

Movie Review



COURTESY PHOTO

Trilogy's finale returns to screen

BY GERRY BELTZ
Film Critic

Great. The Force meets the Muppets. It must be "Return of the Jedi."

The third film in George Lucas' historic trilogy brings this set of adventures to a close, and of course it is done in a flurry of dazzling special effects and a whirlwind of action and suspense.

Oh, and don't forget those CUTE little Ewoks (teddy bears who run around with props and wardrobe from a bad "Tarzan" flick).

This is another of the special edition films in the "Star Wars" movies, so everything has been cleaned up and revamped (though the print I watched was a bit grainy at points). The shots of the emperor also have a much more menacing appearance to them, diminishing the fact that his face looks as though it were covered

with a pound of white Play-Doh.

The highlight, if it can be called that, would be the additional footage. Included here are a more threatening Sarlacc (the thing on Tatooine they try to dump the heroes into), an extended dance scene at Jabba The Hutt's palace and shots of celebrations on other planets at the end of the film.

One small problem with this: One of the planets shown is the Imperial home planet of Coruscant, but how many average "Star Wars" fans would recognize this fact? If the toppling statue of Emperor Palpatine had been more precisely detailed, this would have helped.

The movie itself is still a wild ride from beginning to finish, culminating in possibly the best cinematic space battle sequence of all time.

Performances throughout the film are not Oscar-worthy (have they ever been?), but the cast does take things seriously, adding credibility to its work.

The Facts

Film: "Return of the Jedi"
Stars: Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher
Director: Richard Marquand
Rating: PG (sci-fi violence)
Grade: A-
Five Words: Extra footage doesn't help ... much.

(This film also has my all-time favorite sound effect: the "twung" when the speeder bike rider hits the clothesline. My neck still hurts!)

Overall, just cleaning up "Return of the Jedi" would have been enough, although the dance scene was pretty neat.

Besides, how could you resist those cute little Ewoks?

Movie Review

Typical Lynch effects confuse, distort 'Lost Highway'

BY CLIFF HICKS
Film Critic

Watching a David Lynch film is kind of like drinking bad beer — you'll get messed up no matter what, you just might not enjoy it.

Lynch's latest film, "Lost Highway," is about Fred (Bill Pullman), a jazz saxophonist whose life is turned upside down when ... well, it's hard to say how much to talk about and how much to keep secret.

He and his wife (Patricia Arquette) start receiving videotapes that get stranger and stranger, and before we know it, Fred is going to the electric chair for killing his wife.

One day in prison, though, a guard goes to check on Fred and finds out that he has been replaced by another man, Pete (Balthazar Getty). And from that point, things start getting REALLY weird.

As always, the actors aren't really what's important in a David Lynch film, though Pullman does a nice job.

There also are some nice appearances from Richard Pryor (who refuses to let his illness keep him from acting) and Henry Rollins (with his one line of dialogue) — and, yeah, Marilyn Manson does put in an appearance as a porno

star.

In the end, though, it's still Lynch who steals the show with a lot of weird visual tricks and distorted perceptions.

If you plan on going to see "Lost Highway," don't go right after you've eaten. There are several reasons for this.

Lynch likes to play with film speed, so some things happen at incredibly fast speeds and some happen incredibly slow, sometimes in reverse.

The film speed tricks and sudden cuts between shots are typical Lynch, so their appearance here comes as no real surprise. A lot of the time, they make for some beautiful cinematography but occasionally they just bog things down.

They can also give you a sense of motion sickness, as you travel along a dark road at 10 times the normal speed, watch a house exploding in reverse, pin your eyes on a saxophonist under a strobe light and see lots of other visual feats that don't appear anywhere in reality.

Violence is also something that Lynch likes to toy with, and "Lost Highway" has plenty of it — from surrealistic grainy shots of innards to a hysterical scene about tailgaters.

The Lynch trademarks are all here: fire, velvet, leather, a motorcycle, a musical instrument, sex and stale dialogue.

The Facts

Film: "Lost Highway"
Director: David Lynch
Stars: Bill Pullman, Patricia Arquette, Balthazar Getty
Rating: R (violence, language, nudity)
Grade: C+
Five words: Lynch is a scary man

The opening of the film itself is fairly slow — a lot of waiting for things to pick up, a lot of watch checking. Once the story starts to get moving, things become interesting but not entirely engaging.

The film itself never really captures the imagination to its fullest. There's always a lingering sense of "Yeah, but so what?"

It's the surrealistic story line, another Lynchian trademark, that gets a little distracting. Lynch seems divided between making an art film, a noir film and a psychological film, and that blurred distinction holds things back.

In the end, "Lost Highway" becomes more like a dream — it makes for some fascinating viewing but don't try to make sense of it. Just flow along for the ride.

Theater Review

Strong cast brings tragic story to life

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Theater Critic

The suffocating world of "The House of Bernarda Alba" by Federico Garcia Lorca was brought to life by the UNL Department of Theatre Arts and Dance Friday night.

The play opened with Bernarda and her five daughters beginning a mourning period for Bernarda's husband. As the play progressed, the daughters were torn between their need to be alive and young and Bernarda's increasingly tyrannical rule.

Belinda Barnes gave a multilayered performance as the defiant servant, Poncia. She naturally shifted among the roles of mother, enemy, confidant, conspirator and mediator. Her musical voice cascaded over the lines, giving them a lyrical quality, while her swaying walk and full, round gestures portrayed a passionate, triumphant woman.

Shirley Carr Mason made a formidable Bernarda. Her methodical delivery and harsh enunciation of consonants complimented her rigid posture and tense, controlled gestures. Her only awkwardness resulted from her one vital prop, her cane. The cane should have existed as another appendage of Bernarda, but Mason remained too conscious of it and the result was unnatural and contrived.

Ebru Gokdag was wonderful in the role of Adela, the youngest daughter. Her fiery voice, haughty stance and defiant arm flings served as a vital contrast to the restrained characters of her sisters. Her passionate, compulsive interpretation complimented Barnes' Poncia well, and the scenes between the two of them were some of the strongest.

Jacque Camperud did an excellent job playing the jealous and repressed Martirio. Her facial expressions and glances held more meaning than pages of lines. Like Barnes, she also traversed a variety of relationships and emotions, transforming from a zealous gossip to a wildly, covetous woman.

Kathy Dudley gave a satisfactory performance in the role of Angustias. Though her childish naivete helped to illustrate the sheltered, oppressive life Angustias led, her constant pouting left this forlorn, suppressed character hollow and flat.

Judith Hart provided some moments of comic relief in her role as Maria Josefa. Her blunt tone and vacant looks were funny, but they also helped to underscore the sad and true situation of Bernarda's daughters.

Amy Jirsa's childish portrayal of Amelia seemed vastly inappropriate for a character who is supposed to be 27. She ignored the bitterness and desperateness of her character's situation, and her constant clodding across stage drowned out more than a few lines.

Becky Key's performance as the servant seemed restrained. She seemed to be holding back from portraying all of the contrasting bitterness and fright that her character felt towards Bernarda. Consequently, she lost the multiple dimensions the role had to offer.

Finally, the blocking and constant moving helped to compensate for the poor sight lines that might otherwise have existed, and the white, flowing curtains of the set helped to break the monotony of the flat stage.

The play continues this Tuesday through Friday at 8 p.m. in the Studio Theatre of the Temple Building.