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'Golden Child' doesn't enlighten

Every 1,000 years or so a perfect child is born—a golden child with the power to preserve peace, prosperity, and the spiritual way. Such a child exists today in Tibet. But beware, the forces of darkness have conspired to kidnap our latest savior, and only one man can rescue him. He is the chosen one; he is—Eddie Murphy?

Improbable as this premise may be, that is what director Michael Ritchie works very hard to make us believe. And for the first 15

Review by Mary Courtis

minutes it looks as if he might succeed. Butter lamps, karmic tests, and red-and-yellow-robed monks abound in the opening sequence, lending atmosphere and hinting at intriguing mysteries and marvels, yet to be revealed.

At this point our appetite is whetted. Will evil triumph? Why does the golden child remain calm and passive in the face of his caretakers' death and his own imprisonment? Is it shock, helplessness, karma? We tingle to know.

But we are never told.

Unfortunately, the film falls flat once it leaves Tibet. Sunny California cannot provoke as many shivers as dank, dark lamaseries. And while Murphy may be funny, he is not

enigmatic. His manic craziness and casual profanity seem stilted and out of place in what is essentially a supernatural adventure story. Ultimately, the strain shows.

Murphy rattles off his lines instead of snapping them out as he did in "Beverly Hills Cop" and seems uncomfortable playing the haloed hero. Harrison Ford might pull it off, but Murphy lacks the gritty absurdity essential to a comic book character—or a guardian angel.

The other actors never seem to hit their stride either, and some shoddy special effects—especially in the latter part of the film—only serve to deepen this disenchantment.

Too bad, because "The Golden Child" could have been more than a gaudy excuse for Murphy to strut his stuff. When the golden child sits in his tiny cage, surrounded by various incarnations of evil, the impression is both vivid and chilling. Demons do exist. If not in hell, then certainly in human minds. It is a sad commentary on the state of our society when a 16-year-old girl named Sherril can be sold by a biker gang to Tommy Tong for a quart of pork-fried rice, even in a movie.

If "The Golden Child" had further dwelt on the complexities of these issues, it might have been a bold light instead of a brief glimmer in the sea of cultural darkness.

"The Golden Child" shows nightly at 7 and 9 o'clock at Valley River Twin.

Kulongoski accepts appointment as insurance commission leader

By Shawn Wirtz
Of the Emerald

A former Democratic candidate for governor and Lane County legislator was appointed as state insurance commissioner Wednesday by newly inaugurated Gov. Neil Goldschmidt.

Ted Kulongoski will take over from Josephine Driscoll, whom Goldschmidt publicly accused of exacerbating the insurance liability crisis. Driscoll resigned after the election and will go to work for Standard Insurance, a company she formerly regulated.

Kulongoski served in the House from 1975 to 1977 and in the Senate from 1977 to 1982. "He's got a great background in

the House and Senate working on insurance and business issues," said Gregg Kantor, Goldschmidt's spokesman.

Kulongoski also served as the chairman of the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee during the 1981 session.

"As a lawyer he knows about a lot of problems concerning tort reform," Kantor said. Kulongoski will be taking a leave of absence from his position with the law firm of Kulongoski Heid, Durham and Drummond.

"The governor's charge to me is that he wants the insurance commissioner to be an advocate for the consumer," Kulongoski said.

Without affordable insurance,

"there can be no business growth," he said. Additionally, through taxes paid on premiums, the insurance industry is the third largest contributor to the state's general fund, he said.

"Those two features indicate, obviously, the insurance industry is a vital component of the economy," Kulongoski said. However, "there should be greater disclosure by the carriers on how they determine rates," he said.

Kulongoski will be critical of tort reform, he said. "A lot of the proposals they're talking about now, about limiting the rights of the individual, may be short term political solutions but they're not long term structural solutions," he said.

Kulongoski said his appointment will mark a change in the role of the commissioner's office. "We will be providing the governor's office with the information he needs to develop policy," he said.

Kulongoski and his staff "will be speaking not only to the governor but also in the legislative process," he said. "No longer will you have to drag the insurance commissioner's office into the Legislature."

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