

'Secondhand Lions' roars



New Line Cinema

"Secondhand Lions" tremendous trio Michael Caine, Haley Joel Osment, and Robert Duvall.

review by Daniel J. Stasiewski
a&e editor

Whenever my grandfather would tell me a story about his life, most, if not all of it, seemed too fantastical to have been true. I'll probably never know if the tall tales he narrated with the passion of a bona fide participant ever happened, but those stories have stuck with me all my life.

"Secondhand Lions" is told with the same adventurous ardor as a grandfather's story, life's memories culminating in one heroic ballad. It's a film that expresses the highest regard for the storytelling and uses the ancient tradition to expand upon its own heartwarming narrative. Despite the film's flaws, the genuine compassion in the extraordinary anecdotes gives "Secondhand Lions" an unexpected fairytale appeal.

The film is told through two flashbacks. The first is comes from an adult Walter's (Josh Lucas) reaction to learning his uncles were in an accident. That scene flashes to his life with his uncles, mixed with the stories the old men tell of their past.

Back in the 1950s, Walter's widowed mother Mae (Kyra Sedgwick) was looking for a way to make a life for herself. Once she discovers her two crazy uncles have appeared after 40 years, she takes a young, timid Walter (Haley Joel Osment) to her uncles' rural Texas home, hoping the boy will get close enough to the old men to find their infamous fortune. "They say these old men got millions," she tells Walter, who already knows the abandonment routine.

The pair is naturally against the idea, especially Uncle Hub (Robert Duvall), a macho, gunslinger with an aversion to wimpy boys like Walter. Uncle Garth (Michael Caine) is against it, as well, but more as response to Hub's reaction.

Eventually Mae is able to leave Walter, who is treated at first as a nuisance. He lives in a small tower room at the top of the house with a creaky bed and a lot of dust. Staying in the room, however, leads to the discovery of a young woman's bridal picture and a fascination with his uncles' youth.

Walter tries to make inroads and the trio does find a special, albeit unlikely bond; they annoy the money hungry relatives together. The true moment of friendship, however, begins when Walter walks up on his Uncle Hub sleepwalking, and Uncle Garth tells the boy not to wake him. Hub battles

imaginary warriors, in his sleep, but also stares off into the sky. Garth says he's looking for her, and Walter immediately knows his uncle means the woman in the picture.

The story Garth tells is an unbelievable adventure with war, assassins, and an evil sheik. Walter loves every moment. He learns of Hub's past love, Jasmine, and the basis of his uncle's stubbornness. The boy begins to love the old men, their ridiculous ideas and all, and has a summer like no other, that is until his mother comes back looking for her dough.

I don't know what inspired writer/director Tim McCanlies to create "Secondhand Lions," but McCanlies, with his charming words and inspired direction, has established himself as a premier storyteller here. There's a little bit of Rob Riener and a little bit of Spielberg in his work, but McCanlies, a Texas native, brings uniquely soulful energy to his second feature.

McCanlies' story is wonderful, and it's obvious in the performances of his A-list cast. Robert Duvall, Michael Caine, and Haley Joel Osment are characteristically fantastic. Their performances are as good as any actor would ever want to give, but this time they are all outdone by the film's essence. Not one of the three seems to be at their very best, but McCanlies almost makes me believe there are.

"Secondhand Lions" has an old-fashioned storytelling side that makes up for the film's flaws and melodramatic moments. This film can't be called perfect by any stretch, but I still loved every moment. Not since the "Princess Bride" has a film told a story within its own story with so much heart and imagination. I won't nitpick and say Hub's story needs more screen time, or ask why the film isn't as epic as it could be. "Secondhand Lions" may have other choices, but I wouldn't change a thing.

"Secondhand Lions" directed by Tim McCanlies, starring Haley Joel Osment, Robert Duvall, Michael Caine, and Kyra Sedgwick is now playing at Tinsletown, West Erie Plaza Cinemas, and Eastway Plaza Cinemas.



Comedy awards rule Emmy broadcast

by Brie Fleming
staff writer

Surprises and tributes were the highlight of Sunday night as the 55th annual Emmy Awards celebrated the outstanding events in from the last year of television.

Expected winners "Sex and the City," "Friends," and "Six Feet Under" were winless in the notable categories, while tributes were made to icons and celebrities like Bob Hope, John Ritter, Gregory Hines, and Fred Rogers.

The comedy awards brought the most upsets with Ray Romano losing to "Monk's" Tony Shalhoub for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Comedy Series. It was Shalhoub's first nomination and first win. He also dedicated his award to his nephew who died earlier in the week.

The Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series award was also a shocker. Debra Messing, star of "Will & Grace," broke her slump after three previous losses, winning her first Emmy.

Messing was the only member of the four-person cast to not win an Emmy, and this year she beat Sarah Jessica Parker and Jennifer Aniston to do it.

Long-time Emmy nominee, "Everybody Loves Raymond" won its first trophy for Outstanding Comedy Series just as the show begins its eighth and most likely last season.

The show's success is attributed to executive producer Phil Rosenthal, who said the show did well because of its "classic, old-fashioned values."

