

# 'Phar Lap' horse flick runs slow, steady pace

Review By Toger Swanson  
Daily Nebraskan Staff Writer

"Phar Lap was too good, that's why he's gone," says the race horse's trainer after the horse's demise. The movie, now playing at the East Park 3 Theatre, cannot make the same claim. The film runs slowly out of the gate, with mediocrity in the turns, and with only a slight burst of speed at the finish to look respectable.

Director Simon Wincer creates a steady performer, but nothing to set the world afire, as did the film's namesake. The film lacks intensity and drive. "Phar Lap" runs a slow, steady pace on a track muddled by greed and inequity. Only the horse, of course, holds its nose above these human deviations.

Wincer and producer John Sexton spared no expense in this story of the greatest of Australian racehorses.

They invested vast sums into making the film as true to its 1930s time period as possible. This simpler time allowed them to create a simple story, a story of greed, love and pride. As may be expected, the horse contains plenty of the latter two and the humans have much of the greed. Unfortunately the film concentrates on the trainer and owner and their desire for money and prestige.

Ron Liebman and Martin Vaughan plays the ruthless owner and trainer. Their work only adds depression to the days of the depression with their heavy-

handed performances. Liebman lacks fire in his showdown with the snobbish racing board who tries to stop his horse with excess weight. Vaughn seems to be constantly depressed; he simply stares at the ground when his horse wins the biggest race in the country. He sells his principles and his self-respect for his dream of a successful racing stable.

The only redeemable character besides Phar Lap is Tommy, the stable boy. Although a bit too old to play the star-struck kid in love with the horse, he uses more of a mutual respect with the horse to push Phar Lap into victory after victory. Tommy also has another love, but the horse wins out remarkably without objection from Tommy's wife.

The horse symbolizes all that is good and right, while the audience cheers him on. The dramatics get a little heavy during the repeated episodes of slow motion races set to dramatic theme music. They should be popular with those who seek a good feeling building up to a bettersweet ending. The kids won't be corrupted; the language is squeaky clean. The horses are pretty and the production lavish, yet no vivid impression or message grabs the viewer. For younger moviegoers this should be enough. Kids love horses and that sells tickets.

As a racehorse Phar Lap was a strong, fast champion. As a movie "Phar Lap" is more like a pony at the carnival; slow, methodical, but it seems to make the kids happy.



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# WEEKEND

**LIVE MUSIC**

Bill's Saloon, 1020 P St. — Charlie Burton, Friday and Saturday, rock 'n' roll, \$2.50 cover charge.

Chesterfield, Bottomsley and Potts, 245 N. 13th St. — The Staff, progressive jazz, Friday and Saturday, \$3 cover charge.

Drumstick, 547 N. 48th St. — Caribe, reggae, Friday and Saturday, \$3 cover charge.

Green Frog, 101 P St. — Alpha Street Bank, rock 'n' roll, Friday and Saturday, no cover charge.

The Mountains, 311 S. 11th St. — Thick and Thin, rock 'n' roll, Friday and Saturday, \$1 cover charge.

Rivera's, 1920 W. O St. — New Decade, country, '50s rock, Friday and Saturday, no cover.

Royal Grove, 340 W. Cornhusker Highway — MX, rock 'n' roll, Friday and Saturday, no cover.

Skylight Bistro, 235 N. 11th St. — Newton and Sayre, traditional, Friday and Saturday, no cover.

Tucker Inn, 3235 S. 13th St. — River Rock, country rock, Friday and Saturday, \$2 cover charge.

Zoo Bar, 136 N. 14th St. — Matt Guitar Murphy, blues, Thursday through Saturday, \$3 cover, The Mighty Flyers, Sunday.

**MOVIES**

Cinema 1 & 2 — "Oh God, You Devil," \*1:20, \*3:20, 5:20, 7:20 and 9:20 p.m.; "C.H.U.D.," \*1:40, \*3:40, 5:40, 7:40 and 9:40 p.m.

Cooper — "Amadeus," \*2, 5:10 and 8:20 p.m.

Plaza 4 — "Places in the Heart," \*12:45, \*3, 5:15, 7:30 and 9:45 p.m.; "Buckaroo Banzeye," \*1, \*3:15, 5:30, 7:45 and 10 p.m.; "Silent Night, Deadly Night," \*1:30, \*3:30, 5:30, 7:30 and 9:30 p.m.; "Terminator," \*12:45, \*3, 5:15, 7:30 and 9:45 p.m.

Douglas 3 — "No Small Affair," \*1:20, \*3:20, 5:20, 7:20 and 9:20 p.m.; "A Solider's Story," \*1:30, \*3:30, 5:30, 7:30 and 9:30 p.m.; "Terror in Aisles," \*1:40, \*3:40, 5:40, 7:40 and 9:40 p.m.

East Park 3 — "No Small Affair," \*1:40, \*3:40, 5:40, 7:40 and 9:40 p.m.; "Phar Lap" \*1:30, \*3:30, 5:30, 7:30 and 9:30 p.m.

\*Saturday and Sunday times only.

**THEATER**

Howell Theatre, Temple Building — "The Fox," tonight through Saturday at 8 p.m.

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