

'Awakenings' rouses emotions thought

AWAKENINGS
PG-13
Movieland

- Don't bother
- Wait to rent it
- Worth the time
- A must see

By Christopher Blair
Emerald Managing Editor

You may have heard a lot of things about *Awakenings*. It's based on a true story, but changes the facts. It's too emotional. And so on.

Actually, it's an excellent film, based on the experiences of a New York doctor who revived people who had been "asleep" for decades because of a mysterious illness.

Robin Williams plays Malcolm Sayer. Sayer is a reclusive and shy doctor who wants to spend his life doing research on earthworms and primitive plants but takes a job in a chronic hospital to pay the bills.

Tucked away in the various wards, he finds a community of immobile, comatose people; Sayer becomes obsessed with them, and, convinced they are aware of their surroundings, tries to wake them up.

An experimental drug does the trick. Patient Leonard Lowe (Robert DeNiro) is the first to awaken, stunned at what has happened to him.

Much of the movie deals with the rest of the patients and their own awakenings. Most wake up with gray hair and no trace of the life they left, and the movie asks the audience to answer a question: Was waking these people up worth it?

And although the movie's ending is not the happiest ever filmed, it's not too heart-wrenching, and even has a positive tone to it.

Awakenings has drawn fire from critics for being too sentimental, but it's really just a good movie, and the "sappy" stuff is powerful without being too manipulative. The most emotionally powerful scenes are between Leonard and Paula (Penelope Ann Miller), a girl visiting the institution to read to her father.



Robin Williams and Robert DeNiro star in *Awakenings*, the story of catatonic patients who are revived to find a different world than the one they left.

This is DeNiro's movie, and he does a stellar job. This is the same man who played Satan in *Angel Heart* and a comic bounty hunter in *Midnight Run*. In this movie, however, he plays the serious role of a boy who has a few months to grow up, live, and go back to sleep.

Robin Williams does a good job in his role of Dr. Sayer, although he goes a bit

overboard making his character timid and shy. But for someone who was making "Mr. Happy" jokes and grabbing himself on stage a few years ago, Williams' performance is just fine.

Those who are miffed because the film is only based on fact can get the real story from the book by the same name. Everyone else will be treated to a great movie.



The University Department of Dance opens its annual performance of *Dance '91* tonight in Robinson Theatre. The show will combine elements of jazz, tap and ballet.

Dance '91 kicks off tonight

By Ming Rodrigues
Emerald Reporter

A melange of contemporary dance takes centerstage tonight in *Dance '91*, the University's Department of Dance's annual winter performance.

Featuring works performed by faculty, guest artists and dance students, *Dance '91* explores the variant genres of modern dance including jazz, ballet and tap.

"This is a repertory performance," said Sherry Barr, an assistant professor in the dance department. "Each dance is distinct in style and statement."

"Each is an expression of the personality and experiences of the individual choreographer," she said. "That's what dance is all about. It's not just a series of moves, but an art of creativity with character of its own."

Barr herself choreographed a modern dance piece titled "No Passing Zone." Based on a person-

al experience, it explores the decision-making process we all go through in our lives.

"I was driving on the highway one day and it struck me as a very harrowing experience with all the unexpected turns, twists and peaks along the road," Barr said.

"Life itself is very much like that, with its ups and downs, and often we have to make those important decisions that could make or break us. I thought that would make a good dance theme."

As if choreographing was not enough, Barr is also one of the 12 dancers in the jazz production titled "Suite Bru."

Jazz tap differs from musical theater or show tap in that it stresses complex rhythms rather than high stepping kicks and time steps, she said.

"Some of the music and moves resonate with the influence of the dance cultures of the non-western

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