The sitcom is a widespread favorite, and fellow cast members Brad Garrett and Doris Roberts were acknowledged in the supporting actor and actress categories.

Doris Roberts won her third straight Emmy for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series, almost 20 years to the day after she won her first for the drama "St. Elsewhere." It was Brad Garrett's second win.

Perennial favorites, "The Sopranos" and "The West Wing," dominated the dramatic categories. Edie Falco and James Gandolfini both won for their

lead roles in the HBO drama "The Sopranos," while "The West Wing" took its fourth straight Emmy for Outstanding Drama Series.

TNT's television movie "Door to Door," "Everybody Loves Raymond," and "The Sopranos" pulled in the most awards.

HBO led the networks with 18 Emmys, followed by CBS with 16 and NBC with 15.

Bill Cosby received the Bob Hope Humanitarian Award.

"Bill Cosby, like Hope, has not only made Americans laugh over a long career, but he has also used his stardom to shine a light on strengthening the family values which make our country great," said Academy Chairman Bryce Zabel. "He's the right man, at the right time, to receive this year's award."

Cosby has received other honors such as the Kennedy Center Honor in 1998 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2002. He was inducted into the television Academy's Hall of Fame in 1992.

'Dead' Reckoning

review by Chris Hvizdak
contributing writer



PHOTO BY ERIC LA PRICE

He's coming to get you Barbara. A zombie (Don Dombrowski) from the first run of "Night of the Living Dead"

I grew up about 35 miles from where "Night of the Living Dead" was shot; in fact a building not two blocks from my home is named as a "Rescue Center" during an emergency news broadcast in the film. Consequently, I've always had a special place in my heart for the first of George A. Romero's feature films

The Roadhouse Theatre's stage production of "Night," I'm pleased to say, is a thoroughly fantastic adaptation of the cinematic classic, truly a frightening and delightful experience, providing a score of deep seated scares and an adept performance of the desperate and chaotic scenario of impending peril.

Theatrically the production shines via ingenious touches such as complete black and white make-up for all cast members, a horde of zombies who wander the aisles throughout the program and modern music cues, which amplify the menacing ambience.

Principally the plot follows Ben (Doug Massey) and Barbara (Lara Snavely), two survivors of the developing epidemic of murderous, reanimated, recently dead persons, whom after becoming trapped in a remote farmhouse attempt to fend off their undead assailants, cooperate with fellow survivors and find means to escape to civilization.

All of the actors involved in the production deliver exceptional performances, not only capturing the tension of the source material, but eliciting the extremity of emotion only live theater can in an audience.

The masterful adaptation and direction by Lori Allen Ohm is truly evident in the escalating pace and occasional moments of levity which constantly hold the viewers attention until the wrenching resolution. This is a particularly impressive feat when considering the fluidity and spatial constraints of the source work.

The captivating visual of live persons in black and white make-up, as well as the black and white set, result not only in adhering to the visual style of the film but also in creating a surrealistic atmosphere of severity, simultaneously contrasting reality and heightening one's internalization of the events. We are treated to a diverse array of zombies of all ages and walks of life. The zombie make-up itself is intricate and convincing, in certain instances even surpassing that of the film.

Moments of altercation and violence are well staged and consistently tran-

scend the guttural impact 2D images are capable of conveying and effectively illustrate the severity of the situation in which the protagonists are entrapped. To detail sticklers, I can honestly profess that in the rare instances where the stage production differs from the film it only gains and never loses, taking advantage of the live medium to present Romero's ideas in a surprising and ingenious fashion.

It is certainly invigorating to experience such an expertly executed staging of the work, which not only established the parameters for much of modern horror, but is fittingly rooted in Western-Pennsylvania. Any person who enjoys horror cinema, inspired theater or simply the rush of a good fright will be utterly delighted by the performance. Personally I hope to return for at least one more "Night" this season.

"Night of the Living Dead" runs Friday and Saturday nights at 8 p.m. and closes on Halloween with a party featuring musical guest Black Rose Diary. Tickets are \$5 for students! For the tickets and other information call 814-456-5656 or visit goerie.com/roadhouse. The Roadhouse Theatre of Contemporary Art, 145 W. 11th St.

Chris Hvizdak spends a great deal of his time sizing up potential zombie shelters (quite literally) and promoting Bruce Campbell. He would like to thank Mistress Xena of "N2 Submission" for the adequate spanking following opening night's performance and can be reached at toastmaster@iname.com or via the web at http://viztron.tripod.com

International Film Series 'Happenstance'



Alliance Atlantis Media 2002

International actress Audrey Tautou looks for love in "Happenstance."

"Amelie's" Audrey Tautou stars in this less flashy and whimsical rumination on love and the chaos theory, but one also set in Paris that likewise plays games with causality and coincidence. A mild but engaging romance that hits a few sour notes, the film nonetheless shows Tautou to be more than a one-hit wonder.--Steven Rea, Knight Ridder Newspapers.

"Happenstance," directed by Laurent Firode and starring Audrey Tautou, will be shown as part of Penn State Behrend's International Film Series on Monday at 7 p.m. in Reed 117.