

# 'Excalibur' slices edge of fantasy

By Amy DeVour  
Of The Print

Lust, blood and a magical sword weave the story for the new movie, "Excalibur." Following the story lines of Morte D'Arthur, director John Boorman sets out to create a fantasy. And so the legend unwinds.

The leading character, Merlin the Magician (Nicol Williamson), gives Excalibur to Arthur's father, Luther. Luther becomes king and while lusting breathlessly to "lie" with another's queen, bargains with Merlin to enable him to do so. Merlin, not to be without an ulterior motive, agrees and is

promised the outcome of Luther's lust. And in accordance to the legend, we learn it is infant Arthur. Merlin takes Arthur (who is just barely an infant) into the dragon's forest. Meanwhile, Luther, rather than relinquish possession of Excalibur, plunges the sword into a stone and screams, "No one shall take Excalibur from me." Whereby Merlin vows, "He who releases the sword from the stone shall be king." Merlin promises the kingship to young Arthur, cradled in his arms.

As foreshadowed by Merlin, Arthur releases Excalibur and becomes king. The land of Camelot exists in harmony for

many years but, as in all stories, conflict arises. Famine and disease plague the people of Camelot and King Arthur orders the Knights of the Round Table to search for the Holy Grail which can restore the peace and harmony that was lost.

The story is entertaining but the acting is far from believable. Boorman seems to put more emphasis on the blood, armor and camera angle than on acting quality. Nicol Williamson is quite amusing in his role as Merlin. His facial expression and witty dialogue make his character appealing. Nigel Terry, on the other hand, seems to be lacking in his character of King Arthur. His line delivery is slow and somewhat boring, and Arthur often appears to be an absolute idiot.

It is evident that Boorman wished to mix adventure with

comedy, but his lance-wielding one-liner gags approach to this Arthurian tale is one that can only be watched once.

The landscape is beautiful and green. The costuming is vibrant and colorful but there seems to be some discrepancy in the appearance of the armor. The cinematography is quite good, but Boorman seems to have some trouble with camera transitions. We see a young adolescent mature into a fully grown man by way of his mother's kiss. This transition is awkward and bizarre.

One of the most redeeming aspects of "Excalibur" is in the scene where the great Merlin tells the history of the sword and eloquently utters the phrase, "It was forged when the world was young and bird, beast and flower were one with man, and death was but a dream."

This fantasy still holds audience attention, if one neglects to criticize its theatrical flaws and sits captivated by the guts, greenery and the magical sword, Excalibur.

"Excalibur" is being shown exclusively at the Fox Theater on Broadway.

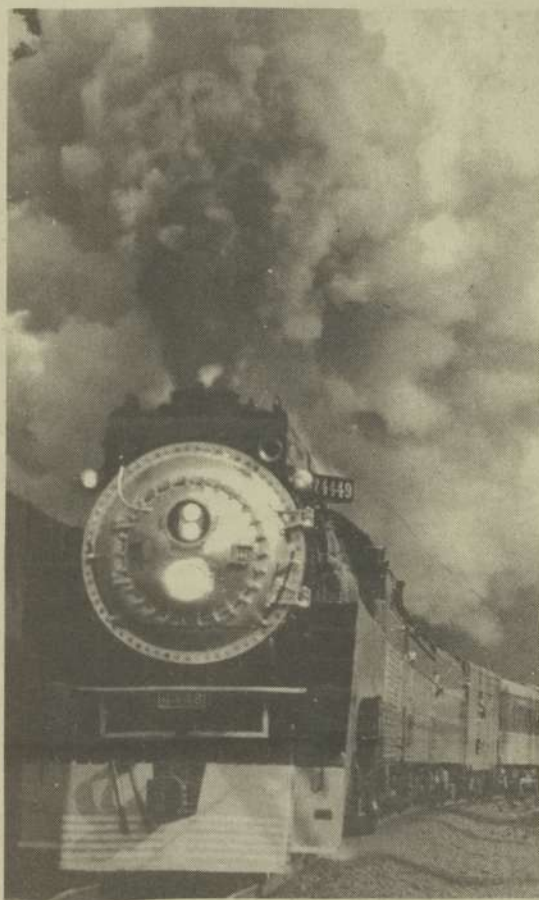
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Freedom Train steams to California



The steam engine of the past remains in the minds of most as a hazy recollection of childhood. Everything that was good about one's youth seems to gather around an idea out of another century leaving us no longer with the truth, but with a memory the present can never quite match.

When old Engine number 4449 puffed out of Portland this last Saturday, a scene not seen by the old Union Station since 4449's last appearance during the Bicentennial, it became a celebration. A celebration of the past, and of

our dreams. We could remember what our minds had made memory and yet marvel at a common place piece of machinery that had become a star.

When 4449 served as a part of the Freedom Train it was decked out in a proudly patriotic red, white and blue. Now it bolsters a more subdued orange, red, black, and white as it carried when it provided daily service. Not as bright, but more fitting for a memory, I think.

If you feel a little lonely in your reminiscence, don't. As the locomotive heads south its

seats will remain full with a few dreamers and railroad buffs, perhaps even a few 'old timers' to keep the lady company.

The train's destination as it heads south is Sacramento. The California capital holds a piece of the railroad dream itself. It has a museum that has been billed as the largest in the world. P.T. Barnum would appreciate that.

And, if a small part of you seeks to relive the past, don't fight it. When old 4449 makes the trip home May 17, you can go down to watch it. You don't even have to tell anyone if you don't want to.

Story by David J. Hayden  
Photos by Duffy Coffman and David J. Hayden

