

DeNiro shines in *Awakenings*

by Christi Luden
The Collegian

We often take our lives for granted. Whether it's family or friends or just the ability to take a walk when we want to, we all need to be reminded that life and everything in it is precious.

Robert DeNiro presents that reminder through his character, Leonard Lowe, in the film *Awakenings*. The character of Leonard touches our hearts, as well as our minds, and makes us all take a good look at the privileges we have that many others don't.

Leonard Lowe is one of many encephalitic patients in a mental hospital. They seem to have been forgotten by the staff until Dr. Malcolm Sayer (Robin Williams) gets hired and takes an interest in this group of special patients.

The symptoms are few, but significant. Sleep-like, comatose state. No communication. The only life these individuals have is

take place and many lives are changed and brightened.

However, the happiness lasts only a short while. The miracle drug produces side effects. Leonard starts twitching and cannot control his movements. Sadness and disappointment flood Mrs. Lowe, her son, and all who saw what the drug had done. Slowly, Leonard is taken off the drug only to return to his previous state.

Awakenings has everything. Moving scenes, people falling in love, and, most importantly, a theme that all of us have to be reminded about. We are very lucky to have happy, normal lives.

Robert DeNiro plays Leonard to perfection. One minute he has to be totally unresponsive and stone-like and the next, after the drug takes effect, he has to show the qualities of a curious child. Finally, DeNiro must twitch and constantly move to depict Leonard's deteriorating state.

DeNiro's performance is a reminder that life and everything in it is precious.

reflex actions and shuffling around a room until a barrier gets in the way. Dr. Sayer, however, has hopes and starts to study all the patients.

As usual, the "higher-ups" of an organization try to stop anything productive from going on if there is a slight risk involved. However, Dr. Sayer is extremely thorough and persuasive in his arguments and finally gets permission to try a drug on these patients.

The results are miraculous. Leonard, the first experimental patient, wakes up from his state. He becomes extremely normal and touches the lives and hearts of many people.

The most heart-warming scene is between a dedicated Mrs. Lowe (Ruth Nelson) and her son. She had cared for him since he lapsed into his state thirty years before. Now, she has a son who could love her back.

After Leonard's success, the drug is used on all the other patients also. The same things

Robin Williams also does a great job in a serious role. His own shyness is changed by Leonard and he learns how to love.

There are many people in the world like Leonard is at the end of the film. Their minds are totally intact, but their bodies are deteriorating right before their eyes. They can't do simple things like walk or write.

A lot of times it's better to have your mind go first. Then, you can't see what's happening to you.

Leonard, in a scene with other patients, makes quite a speech about the "normal" people in the world.

"They think we're crazy and they're the ones that are crazy. They don't know what they have. Work, play, friends, family. They take everything for granted. I can't even take a walk by myself."

We are crazy if we don't cherish our lives and everything in them!

Entertainment

Compilation honors Erickson *Lesser-known bands add soulful depth*

by Brad Kane
The Collegian

It's been said before, and it will be stated here once more-1990 will go down in musical history as the year of the compilation.

With the major label releases of *Rubaiyat: Elektra Records' 20th Anniversary Album*, the AIDS-benefit, Cole Porter-tribute collection *Red, Hot and Blue*, *Nobody's Child: Romanian Angel Appeal* and *The Last Temptation of Elvis*, what else could 1990 go down in musical history as-another year of pop music infestation?

But as the above titles are all worthy of merit, the best of 1990's compilations is probably the least known. It's *Where the Pyramid Meets the Eye: A tribute to Roky Erickson*.

The former lead singer of the 13th Floor Elevators, a late 60's psychedelic four-man ensemble from Texas, Erickson easily stood out among the number of musically-inclined souls associated with his era due to the emotionally wrenching on-stage performances of his songs. These performances made enough of an impact on the music world that a large amount of groups today have some spots of Erickson's influence in their material.

On *Where the Pyramid Meets the Eye* (a phrase that sums up Erickson's feelings about what psychedelic music is), these musicians pay homage to Erickson in an outstanding fashion, using differing styles and techniques to convey the messages of Erickson's music.

The album is primarily composed of lesser known acts, but some bigger names do appear on the record. Most prominent are R.E.M., ZZ Top and Jesus and Mary Chain. The latter two groups perform the same song, "Reverberation (Doubt)," as ZZ Top begins the album with the track and the Chain finishes the record off.

The Chain's rendition is slightly better as the Reid

brothers, Jim and William, use their deep vocals, heavy bass-drum arrangements, and grungy guitar style to their benefit, turning out a fine track. ZZ Top's version works well too, but the bass line is flatter and Billy Gibbons' vocals seem slightly higher pitched for a song attuned to lower pitched arrangements.

R.E.M.'s "I Walked With a Zombie" may be one of the simplest songs ever written (the words to the song are simply "I walked with a zombie"), but the song brought a tear to this reviewer's eye.

The tune harkens back to the days of the quartet's 1983 effort *Reckoning* due to the song's slight country influences. It's a technique that adds up to much more success than does the band's current formula, which leans toward a more popularized style.

But it's the less-popular groups that give *Eye* its soul. The first side features John Wesley Harding and Good Liars, who turn out a well-crafted track on "If You Have Ghosts," which maintains the flavor of the original tune; an emotional rendition on "I Had To Tell You" by Poi Dog Pondering; and the rich organ and staunch bass of Julian Cope's "I Have Always Been Here Before."

The album's two true gems also appear on the first side- The Judybats' "She Lives (In a Time of Her Own)," and Bongwater's "You Don't Love Me Yet." The former is a driving, rhythm guitar-dominated song featuring excellent vocals from singer Jeff Heiskell while the latter also uses

a good vocal effort (from Ann Magnuson) as well as a preservation of Erickson's psychedelic style to create an excellent song.


The second side may not be as strong, but there are highlights. Aside from R.E.M. and Jesus and Mary Chain, cult favorites the Butthole Surfers do a raucous rendition of "Earthquake," Chris Thomas sings the danceable "Postures (Leave Your Body Behind)" and T-Bone Burnett does a delicate version of "Nothing in Return," a tune that focuses on the feeling of being unwanted.

The finest song on the latter side, however, may well be Lyres' "We Sell Soul," which comes across sounding like an early Rolling Stones track.

The second side is balanced, however, by the record's lowlights, namely "Red Temple Prayer (Two Headed Dog)," by Sister Double Happiness due to boring, repetitive vocals and "White Faces," by the Angry Samoans, which is not nearly as fierce as the material the Samoans are famous for.

A true disappointment is the downright dull "Splash 1" by Mighty Lemon Drops. Better should be expected from a group that usually does solid work.

But keep in mind that these shortcomings are few here. Like all compilation albums, there will be a chunk of material to skip through to get to the good stuff. And while not all of the 22 songs on *Eye* are masterpieces, the gems shine brightly enough to white out the stones.



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