

The Behrend Beacon

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Burton returns with 'Big Fish' 'Cabin Fever' bleeds B-movie brilliance



Ewan McGregor wanders through Burton's fishy world.

COLUMBIA PICTURES

review by Chris Hvizdak
contributing writer

Due to the wavering quality of his last few pictures, the constitution of Tim Burton's directorial career has arguably fallen deep into question. With his "Planet of the Apes" being a cinematic travesty only to be rivaled by such greats as "Howard the Duck" and "The Postman," old Timmy needed, quite desperately, to turn a new leaf. Burton has thankfully given said leaf a healthy twiddle with "Big Fish," the story of William Bloom (Billy Crudup), a 30-something man attempting to separate fact from fiction in regard to the many autobiographical tall tales told by his estranged and ailing father, Ed Bloom (Albert Finney).

Adapted from the novel by Daniel Wallace, the film is composed primarily of dramatizations in which Ewan McGregor portrays the father as a young man, in search of someplace larger than his hometown in which to build a new life. Here Burton shines as the many eccentric persons and situations Ed encounters are developed with that singular and satisfying style familiar to any viewer of "Beetlejuice" or "Edward Scissorhands."

These "flashbacks," so to speak, yield a quirky adventure, which is the impetus for sound bite reviews that herald the film as a modern day "The Wizard of Oz." The central draw of the film, this narrative provides a healthy dose of that signature - little seen as of late - Burtonian style through both traditional and modern computer-enhanced means.

While "Big Fish" is both satisfactory in embodying the auteurism of Burton and promising in his use of contemporary

production technology, it also presents an endearing story that stresses the role of myth in familial history. Through Crudup's pessimistic quest for the truth about his father we are convinced of the beneficent nature inherent in Ed's fanaticized and perhaps fictionalized tales of his youth.

The genuine intent of this thrust by both the author and filmmaker is clearly evident as the truths behind Ed's tales intertwine and compound with reality, giving the impression that the character has created for us, by his storytelling, a reality that would be far less livable if deprived of his efforts.

When taken in the context of serving such great goals as the vindication of idealized personal history, the film can be taken as a grand achievement, perhaps most by those viewers who have experienced or perpetuated such myth themselves. Herein lies room for debate, where one individual may take the film's overlaying story of William's quest and its resolution as fitting, another might find it overly sentimental.

Although ultimately predictable, the film is both engaging in its execution and commendable for effective dramatization of familial storytelling. Regardless of one's ultimate attitude toward the film's greater purpose, "Big Fish" provides, at the very least, a long-absent platform for Burton's eccentric technique and yields much promise for future projects, such as "Charlie and The Chocolate Factory."

Chris Hvizdak's (toastmaster@iname.com) own continuing journey to revitalize a classic Burton character can be followed in the production log of his upcoming major motion picture, "Beetlejuice vs. Ghostdad" at www.livejournal.com/~hviz.

review by Daniel J. Stasiewski
managing editor

Brain-dead teen horror films like "Jeepers Creepers" and the remake of "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre" are flooding the commercial cinemas, but thanks to Eli Roth, the sex and gore that once made the genre fun is back in his B-horror bloodbath, "Cabin Fever."

The film is no more intelligent than any studio horror flick. Its plot is insipid and the characters are the usual pack of horny college kids. The difference lies in the degree of stupidity when compared to the overwhelming amount of bloody vomit, soupy flesh, and, of course, skin.

"Cabin Fever" isn't cleaned up for the screen and the existence of the word "f***" in the dialogue isn't the only thing that makes the film edgy. "Cabin Fever" opens with a redneck hunter discovering his lifeless dog. He begins poking at it until he lifts the carcass to find the animal hollowed out. At that point, rust colored ooze splatters across his face, if only to tell the audience that this is going to be more gruesome than any horror film in the past decade.

Cut to the gang of potential victims leaving college for a vacation in the woods. A veteran horror fan should be able to pick the characters apart at first glance. You know which girl is going to take off her bra and which guy is the jack-ass who'll get the horror going. Then there's Paul (Rider Strong), the sensitive hero-type, who's going on the trip with the hopes of finally hooking up with the girl he's liked since eighth grade.

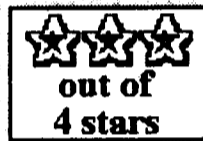
If wasn't for a flesh-eating virus that begins to infect the group, he might have had a chance. The five friends fight against the bug and then each other until

the entire weekend turns into one big nightmare.

It shouldn't be misconstrued as leeching off the newfound fame of Peter Jackson, the DVD cover of "Cabin Fever" flaunts a favorable quote by the "Lord of the Rings" director. "An unremitting, gruesomely funny blood bath. I loved it," says Jackson. "Cabin Fever" gets away with using the quote because Jackson's films, the gory bad horror from his twisted early days, are the kinds of revolting massacres "Cabin Fever" mirrors in almost every frame. No other film would dare have Cerina Vincent, a former Power Ranger, bare all and then be dismembered by a ravenous dog.

"Cabin Fever" does in the first five minutes what Rob Zombie's "House of 1,000 Corpses" wants to do throughout. "Cabin Fever" flaunts its gore and even scares us. The difference is Zombie's film tries to scare the audience with its absurd characters and silly satanic visuals, attempting to trump the horror films of the past, while "Cabin Fever" revels in its hammy gore and ridiculous characters with more love for the genre than itself.

The worst thing that could happen to "Cabin Fever" and Eli Roth, creatively, is Roth joining a studio to make "Cabin Fever 2." I'm not against a sequel. It could be the best follow-up to a horror film since "Sleepaway Camp II." Right now, Roth just needs to get the goofy gore out of his system before Hollywood never lets him use it again.



