

Ladely, filmgoers pleased with festival's success

By JASON HARDY
Senior editor

Last Saturday night the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theatre was crammed with more than 200 people who braved the heat to watch Chris Eyre's film "Smoke Signals."

Following the showing, the extremely receptive crowd stayed an extra 30 to minutes ask Eyre questions about the film and share with him their comments.

It was the first actual weekend of the Great Plains Film Festival and attendance was just 200 people shy of meeting the last festival's record setting 1000 attendees mark.

Now with the weekend still ahead and many guests still to arrive Ladely couldn't be more proud of his creation.

"Seeing the crowds for Tony Bui and Chris Eyre is really gratifying," Ladely said. "To have people turn out in those numbers is great."

Despite last week's success,

Ladely said he is most looking forward to this weekend's showings and the arrival of Alexander Payne, director of Election, who will be awarded the Mary Riepma Ross award for directors. Payne will be present at the awards ceremony Friday at 6 p.m. and also at the screenings of two of his films, "The Passion of Martin," Friday at 5 p.m. and "Election," Saturday at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, Aug. 1, marks the last day of the festival and the Mary Riepma Ross Film theatre will show the winners of each category, including the grand prize winner, "The Brandon Teena Story."

With all the excitement still to come Ladely said he hasn't had much time to reflect on the events of the past week but one thing is for sure, in two years he'll be back do it all over again.

"Everybody has been having a great time. In every way I can think of it's been very successful," he said.

"And I haven't even spent all the money yet."

Great Plains Film Festival Award Winners' Screening Schedule

Sunday, August 1st

2:30 pm
Grand Prize Winner
The Brandon Teena Story
Best Documentary Short
Gifts From My Father

4:45 pm
The Rainbow Award
Hill Stomp Hollar
Best Made For Public Television Entry
American Cowboys

7:00 pm
Best Documentary Feature
Road To Return
Best Dramatic Short
Silent Tears

9:15 pm
Best Documentary Short
Man and Dog
Best Dramatic Short
Everyday

Nebraska Humanities Council Award
Free a Man To Fight!
Women Soldiers of World War II

Matt Haney/DN

'Division Street' brings the '60s back to life

Play is awkward, but amusing

By PATRICK KELLY
Staff Writer

If you haven't gotten enough of the hype surrounding Woodstock '99 then there's still a way to take a trip back to the '60's without the use of LSD. The Nebraska Repertory Theatre's production of "Division Street" brings the age of Aquarius into the age of yuppies.

Steve Tesich's play centers on Chris, a '60's radical turned '80's sell-out. Chris, played by Eric Liddell, is forced to renounce his idealism to save his job. If the premise sounds overdone, that's because it is. However, it should be noted that this play was written twenty years ago before films like "The Big Chill" made ex-hippies wonder if whether or not they sold out.

Eric Liddell brings to Chris a sense of pessimism and self-doubt which becomes annoying after a while. However, this performance is effective and establishes Chris as the straight man and leaves the rest of the cast an opportunity to steal the spotlight.

The comedic aspects of the play comes at the expense of the story. The first act of the play introduces an eclectic cast of characters, but does very little to move the story along making the play dependent on the second act to tie up all the loose ends.

We meet, Mrs. Bruchinski (Trazana Beverley), his overbearing landlady. Mrs. Bruchinski along with Yovan, (Stan Rifkin) a mad restaurant-owner who threatens to kill Chris provide an ethnic flavor to the

Theatre review

The Facts

Title: "Division Street"

Stars: Eric Liddell, Trazna Beverley, Stan Rifkin, Tara McAllister-Viel, John Blair, Amy Jirsa, Mark Lynch, Sonya Hensley

Director: Paul Gaffney

Grade: B-

play. Their misuse of the English language becomes their predictable source of humor.

The past comes to Chris' door in the form of Roger, (Mark Lynch) a burned-out hippie. Lynch's performances one of the highlights of the play especially when he has a flashback concerning orgasms.

