



At the movies

'Passage' sadly rambling, awkward

"A Passage To India" emerged with great promise. Here was the first film in 15 years from David Lean, director of such classic epics as "Bridge On The River Kwai" and "Lawrence of Arabia."

From all the acclaim that follows the film, I expected the work of a mature master — a thoughtful, elegant, probing production of a classic British novel.

What Lean delivers is a "veddy British" epic that is awkward, heavy-handed and pretentious beyond all belief.

Based on the E.M. Forster novel by the same name, "A Passage" is about the British occupation of India and the rampant racism in the country. Ever since "Ghandi," the racism of Britain's past has been a fashionable topic for British filmmakers, akin to the

American "Roots" movement in the 1970s.

Judy Davis stars as Adela Quested, a young British woman who travels to India to see her beloved, a civil servant named Ronny Heaslop (Nigel Havers).

Adela wants to discover the "real" India; Ronny, a diehard racist (like 99 percent of the British in the film) refuses to have her associate with native Indians.

Adela and Ronny's mother, Mrs. Moore (Peggy Ashcroft), have ideas of their own. With the help of practically the only decent Briton in India, University director Richard Fielding (James Fox), they meet two charming Indians: the young Doctor Aziz (Victor Banerjee) and the elderly Professor Godbole (Alec Guinness).

Aziz, who earlier had ex-

pressed his dislike for the contemptuous British, falls all over himself to please these "decent" Britons.

In making conversation, he invites Adela and Mrs. Moore to his house, and embarrassed at having done that (his house is a small, ugly shack), he covers himself by asking them to picnic at the Marabar caves.

Misunderstandings, mistakes and unfortunate occurrences lead to a picnic that ends in disaster. A horribly injured Adela charges Aziz with attempted rape, and as the bigot Turton (Richard Wilson) tells her, "The verdict is a forgone conclusion."

This is not a subtle film. The injustices of British rule and the racist attitudes of the foreign rulers are practically thrown in our faces. Except for Adela, Mrs. Moore and Fielding, all the Britons are one-dimensional and have absolutely no human qualities. Lean is so calculating in making them villains that they lose any pretense of being real.

On the other hand, Lean is so condescending in his treatment of the Indians that he seems to be supporting the claims made by the racist military government. Aziz acts like a school kid whenever the three good Britons are around, playing the humble dark servant who couldn't be more excited when



Photo courtesy Columbia Pictures
James Fox and Sir Alec Guinness star in David Lean's disappointing film "A Passage to India," which focuses on love and social struggle in 1928 India.

asked to tea by his masters. Godbole, on the other hand, is an enigmatic mystic whose philosophy is so odd and incomprehensible that it's played for laughs.

What's left is the spectacular visual treatment that we expect from this master of epics, and for the first half-hour the film is sumptuous. A tightly edited composite of character introductions and grand, beautiful vistas hint at a film that at the very least will be visually overwhelming.

Such is sadly not the case.

The film becomes clumsy and awkward as it progresses, with odd, unattractive compositions becoming evident and an off-pace editing rhythm that throws the picture off balance.

The worst part of the entire film is the epilogue. It is clumsy, unnecessary and practically degrades the character of Aziz while totally unbalancing the picture. A totally gratuitous travelogue insert of the Himalayas merely adds insult to the audience, and the sappy music that backs this scene is no help either.

By Sean Axmaker

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Shadowfax concert nears

By Chris Hazen
Of the Emerald

Shadowfax, a band that encompasses blues, gospel, classical, jazz and rock, will appear in the EMU Ballroom Saturday at 8:30 p.m.

"What are the elements that characterize Shadowfax?" asked Los Angeles Times music critic Leonard Feather in 1984. "American, African, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, European? All these and more."

Classified by some as "world music," Shadowfax was spawned in 1972 in the blues clubs of Chicago by guitarist Greg Stinson and reed-player Chuck Greenberg (who plays saxophone and an electric reed instrument called a lyricon).

After experimenting in an Illinois farmhouse for four years, Shadowfax released an album in 1976 called "Watercourse Way," launching the group's reputation as one of the most innovative groups to emerge from Chicago in the late '70s.

But with the rise of disco, record company executives were no longer responsive to Shadowfax and the band split up in 1978. Greenberg eventually ended up helping guitarist Alex de Grassi on his "Clockwork" album and attracted the interest of Windham Hill Records' Will Ackerman, who asked Greenberg if he'd record a solo album.

Greenberg decided he would rather get Shadowfax back together to see what the band could come up with.

The result was the commercially successful and critically acclaimed album "Shadowfax," which charted in Billboard and Cashbox magazines for 16 weeks following its 1982 release on Windham Hill. The band, then a quintet, moved its headquarters to Los Angeles and followed up "Shadowfax" in 1983 with a third album, "Shadowdance," featuring the talents of new members Jamii Szmazdzinski and Jarred Stewart.

Late last year, Shadowfax released its fourth album, "The Dreams of Children," which reached No. 12 on Billboard magazine's jazz chart within six weeks of its release.

Shadowfax members profess influences as diverse as John McLaughlin, Peter Gabriel and Gamelan orchestras and are considered the closest thing to rock on Windham Hill's mostly-jazz record label. The band's sound tends to attract an older, more sophisticated audience than most brands of rock.

A portion of the concert's proceeds will benefit the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, a Eugene-based, non-profit organization. Tickets are available at Face the Music, Earth River Records, Everybody's Records and the EMU Main Desk.

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