"Cabin Fever," directed by Eli Roth and starring Rider Strong, is available on DVD Jan. 20.

Just a little gossip to make you feel better about yourself

by Erika Jarvis
a&e editor

Here comes the very bitter bride:

Britney Spears called in MTV's TRL to promote her new music video "Toxic," but got offended when host Damien Faye turned the interview into a discussion of the Pop Princess' 55-hour-long marriage. "We landed on Mars that day. Why aren't we talking about that?" Ms. Spears asked.

Well, Britney, seems that TRL was never the venue to really talk about space exploration ... They're more the music video channel. You'll have to call in CNN to talk about that one.

Fashionistas ... Beware!

It's time for Mr. Blackwell's 44th annual list of worst dressed stars and he has proclaimed that the No. 1 star is the worst whether she's dressed or undressed.

Paris Hilton claims the top spot, and it seems her sex tape on the Internet wasn't good enough to impress the fashion gods. Coming in a close second was the make out duo themselves, Britney Spears and Madonna.

Country superstar Shania Twain was also found to be atop Mr. Blackwell's list as he is not a fan of the Canada's take on fashion ... Surprisingly enough, Christina Aguilera was not found on the list.

He loves me, he loves me not:

Just because you're famous at a young age doesn't mean you get to miss out on all the petty fights the rest of us went through in High School.

Turns out that Hilary Duff and Lindsay Lohan are fighting over the same boyfriend! And we thought this only happened in the "real world."

Seems Aaron Carter (Nick Carter of the Back Street Boy's little brother) has these two girls throwing hissy fits. Apparently the teen heartthrob was dating both girls at once and caused a riff in their friendship.

With both girls having a similar career, both in music and movies, it only seems fit that they both have the same boyfriend!

Actors needed to fill 'Little Shop' cast

by Daniel J. Stasiewski
managing editor

It's not every day that students and faculty get the chance to sing with a giant, man-eating plant, but Studio Theatre director Christine Mangone, Ph.D., is looking for actors interested in doing just that.

She's even looking for the plant.

Mangone has planned a two-night audition process for the spring semester production of "Little Shop of Horrors."

The campy musical follows the story of Seymour, a nerdy florist who uses his discovery of a plant with an unusual palate to gain success and the love of the shop assistant Audrey.

Auditions are scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday, featuring first the singing audition, followed on Thursday with script reading.

Mangone said she is looking for a "diverse cast."

"Little Shop of Horrors" will be the first musical to be performed at Behrend in over three years, and the familiar title, as well as its off-beat humor, should pique the interest of college thespians.

"It's running on Broadway right now, so it's a really popular choice," said Mangone. "But actually it's meant to be a show that's produced in a tiny, tiny space."

"Little Shop" will continue the Studio Theatre tradition of presenting smaller productions while affording Behrend

community members the chance to either perform in or enjoy a musical.

Mangone described the main performance area as a dingy, rundown shop, but the sometimes bizarre antics are what make the show her choice production.

"It's a fun show to do," said Mangone. "The story is twisted and fun, so I think it will be an enjoyable show."

Mangone also said the musical theater background of many of the people who auditioned for the fall production of "Holy Days" encouraged her to seek a musical suitable for the Studio Theatre.

The play features 13 speaking roles, plus the casting of two people for the giant plant, Audrey II. One person will act as the puppeteer, but another person must provide the male voice of the plant. Mangone said the casting of Audrey II is crucial.

"The [plant's] songs are the most difficult," said Mangone. "It's one of the most important roles that's overlooked sometimes because it isn't physically on stage."

"Little Shop of Horrors" premiered on Broadway at the Orpheum Theatre in July 1982. Based on the 1960 film "The Little Shop of Horrors" that featured Jack Nicholson in his second screen role, the production became a critic hit and ran for 2,209 performances. The musical was then adapted to the screen in 1986 starring comedic veterans includ-



PHOTO COURTESY OF PLAYBILL.COM
Audrey II tries to nibble on "Little Shop" composer Alan Menken.

ing Rick Moranis and Steve Martin, along with Ellen Greene reprising her stage role as Audrey.

The Behrend production requires a rehearsal schedule of Monday, Tuesday and Thursday nights, plus Saturday mornings. Additional individual rehearsals may also be required. Three credits are offered to students who are cast.

The musical is scheduled to run March 26-28, 31, and April 1-4. Interested students can sign-up for audition space in front of Reed 117.

Arts & Entertainment Highlights

Top 40 Singles

- "Hey Ya!" Outkast
- "The Way You Move" Outkast featuring Sleepy Brown
- "Suga Suga" Baby Bash featuring Frankie J
- "Here Without You" 3 Doors Down
- "It's My Life" No Doubt
- "Milkshake" Kellis
- "Someday" Nickelback
- "Stand Up" Ludacris featuring Shawanna
- "Perfect" Simple Plan
- "White Flag" Dido

According to Billboard.com

Album Releases on Jan. 20

- Ani DiFranco--"Educated Guess"
John Lennon--"John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band"
Sister Hazel--"Live Live"
Various Artists--"Grammy Nominees 2004"

New Movie Releases

- Along Came Polly-- Ben Stiller and Jennifer Aniston
Teacher's Pet-- Animated
Toque-- Jay Hernandez and Ice Cube

DVD Releases on Jan. 20

- Open Range-- Kevin Costner and Robert Duvall
Once Upon a Time in Mexico-- Johnny Depp and Antonio Banderas
Cabin Fever-- Rider Strong