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Radio talk show out of Denver the basis for movie 'Talk Radio'

By Adam T. Branting
Staff Reporter

This may be the winter of Hollywood's discontent. The Christmas season introduced several unorthodox films into the mire of big budget spectacles. The most disturbing, captivating and electrifying movie is "Talk Radio."

movie REVIEW

WGAB Radio in Dallas is the home of "shock jock" Barry Champlain (Eric Bogosian), whose Night Talk radio show asks his listeners, "What the hell is wrong with America?"

To the delight of the station manager (Alec Baldwin), Champlain's insulting, arrogant, infuriating manner sends the ratings high and gives Barry a chance for national radio syndication.

Champlain's search to find the

soul of America from his radio microphone is actually a search to find himself as he entraps his ex-wife, girlfriend and co-workers into a dark world of racism, fear and hate.

Based on the life of Alan Berg, a Denver shock jock who was allegedly gunned down by neo-Nazis, "Talk Radio" was written by Bogosian as a one-man show. It was rewritten for the screen by Bogosian and director Oliver Stone.

Stone, who won critical acclaim for "Platoon" and "Wall Street," is along for the ride on this one. His direction seems sparse, concentrating on camera work and lighting to give this film the ugly, trapped feeling it needs.

The supporting cast includes Ellen Greene ("Little Shop of Horrors") as Champlain's ex-wife, Leslie Hope as the producer and girlfriend, and John C. McGinley (who keeps showing up in Oliver Stone shows) as Champlain's friend and technician all deserve nods for strong performances in very difficult roles. But they all take a back seat to the

electrifying performance of writer/actor Bogosian. His deep, rich voice draws us into his radio booth and holds our attention as he weaves his own American flag with the threads of hypocrisy and rage from those who call in and from himself.

He is as brutal with an older lady, chastising her for being ignorant about the world, as he is gentle with a rapist who can't stop. The odd assortment of phone calls becomes a barrage of hate toward the world and Champlain himself, who feeds off their hate.

It's almost a weird "state of the nation" address by Bogosian that reveals the dark side that most people would simply ignore.

The music of Stewart Copeland helps Bogosian play with the audience's emotions, leading them down the River Styx to an ending which is an orgasmic catharsis.

No recent film is as transfixing as "Talk Radio." It's the highest caliber movie of the season.

"Talk Radio" is currently playing at the Plaza Theaters.

'Au Revoir Les Enfants' splendid film despite some blurry, garish scenes

By Micki Haller
Senior Editor

In 1944, people in France carried on despite the wartime horrors. Children went to school and grew up despite studying in dark bomb shelters and watching Jewish classmates disappear with the authorities.

movie REVIEW

"Au Revoir Les Enfants (Goodbye Children)" tells the tale of Julien Quentin, a student in a Catholic boys' school that sheltered Jews in World War II.

In the film, Quentin deals with puberty, life in a Catholic school, World War II, but most importantly, why people make others into outcasts.

In the beginning of the film, Quentin is a popular, intelligent boy, but he soon finds a rival in the new boy, Jean Bonnet. Bonnet is brilliant at math, good at writing, and an accomplished musician.

In wartime France, things are hard for even rich boys in private schools. The boys must fast, and study in freezing schoolrooms, yet they carry on in many ways as if the war isn't really happening. They play and fight like normal.

Even the teachers are determined to make life as war-free for the children as they can. When the air raid sirens go off, a student says, "Great, air raid!"

The stern geometry teacher says the lesson isn't over, and the boys continue class in the dark catacombs beneath the school.

Bonnet, as the new boy, is teased and roughed up constantly, but Quentin develops a grudging respect for the boy which turns into friendship. However, Quentin has a suspicion that perhaps his new friend is a Jew.

Quentin accepts Bonnet's Jewishness. Because the boys share many interests, religion or race don't seem to matter very much to them. But Bonnet is in a very dangerous position, and his background is almost a taboo subject.

At one point, Quentin asks his older brother what crimes have the Jews committed.

"Being smarter than us. And crucifying Jesus," the brother said without really thinking.

The film's great strength is its analysis of prejudice. The movie has several powerful, thoughtful mo-

ments, such as when Quentin, his family, and Bonnet are sitting in a restaurant watching an elderly Jewish man being ejected by French "collaborators." The ending also has a great deal of emotional impact.

The film's director, Louis Malle, wrote the script based on his experience in a Catholic school during World War II. "Au Revoir Les Enfants" has a touching realism -- the kind that buries deep in the soul and reminds all that prejudice is wrong.

The child actors continue the director's vision, with Gaspard Manesse and Raphael Fejtö turning in excellent performances as Quentin and Bonnet, respectively.

The movie is in French, but the English subtitles are good.

One problem with the film, however, is the quality of the print. At times, the movie has a very muddy, blurry look, and the colors seem almost garish. During the scenes in the dark (and there are a lot of dark scenes in this movie), the actors take on a hellish appearance that perhaps wasn't intended.

Still, "Au Revoir Les Enfants" is well worth the time to see it.

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