

Spiritual awakening 'Tibet' turns triumph of cinematic style

BY BRET SCHULTE
Film Critic

You probably already have heard a few things about "Seven Years in Tibet": It's boring, it's too long and Pitt's accent is horrible.

Well, the film isn't boring. Although "Seven Years" feels like it is being shot in real time, it clocks in at a shocking 131 minutes — just barely edging out the longevity of its own subject matter. And yes, Pitt's accent sounds vaguely reminiscent of Sean Connery's confused, yet daring Lithuanian-Scottish tongue roll in the submarine cinema epic "The Hunt for Red October."

The film chronicles (with all the adoration and attention to pointless detail of Dad's home movies) the physical and spiritual seven-year journey of Austrian mountain climber Heinrich Harrer (Brad Pitt).

Sponsored nationally, Harrer is a member of an elite team of mountain climbers sent to the Indian Himalayas to conquer a mountain that has claimed the lives of eleven Germans and rebuked the attempts of four previous expeditions. The achievement of the summit is "a matter of national pride," explains Harrer.

Meanwhile, World War II has erupted in Europe, and when Harrer's expedition fails, the mountaineers are arrested as prisoners of war by British soldiers.

French director Jean-Jacques Annaud goes to great lengths to portray Harrer as an egotistical S.O.B. whose relentless concentration on self-aggrandizement and personal victories lead him to abandon his pregnant and heartbroken wife to fulfill his personal dream of climbing the Himalayan mountain. With his team of mountain climbers, Harrer acts in a similar fashion. He is sullen, selfish, arrogant and surly, largely because he was not chosen over fellow climber Peter Aufschnaiter as the group's leader.

As I overstated earlier, Pitt's accent suffers and

The Facts

Title: "Seven Years in Tibet"
Stars: Brad Pitt, David Thewlis, Jangyong Jamtsho Wangchuk, Mako
Director: Jean-Jacques Annaud
Rating: PG-13 (language, adult situation)
Grade: B
Five Words: "Tibet" is peak of redemption.

consequently, so does his performance. However, he is always captivating on screen, and once the viewer forgets his alleged ethnicity, Pitt's performance flows much more easily.

After Pitt's character is well established as an individualist and consummate jerk, he is startled onto the road of reevaluation by Peter, who masterminded their escape from the POW camp.

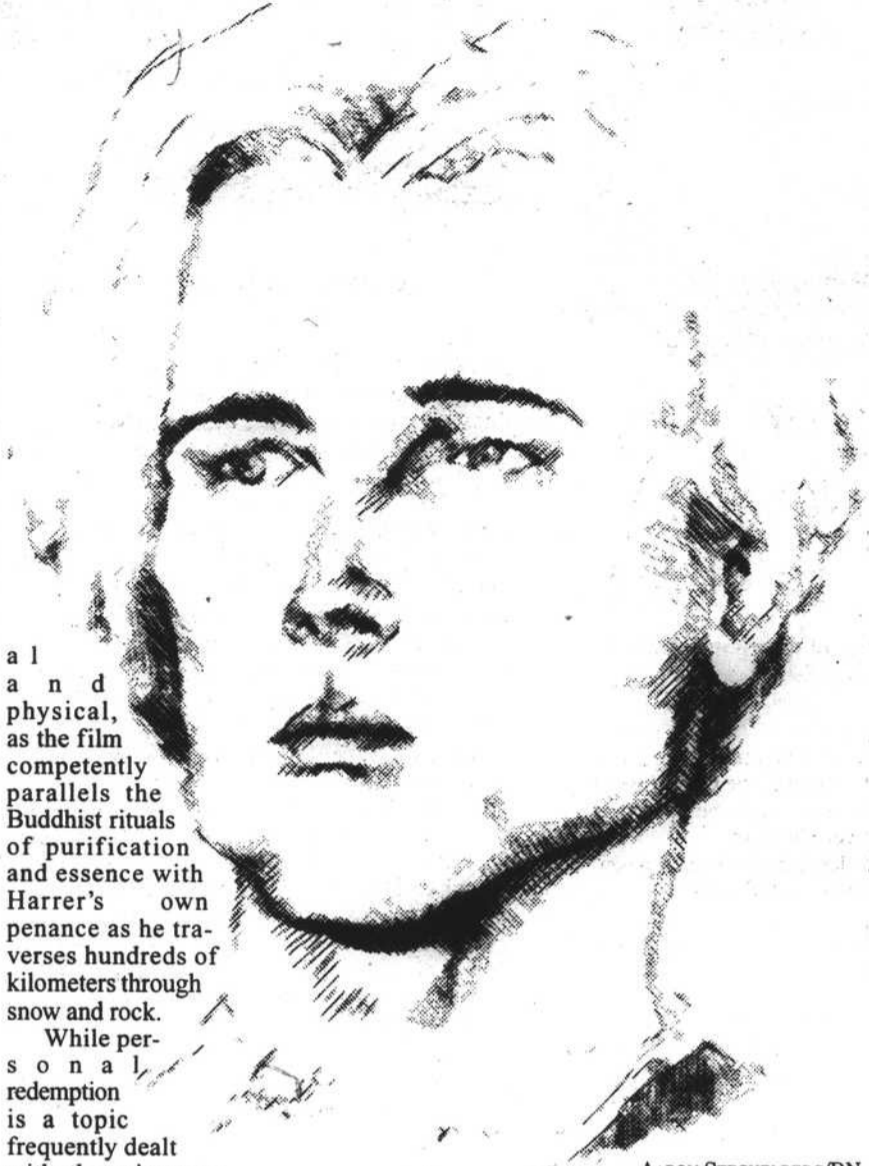
"No wonder you're always alone," Peter says. "No one can stand your miserable company."

