

Arts and entertainment

'Burke and Wills' chronicles expedition in land down under

The year was 1860. The mission, "to conquer the country." The country — Australia.

Based on a true story, "Burke and Wills" turns back the hands of time, and transports us into

Review By
Kelvin Wee

the land down under one hundred years ago. The movie centers around the Victorian Exploring Expedition, "the best

equipped expedition possible" at that time.

The expedition consisted of 19 men, 28 horses, 26 camels, six wagons and 21 tons of equipment and supplies. The goal was to map the route from southern Australia to the northern region, through the previously unexplored "inland sea".

Filmed on location in Australia, the movie presents a refreshing view of nature in its most untouched form. From sandstorms to swamp leeches,

to crocodiles and aborigines, the show presents a very clear and uncensored display of things that lie in the unknown land.

"Burke and Wills" is a story about how two men suffered to be the "first" white men to cross and map out Australia. Heading the expedition is Robert O'Hara Burke, a pompous Irishman played by Australian actor, Jack Thompson.

Burke's assistant, William John Wills is a English gentleman who's cool temperament clearly distinguishes him from Burke. Wills is played by Nigel Havers, who has been in award winning films like "Chariots of Fire" and "A Passage to India".

Both men had different reasons for making the journey. Burke's personal goal was to be the first man to make it across and back in order to win the hand of a beautiful British opera singer, Julia Matthews played by Greta Scacchi. His sponsors had another goal for him in mind. They wanted him to secure land for the colonies.

Wills, on the other hand, had an entirely different perspective in mind. He wanted to study the land, mapping it while they recorded the different temperatures and events through his thermometer and telescope. Wills' submissive character, typical of a "well-bred English gentleman," helped his relationship with Burke.

As they traveled, the men encountered problems they never perceived possible. Wills repeatedly updated his notes, while Burke constantly thought of his belle in Melbourne. As time passed, the two men learned to trust each other, faced



Courtesy photo

Jack Thompson as Robert O'Hara Burke shares a moment with Julia Matthews, played by Greta Scacchi, in the outback film "Burke and Wills."

sandstorms, and even fought crocodiles together. Their respect for one another gave this story sparkle.

The movie moves from scene to scene with narratives from Wills' records, which describe the adventure in detail. The last and most important leg of the journey was forged by just four of the original nineteen men, Burke, Wills, Charley Gray and John King.

John King was the youngest and most inexperienced member of the entire expedition. Also an Irishman, his overly submissive character and strong hatred for prejudice was what distinguished him from the troupe. His appreciation of the aboriginal natives was not well understood by his colleagues, and thus he often kept

himself silent.

King plays an important role in a surprising twist ending, which has to be seen to be appreciated.

"Burke and Wills" is directed and co-produced by Graeme Clifford whose credits over the last 20 years include editing such films as "The Rocky Horror Picture Show," "The Man who Fell to Earth," "F.I.S.T.," and "The Postman Always Rings Twice."

Clifford also directed the English television detective series, "The Avengers" and the film "Frances," which was nominated for two Academy Awards.

"Burke and Wills" will be shown nightly at the Bijou Theatre, 492 East 13th Avenue, at 7 and 9 p.m.

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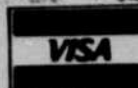
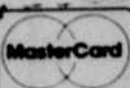
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LINE ADS: 1:00 PM the day before publication.
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The Oregon Daily Emerald is published Monday through Friday during the academic year (September-June) and Tuesday and Thursday during summer session (June-August).

DON'T MISS THE LAST ISSUE FOR SUMMER TERM!!

Thursday, August 13 is the last issue for summer term. Deadline is 1pm Wednesday, August 12. Don't forget about our Fall Orientation Issue to be published September 21! Deadline for the FOI is 1pm Friday, September 11.

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