

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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the GLASSY EYE



Mark Baldridge

Television: an artform in infancy

I went an entire year, not too terribly long ago, without turning on my tiny black-and-white TV more than three times. I didn't miss much—all the thing picked up was Fox—and that badly.

But I still saw plenty of TV—mostly silent, in crowded bars—or blaring, in the apartments of friends—sometimes wobbly and blue in seedy motels or run-down Greyhound stations.

I discovered that such a profoundly chaotic and random access to TV had a strange effect on me: Whenever I actually came upon an active set, I sat mesmerized. I mean, this had never happened to me before.

It hardly mattered what was on. I particularly like the ads. They're simple and vivid enough to be easily followed with the sound off, while someone else is talking. You just continue to nod and smile as you secretly slip away into Wall Street's childish world.

But when I say I was hypnotized by TV, any TV, I mean something other than what you might think. I've watched people sit, glassy-eyed and slack, in front of the tube. Murmuring, every few minutes, "This sucks."

But something else has happened to me: I've gotten X-Ray eyes. I don't look at TV any more—I look into it, through it—into its tiny, glowing soulless soul.

Somehow my time not watching TV worked a strange alchemy on my TV-viewing eye—I wised up.

These days, no one will watch TV with me. I fidget and chatter and try to take the thing apart. No show, no ad, no music video is safe from my gaze—because somewhere along the line, TV stopped being entertainment for me and became art.

Not great art, not immortal art necessarily, but a form of art—subject to the strength of criticism generally reserved for art.

And if I'm right—if TV is indeed the newest artform going—then people who think art goes unappreciated in these modern TV-watching times are wrong.

If TV is art, even often mediocre or bad art, then art historians will see our epoch as a "boom time."

More people are submerged in art now than we imagine.

And it's only the great expense of the artform that keeps this from being obvious.

Because, right now, only large corporations can afford to make TV art. They compete against each other for viewers to watch the ads which pay enough for them to go on being large corporations.

But one day there will be 500 channels. There will be "meta" channels carrying menus of programming.

Someone's going to have to ride that wave.

And it might as well be us.

The Glassy Eye is a weekly column deconstructing television for entertainment purposes. Send ideas or suggestions to Mark Baldridge, c/o the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588. E-mail dn@unlinfo.unl.edu.



Courtesy of TriStar Pictures

Dr. Jack Black, played by Mark Harmon, expresses the rediscovery of his youth by building a sandcastle during a magical vacation in "Magic in the Water."

'Magic' rekindles childhood fantasy

By Brian Priesman
Film Critic

A quirky, fun-filled fantasy, "Magic in the Water" is a movie about compassion, love and lost childhood.

"Magic in the Water" is the story of Dr. Jack Black, a divorced hard-nosed radiopsychiatrist, his two children Josh and Ashley and a mysterious lake creature known as Orky.

Director Rick Stevenson, who makes his directing debut with "Magic in the Water," has assembled a top-notch cast to tell the story of the magical lake creature Orky and the family whose life he changes.

Mark Harmon ("Sumner School," "Wyatt Earp") is perfectly cast as the tough-as-nails psychiatrist Jack Black who treats his children as coldly as he treats his patients.

Harmon brings a tough-love approach to his

children until a freak run-in with the mysterious Orky. After his encounter, Black is a changed man, believing that he can dig a hole to China and see pictures in the clouds.

Joshua Jackson, who plays Black's son Josh, fits well into the role of the doubtful and cynical teenager. Jackson ("The Mighty Ducks," "D2: The Mighty Ducks," "Andre") is believable as the unforgiving son ready to give up on his father for good.

Harley Jane Kozak ("Necessary Roughness," "Arachnophobia," "Parenthood") plays the skeptical psychiatrist trying to cure the town residents of their belief in the lake creature. Kozak works well as the mistrusting doctor who refuses to believe in the existence of the lake creature.

The real star of the film, however, is Sarah Wayne Wayne, who plays Black's daughter Ashley, makes her film debut with "Magic in the Water." She brings an infectious delight of magic and fantasy to the role, and steals every scene she's in. Ashley idolizes her father but is constantly being disappointed by him.

After one of these disappointments, Ashley has a chance encounter with the lake monster,

The Facts

Film: Magic in the Water

Stars: Mark Harmon, Harley Jane Kozak, Sarah Wayne

Director: Rick Stevenson

Rating: PG

Grade: B

Five Words: Magical movie about lake creature

Orky. Orky is sick and dying from waste being dumped into the lake by the villainous Mack Miller, played by Morris Panych. Orky and Ashley strike an unlikely friendship.

"Magic in the Water" is not so much about Orky, but more about regaining a sense of fantasy and belief in imagination.

See MAGIC on 13

Bistro offers pleasurable, exquisite dining experience

By Albert Schmid
Restaurant Critic

If you're looking for a special-occasion place, make reservations at the Blue Heron Wine Bar and Bistro, 5555 S. 48th St.

The bistro, which is open Monday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., and Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., features simple but elegant decor, which helped me relax and enjoy a great meal prepared under the direction of Chef Dina Davis.

My dining companion and I started with the olivada and roasted red peppers (\$6.95) off of an appetizer list that included baked brie, shrimp cocktail, smoked salmon spread, baked oysters and a fruit and cheese platter.

To accompany our picnic-style appetizer, we each enjoyed a glass of wine from an extensive wine list. My friend had a fruity 1993 Guenoc

chardonnay (\$5.50), and I had a dry 1994 Benziger fume blanc (\$4.50). Both were excellent choices.

The owner, Ken Meier, helps the diner with a well-trained wait staff and a monthly "top 10" wine list.

Meier, owner of Meier's Cork 'n' Bottle, takes every precaution to make a wine-inert customer feel comfortable with what could be a confusing and frustrating experience.

The Blue Heron's bar also is well-stocked with many import and domestic beers.

Off of a balanced entree menu that offers a choice of fish, pasta, beef, chicken and pork, with items ranging from \$10.95 to \$14.95, I chose the grilled salmon fillet (\$12.95).

It was served in a pool of basil butter sauce, which was a crisp addition to the salmon's grilled flavor. A side of fresh angel hair pasta was served with the fish, as well as mixed vegetables to round out the meal.

My dining companion had the Pasta Raphael (\$10.95), which had a bold tomato-artichoke sauce to accent the cheese tortellini. The portion

See HERON on 13

Old favorites 'strike back' at home viewers

By Gerry Beltz
Film Critic

The new releases for the past two weeks—two below-average last week and one above-average this week—are more than overshadowed by the monumental re-release of three of the most famous films of all time last Wednesday.

"The Hunted" (R)—Christopher Lambert is in it. Need we say more about the quality?

Actually, that wasn't fair. Lambert's early work in films such as "Subway" and "Greystoke" was good stuff, while "Highlander" is probably his most well-known role. After that, however, came the other "Highlander" flicks, and "The Sicilian," and then this ...

Paul Racine (Lambert) is a mild-mannered businessman who sleeps with a woman he met

See NEW VIDEO on 13