

Sheldon shows classic 'Manchurian Candidate'

By Geoff McMurtry
Senior Editor

"The Manchurian Candidate," John Frankenheimer's classic international-intrigue thriller, shows today through Sunday and July 7-10 at the Sheldon Theater. Originally released in 1962, the film was taken out of circulation until last year by Frank Sinatra, who starred in the film.

But the film is available now, and holds up remarkably well as a suspense/intrigue/thriller.

As with any good thriller, the plot is complex and confusing at first, and riveting at the end. Frankenheimer pulls you slowly into the story with visual non-sequiturs and audio that doesn't seem to match up with what is onscreen. Gradually everything starts coming together, twisting into a bizarre plot of deception, treachery, power and innocence.

The plot revolves around Raymond Shaw (Laurence Harvey), a war hero just returning home from Korea, and the stepson of Senator Johnny Iselin (James Gregory), a McCarthy-ist fascist demagogue. Shaw was awarded the Medal of Honor for his courageous action in

singlehandedly saving the lives of his platoon.

Angela Lansbury was nominated for Best Supporting Actress for her performance as Shaw's mother and Iselin's wife. She is cold, ruthless, diabolical, calculating and the one who pulls the strings behind muddled fool Iselin's barking outburst of a career. She has big plans, and nobody, not even her son or incompetent husband, will get in her way. When her son falls in love with a neighbor girl, and is happy for the first time in his life, she breaks up the pair because the girl is the daughter of a rival Senator ("a liberal Communist").

Sinatra, who was a much more convincing actor than singer, gives an outstanding performance as Major Marco, an Army colleague of Shaw's who starts having a strange recurring dream about what really happened on that mission where Shaw won his medal. Did it really happen? Is it all an elaborate hoax? Is it possible that his whole platoon was brainwashed by the Communists?

When Marco takes his dream to his commanding officers, they tell him he needs a rest. When another

man in the platoon has the same dream and independently identifies the same two upper-level Russian and Chinese leaders as Marco does, they decide to take him seriously.

It now becomes Marco's job to find out what is going on, who is behind it, what will happen, when it will happen and why. A breakthrough comes accidentally when Marco meets with Shaw, who is unaware of all this, in a bar. The bartender randomly asks if he wants to play solitaire. That trigger Shaw's hypnotic state. When the Queen of Diamonds turns up, Shaw is completely open to any suggestion. The bartender's next suggestion, which isn't directed at Shaw, is that if the object of his scorn is going to play cards like that, he may as well get a cab and jump in the lake. Shaw promptly does, leaving a bewildered Marco to follow along in utter confusion.

While moments like that one, and whenever Janet Leigh or Leslie Parrish are onscreen, exemplify subtle humor and gentle innocence, the film itself is a dark, disturbing story of greed, lust and self-centered deceit. It has humor

and heroes, but it's not your standard hero drama, and definitely not a comedy.

Although at times toward the end the clues seem practically stapled to the characters' foreheads, and they probably should have figured things

out sooner than they did, "The Manchurian Candidate" succeeds admirably. It is a ground-breaking film that still seems innovative and fresh after 26 years and is mesmerizing entertainment with a thought-provoking subtext.



Courtesy of United Artists
Frank Sinatra and the mysterious Queen of Diamonds in a scene from 'The Manchurian Candidate.'

Film greats create 'masterpiece'

By Charles Lieurance
Senior Editor

If ever there was a pantheon of cinematic greats assembled to create one big screen classic, "Who Framed Roger Rabbit?" is it.

So many deities touch this film that it had every right to explode into a big mess of celluloid flatulence. But it is so obviously a labor of love and devotion that the laurel of "masterpiece" floats around its head quite naturally. Sure, there is a kitchen sink aura to "Who Framed Roger Rabbit?" but the sink is full of disarming little miracles and a few monumental ones.

The names attached to this production make sitting through the credits (both closing and opening) a breeze: Walt Disney studios, Steven Spielberg, Robert Zemeckis, Chuck

Jones (director of Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, creator of Roadrunner and Wile E. Coyote who visited Lincoln during the Flatwater Festival), Mel Blanc, Industrial Lights and Magic, George Lucas, Katherine Turner, Bob Hoskins, Warner Brothers' Looney Toons, Christopher Lloyd, etc.

The first 10-minute animated sequence is an expressway to nostalgia that actually manages to surpass the great animation pioneered by Warner Brothers studios from 1930 until the early 1960s. We are introduced to a rabbit to rival the king of rabbits, Bugs Bunny, a hare apparent, if you will. Roger Rabbit may not have the sophistication or class of Bugs, but he makes up for it with his total commitment to lunacy.

What's more amazing than the movie's animation, the unique effects

that allow real actors and cartoon characters to interact in three dimensional space and the machine gun homages to the golden years of cartooning, is that "Who Framed Roger Rabbit?" has a plot that, if occasionally sidetracked for the sake of Industrial Light and Magic's circus of high-budget tricks, survives throughout the course of the movie. Its send-up of film noir, specifically Roman Polanski's "Chinatown," is priceless, with the cartoon paradise of Toontown replacing Polanski's dark, inscrutable oriental section of Los Angeles.

Hoskins plays the hardboiled, haunted gumshoe, Eddie Valiant, who's just about given up on things like personal honor and integrity in favor of capturing live footage of adulteries for a little booze money. It seems his brother/partner was killed in Toontown by a falling piano. He drinks to forget and, although he set up his private investigation service to make sure Toons got an even shake of justice, has promised never to wander into Toontown or its perimeters again. Toontown for Valiant may not be as dark as Polanski's Chinatown, but it's just as inscrutable and mysterious, just as filled with vague motivations and obsessive, but unexplained, behavior. It is the anarchic joy of Toontown that truly frightens Valiant, that there is no one held accountable for anything. In some ways Valiant represents the parents who became frightened by Toontown in the late 1960s and reduced Saturday morning TV and TV for kids in general to a novocaine bland-out. Valiant admits that he used to go to Toontown when he was young, for a laugh, but now he wants order, sense. He will not give in to Roger Rabbit continually cajoling him back into the world of laughter.

The Shoes of Summer

If you knew what they felt like, you'd be wearing them now.



Birkenstock

Footloose & Fancy

Nebraska's Largest Full Service
Birkenstock Store. Serving The
Midwest For Over 13 Years.

1219 'P'

476-6119

Buddy Guy is
by far and
without a doubt
the best guitar
player alive—
—Eric Clapton

Tonight in Concert
Living Legend Buddy Guy
& His Chicago Blues Band
9:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.
\$8 at the door

THE ZOO BAR 136 No. 14th

See RABBIT on 11