From such fire are friendships forged, and the two become inseparable companions as they decide to ride out World War II by climbing through "the roof of the world," nearby Tibet.

In Tibet, they manage to penetrate the mountain city/fortress of Lhasa, the national holy city. It is in this city of worship that Harrer establishes a relationship with the Dalai Lama that changes both of their lives forever.

Harrer discovers his own humanity first through Peter, and then through the young Dalai Lama. As a tutor and father figure, Harrer allows himself to be the father he was afraid to be with his own child. Together the two form an understanding of two different worlds and two different philosophies.

Based on Harrer's autobiographical account, "Seven Years in Tibet" is an entrancing and strikingly suspenseful film. Harrer's voyage is both spiritu-



AARON STECKELBERG/DN

ally and physical, as the film competently parallels the Buddhist rituals of purification and essence with Harrer's own penance as he traverses hundreds of kilometers through snow and rock. While personal redemption is a topic frequently dealt with, the poignancy, grace and grandiose cinematic style of this film make it a mountain among molehills.

Clichés can't stifle 'Brassed'

■ This film succeeds when it focuses on its emotional core and not on its romantic subplot.

BY SEAN MCCARTHY
Movie Critic



PHOTO COURTESY OF MIRAMAX FILMS
IN "BRASSED OFF," Tara Fitzgerald and Ewan McGregor play out their hearts at a London band competition.

ally during withdrawal and contemplate betraying his friends. In this film, he's forced to play it subtle.

The relationship between Gloria and Andy doesn't carry much weight in the film. They meet, they get along, they break apart, and they reconcile. The clichéd relationship between the two dulls "Brassed Off."

Tompkinson's character, Phil, also has a great deal of clichés. Flat broke and fighting off creditors, Phil resorts to dressing up as a clown to make extra money. It may be a novelty, but the pissed-off clown act has all but worn out its potential (remember "Shakes the Clown"?)

Postlethwaite's performance as Danny is outstanding. The scenes where he is conducting seem like a perfect chance to overact, but Postlethwaite manages to be fiercely passionate without being hammy.

Herman's effectively portrays the community's feeling of anguish over

the pit closing. Everyone loses his or her job, Phil loses his family and house, and Andy collapses.

What's a town to do? Get the band fired up, win the big competition, and the government's respect, and re-open the pit!

Luckily, Herman realizes things are not that simple. Though everyone puts differences aside and travels to London to win the championship, no performance will return the job.

The movie works well only when focusing on Postlethwaite's performance, and the anguish the characters suffer when they lose their jobs. The emotional resonance of the two carries the movie beyond the formulaic plot. Also, the musical score is outstanding.

Playing at the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater Thursday through Sunday, the movie costs \$5 for students, \$4 for members of the theater, seniors and children; and \$6 for all others.

Booth's brother inspires lecture

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Senior Reporter

Actor Edwin Booth was so upset when his brother assassinated President Abraham Lincoln that he retired from performing in Washington, D.C.

In April 1888, however, he gave a performance of "Julius Caesar," ironically, in Lincoln.

When Edwin came to Lincoln, the newspapers politely ignored the conditions of his performance," said Marvin Carlson, a theater professor at the City University of New York. "There is a kind of dark irony. It adds an interesting dimension to the event."

Tonight, Carlson will lecture on Booth's Lincoln performance in "Booth, Lincoln and Theatrical Reception." The 7 p.m. speech will be in the Mary Riepma Ross Theater in the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.

"(The lecture) is a kind of a general study of that particular occasion and what the event meant to the lives of Midwesterners," Carlson said. "There's nothing like the excitement of a great performance. It's important to understand what that kind of cultural event meant in those times."

The lecture also covers how the superstar status of actors and performers in the 1800s has become more prevalent in the 20th century.

"The reputation of actors precedes them, and we are conditioned by that," said William Grange, University of

Nebraska-Lincoln associate professor of theater arts and dance.

"Whether it's Booth and Shakespeare or Garth Brooks and country music, performers are able to attract a huge following. The question is, how does that affect our perception of the actual performance?"

Edwin Booth was considered one of the last great U.S. actors before the advent of motion pictures. His career spanned 42 years, and his Lincoln performance was part of a national tour with Lawrence Barrett that lasted from 1886 to 1889.

The idea for Carlson's lecture stemmed from a portrait of Booth hanging in the Sheldon gallery. Carlson remembered that Booth toured through Lincoln, and he decided to expand the context of that event to include the icon status of actors.

To research the topic, Carlson searched through the archives of "The Player's Club," an actors group Booth established and of which Carlson is a member. He found information about the tour as well as reviews of various performances.

In addition to his lecture experience, Carlson has published a number of books on performance and theater theory. He won a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1968 and the George Jean Nathan Award — the highest award given for theater criticism in the United States — in 1994.

His lecture is part of the Geske Lectureship in the History of Arts. Norman and Jane Geske established the lectureship in 1995. Carlson is the third speaker sponsored by the series and the first to lecture on theater.

The lecture, which is free and open to the public, will be followed by a reception in Sheldon's Great Hall.