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The Oregon Daily Emerald's
 New Weekly
 Entertainment Section!



'Blast' defies low expectations

By Jack Clifford
Oregon Daily Emerald

Every moviegoer has experienced that phenomenon of feeling totally jazzed to see some hot new film, only to be bummed when it falls short of expectations. "Saving Private Ryan" — just about every critic's choice for this year's Best Picture Oscar — filled that bill for me in 1998.

On the flip side, it's always a treat when an apparent dud turns out to be a decent movie. Two months into 1999, this year's contender for sleeper is "Blast From The Past," director Hugh Wilson's newest offering, starring Brendan Fraser and Alicia Silverstone.

"Blast From The Past" begins during another conflict-dominated era, the early 1960s. Wilson is confident enough to bring levity and a disjointed feel to the Cold War, the Cuban missile crisis and, more specifically, bomb shelters.

Two Los Angeles suburbanites, Calvin and Helen, played superbly by Christopher Walken and Sissy Spacek, are throwing a party when an explosion forces them into their backyard safety space. Helen, who is pregnant, and her eccentric husband are secure in the Earth's depths for 35 years.

Along comes baby, Adam, and the two parents embark on a social learning program for their only son. Once Fraser makes his screen

Blast From The Past

DIRECTED BY: Hugh Wilson
STARRING: Brendan Fraser
 and Alicia Silverstone

RATING:

★★★★★

appearance as a young adult, Adam has been home-schooled, he's been taught how to dance and he has impeccable manners, to boot. By the time the shelter's alarm sounds, telling the family that it's OK to explore the outside world, Adam is basically most women's dream guy.

Well, he's not necessarily the man for Silverstone's character, Eve. (Yes, the names are corny, but they don't distract from the plot.) She is more attracted to the "mimbo" types, those La-La hunks interested in buffing up and hair-styling. Eve's initial avoidance tactics with Adam are amusing, but there's never any doubt that his innocent charm will sway her by the movie's end.

Adam's mission above ground is twofold: to gather more supplies for an extended stay in the shelter and, hopefully, to find a wife — preferably from Pasadena — to fulfill his mother's wishes. He hires Eve to help with the former, then once she rebuffs him romantically, he enlists her help with the latter.

Granted, this is a fairly thin excuse for a plot, but surprisingly it works. Fraser plays up the "fish out of water" personality just enough, and Silverstone adequately handles her role as the hard-edged cynic with a heart of gold. Nobody is going to mistake this duo for Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy anytime soon, but the chemistry works well.

The screen presences of Walken and Spacek work much better, mainly because those two are more seasoned actors. In addition, they both string out some wacky scenes with solid comic timing. Dave Foley (from TV's "News Radio") is funny as Eve's gay roommate, and it's nice to see a Hollywood flick stay away from the stereotypical limp-wrist jokes.

The only aspect of this film that doesn't work at all is the cult that is formed when Adam emerges from underground and is pronounced the Messiah. Wilson would have been wise to cut this plot line and focus more attention on Adam and his interaction with L.A.'s other loonies.

Wilson's directorial career has come a long way since he debuted in 1984 with the bomb "Police Academy." Fifteen years later, he hits the target with "Blast From The Past," not an Oscar winner, but nonetheless a surprisingly fun time at the theater.

Theater

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supply voices and seem to direct the actors as they progress through the play.

Director Jon Cole describes the content as "a really, really intense down-and-dirty look at the dark side of relationships, in a medium that you can't escape."

Although "Hot 'n' Throbbing" does not necessarily confuse the audience, it may offend some with its moments of violence, sex and incest. However, Cole does a nice job of making his point — creating an environment that questions the roles of women in society.

Again, the portrayals carry the play. With such ex-

PLICIT material in a confined space so close to the audience, the cast members are very believable. As the teen-age daughter who comes on to her brother and her father, Hellesto delivers an enticing performance wearing blond pigtails and lime-green capri pants.

"I'm basically like Kelly from 'Married With Children,'" Hellesto says. "This is a play that touches on physical and emotional issues."

Both plays continue at 8 p.m. March 4-6 and 11-13 at the Arena Theatre in Villard Hall. Patron discretion is advised due to adult themes.

Band

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keeps a post office box in Georgia, where he grew up.

Being on the road isn't bad at all, though, Chandler says. He may have a hard time getting his mail, but, he adds, "it's a lot harder for the police to get in touch with me."

"I don't know any different, to tell the truth," says Chandler, who has been a performer most of his life. "I spent the past two months in New Orleans, and it was a new life experience for me. I've been on the road all my life."

After their current run, the Troubadours will head to Austin, Texas, where they will record their first CD together. Chandler has recorded several CDs on his own, including a recent release called "Collaborations," on which he performs with a number of different artists such as Yarrow, the Austin Lounge Lizards and Trout Fishing in America.

On the CD, the musicians play their own songs and Chandler recites poetry over them. These collaborations lie at the heart of what

Chandler loves about performing.

"I don't feel whole unless I feel like I'm contributing to something, changing the 'I' to 'we,'" he says. "The power of our creative forces multiplies tenfold instead of twofold."

Chandler will sell copies of his CD at the BUZZ tonight, and he looks forward to performing at the coffee house.

"We do a myriad of different events," he says. "We played in a chapel last night. We'll play anywhere anybody will listen to us."

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