We also learn about Chris' past from his ex-wife Dinah (Tara McAllister-Viel) and her lawyer, Sal (John Blair) who prone to partially exposing himself.

Of course, there has to be a little romance in the play. Chris falls in love with Nadja, (Amy Jirsa) a cynical hooker who also happens to be Roger's ex-wife and Yovan's daughter. Sal falls in love with Betty, a transsexual cop. Eventually, all the characters relationships are cleared up but only after a series of bizarre episodes.

While there is much humor to be found in the performances by all of the actors, none of the characters are very well-developed. The play's conclusion serves as an awkward opportunity to find a resolution for the various conflicts facing the characters.

Despite premise, 'Haunting' fails to bring forth frights

By PATRICK KELLY
Staff Writer

The Facts

Title: "The Haunting"
Stars: Liam Neeson, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Lili Taylor, Owen Wilson
Director: Jan De Bont
Rating: PG-13 (violence, horror sequences)
Grade: D-
Five Words: Be unimpressed, be very unimpressed.

This is the perfect horror movie for the weak of heart. "The Haunting" is a sterile and harmless film with a series of predictable and clearly laid out plot twists.

The film is a tribute to the classic film, "The House on Haunted Hill". However the original film starred the legendary Vincent Price. This latest version has neither the amusing camp value nor the menacing sense of terror.

Dr. Jeffrey Marrow (Liam Neeson) brings together a group of insomniacs for group therapy. The meeting place is a gothic mansion conveniently removed from society. Oh, and of course, the house is haunted by an evil spirit and the souls of the children that he killed.

The house itself was built by a twisted millionaire by the name of Hugh Crane who was believed to have built the house to raise a family. Instead, Crane uses the house to entrap small children whose spirits along with Crane's occupy the house.

The paranormal activity provides director Jan De Bont ("Speed", "Twister") a chance to saturate the movie with visual effects. Unfortunately the special effects become repetitive and stale. The appearance of the children in the form of silhouettes and shapes made by a breeze blowing through sheets

and curtains. As the movie wears on it becomes obvious that this film is a case of style over substance.

The film was also devoid of any convincing performances due to the fact that none of the characters were well-developed. Since the characters were so shallow I had no real concern for what would happen to them.

Neeson phones in his performance as the stiff Dr. Jeffrey Marrow. Catherine Zeta Jones plays Theadora, the wealthy artist and socialite. Upon her introduction, we learn that Theadora is bisexual, thrown in purely for shock value and nothing more.

The only entertaining performance is that of Owen Wilson ("Armageddon", "Bottle Rocket") who plays the sarcastic and wise-cracking Luke. Wilson's performance was well-used as he keeps the film from taking itself too seriously.

Despite the movie's commercials which play on Neeson and Zeta-Jones' recent box-office successes

the movie is centered on Lili Taylor's character, Eleanor. Eleanor has a supernatural connection to the house and a tortured soul.

For a horror film, "The Haunting" was not very frightening. This can be attributed to the fact that the performances by the actors are terribly unconvincing. The actors never convey a sense of fear to the audience. At any time, I never felt that the characters were in any real danger. How can I be afraid of killer harpsichords, giant cement birds, gargoyles and a man eating fireplace if the actors are not.

A scene which comes to mind is one which involves a statue coming to life and trying to drown Liam Neeson while spitting blood. Neeson breaks free and walks away nonchalantly. This cavalier attitude is pretty much the tone of the movie. I never really saw the actors in any real peril.

The action culminates into an anti-climactic climax. Eleanor takes on Hugh Crane pretty much by standing still and shouting at the ghost.

The movie plays on the retro-charm of classic horror films. Unfortunately, the story becomes a cliché. The caretaker of the house warns Eleanor that the town is so far removed from the house that the townspeople could never hear their (the group's) screams.

While the film itself did not scare me, the fact that moviegoers are paying admission s a frightening thought.

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