the absence of experienced actors.



The Bee Gees and Peter Frampton sing along in "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart Club Band," the fantasy created by the Beatles during their experiments with LSD.

However, the factor which gives the movie credibility is the survival of Beatles' music almost intact.

Any attempt to transform the score into the homogenized mush of typical Bee Gee's material was doomed to failure and would have taken the movie with it.

This is not to say the film escapes all of its potential trouble areas unscathed.

The plot of hometown boys making good in the big city and returning to rescue the homeland from the forces of evil is standard t.v. fare.

The film also seems to drag at times as the characters meander through a song, when the time has come to move on.

And Stigwood seems to have given us too much of a good thing in guest appearances.

The spots with Steve Martin (who seems very out of

place), Alice Cooper, Earth Wind and Fire and Aerosmith look designed to sell tickets and, once again, soundtrack albums.

Somehow, something also seems amiss in the use of the Beatles' music.

The Beatles' album, "St. Pepper's," was the result of a meeting between the Beatles and LSD and marked a dramatic change in their music.

To see it performed by stars of the '70s whose creative enterprise moves to the sound of the cash register is incongruous.

In short, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* is not a good movie.

The film does not contain exceptional performances, the plot is mediocre, and it is very commercial.

But at the same time it is technically well done and enjoyable.

'Red Dust' at Sheldon

The Sheldon Film Theatre will show *Red Dust*, *The Shanghai Express*, and the *Love Parade* in August. Screenings are at 7 & 9 p.m. with matinees at 3 p.m. Fri.-Sun.

Red Dust, Aug. 3-6, stars Jean Harlow and Clark Gable. This tropical melodrama portrays Gable's animal magnetism in the steamy setting of an Indochinese rubber plantation. Harlow's sense of humor and innocent vulgarity find perfect expression in the role of a sassy river tramp.

The Shanghai Express, showing Aug. 10-13, stars Marlene Dietrich, Clive Brook and Anna May Wong. The film is dedicated to the proposition of unconditional love, as the characters find themselves caught up in the atmosphere of a Chinese civil war.

The Love Parade, showing Aug. 17-20, stars Maurice Chevalier, Jeannette MacDonald and Lupino Lane. This musical is a milestone of the early sound film and a provocative sexual fable. Maurice Chevalier marries Jeannette MacDonald, ruler of a feminist queendom, and discovers his true position when the wedding ceremony pronounces them "wife and man."

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