

October Sky: a true American tale of determination

ANGIE DASCHEL
Associate Editor

Sometimes you have to take a break from the blood- and sex-drenched movies that abound in Hollywood today and see a truly nice film. "October Sky," opening on February 19, will actually make you feel good when you leave the theater.

Based on the book, *Rocket Boys*, by Homer Hickam, "October Sky" is the true story of four boys, including Homer, from Coalwood, West Virginia in 1957. In Coalwood, if a high school boy isn't lucky enough to receive a football scholarship, he has only one other option: to work in the coal mine that employs practically everyone in town. Homer (Jake Gyllenhaal, "City Slickers") and his classmates accept this fact until a spectacular event changes their lives: the Russian satellite Sputnik is launched and streaks across the calm October sky of Coalwood.

"This story takes place at a time in our history when people had hope."

Chuck Gordon
Producer

Inspired by the satellite, Homer announces to his family that he is going to build a rocket to enter in the science fair at school. His first attempt at rocketry ends up blowing apart his mother's fence, so Homer decides to enlist the help of his friends and the class brainiac. Their physics and chemistry teacher, Mrs. Riley, (Laura Dern, "Jurassic Park") gives them an advanced book on rockets and informs them that college scholarships are given out to winners of a regional science competition. Homer sees this as his only way out of Coalwood and it makes him work harder.

Academy Award-winner Joe Johnson, director of "October Sky," mirrors how I felt about the movie: "It doesn't happen often, but every now and then you read a story that hits you on an emotional level... 'October Sky' involves themes that are so universal to the experience of coming-of-age in twentieth century America that it approaches the



Chris Cooper (left), as a distraught father, shares an emotional scene with son Jake Gyllenhaal.

status of a modern fable."

Chuck Gordon, producer of "October Sky," said, "This story takes place at a time in history when people had hope. There was a camaraderie. That doesn't happen anymore."

The film focuses not only on the rockets, but the relationship between Homer and his father, the desperation of having no choice in one's future, and the determination of the human spirit. The next time you go to the theater, instead of seeing the usual bloody action flick, consider "October Sky."



PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Jake Gyllenhaal accepts a gift from teacher Laura Dern.

Burnt Offerings: a gripping read with a new twist on vampires

SALENA DE LA CRUZ
Staff Writer

Imagine if you will that the world as you know it not as it seems: vampires, witches, werewolves and other supernatural beings roam free with legal rights.

Laurell K. Hamilton, renowned fiction author, offers a taste of the supernatural with a new twist to the old tale. *Burnt Offerings* is book number seven in the "Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter" series.

Burnt Offerings, like all of Hamilton's "Anita Blake" series

(nine volumes thus far), is an edge of your seat, page turning thriller.

The familiar faces of the series are all here: Anita Blake, Executioner—she is also known as a Necromancer and an Animator, which is someone that can raise the dead. she also has special powers that correspond with her mission. Jean-Claude, Master Vampire of the City and Anita's love interest, has bound Anita with two marks or bites to give her special powers. Richard, Lycanthrope (a man who changes into a wolf once a month) is Anita's ex-boyfriend whom she left for Jean-Claude.

Ronnie is Anita's best friend who works at the same firm as Anita and is her back-up when she needs it. Dolph, a cop on the Preternatural Squad, is Anita's friend and father figure and gives her friendly advice when she doesn't ask for it.

The entire series takes place in present-day St. Louis. Anita is a private investigator for an independent firm where she contracts her services out for legal vampire slayings, raising the dead and other paranormal activities a normal cop won't do. She is also a member of the Preternatural Squad, which on various occasions requires her exper-

tise in the field of the supernatural. In many cases she has to ascertain what kind of supernatural beings committed the crime.

In this particular book Anita is faced with the task of finding the pyrokinetic that is burning buildings and pursuing vampires in the city. This case may have an effect on Jean-Claude.

While all of this is unfolding, she has to meet with the Vampire Council, the most powerful vampires in the world. The council is very upset that the infamous Anita Blake helped Jean-Claude kill the Earthmover vampire who wanted to start a new world order, taking the world back to old

days when vampires were feared and had no legal rights.

In the meantime she is still Lupa (mate and/or girlfriend) to her ex-boyfriend Richard which means she has to protect the pack. All the while strange things are starting to happen to her.

Laurell K. Hamilton most certainly does not let the reader down with this book. I highly recommend it to anyone that has a fascination for the supernatural and wants something new. Run to the library to check out one through nine and hold on; the series is well worth the anticipation of the next page turn and the next book.

Upcoming spring theatrical releases

"Office Space"

Opening Feb. 19

Starring: Ron Livingston, Jennifer Aniston and David Herman

"Jawbreaker"

Opening Feb. 19

Starring: Rose McGowan and Rebecca Gayheart

"200 Cigarettes"

Opening Feb. 26

Starring: Casey Affleck, Jay Mohr, Ben Affleck, Dave Chappelle, Gaby Hoffmann, Courtney Love, Christina Ricci, Paul Rudd and Janeane Garofalo

"Eight Millimeter"

Opening Feb. 26

Starring: Nicolas Cage, Joaquin Phoenix and James Gandolfini

"Cruel Intentions"

Opening Mar. 5

Starring: Ryan Phillippe, Sarah Michelle Gellar and Reese Witherspoon

"Forces of Nature"

Opening March 19

Starring: Sandra Bullock, Ben Affleck and Steve Zahn

"True Crime"

Opening Mar. 19

Starring: Clint Eastwood, James Woods and Denis Leary

"EDtv"

Opening Mar. 26

Starring: Matthew McConaughey, Jenna Elfman, Woody Harrelson, Ellen DeGeneres, Dennis Hopper, Elizabeth Hurley and Rob Reiner

"The Mod Squad"

Opening April 1

Starring: Claire Danes, Giovanni Ribisi, Omar Epps and Josh Brolin

"Mystery, Alaska"

Opening April 2

Starring: Russell Crowe, Mary McCormack, Burt Reynolds, Ron Eldard, Hank Azaria and Lolita Davidovich

"The Matrix"

Opening April 2

Starring: Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburne, Hugo Weaving and Carrie-Anne Moss

"Never Been Kissed"

Opening April 9

Starring: Drew Barrymore, David Arquette and Molly Shannon

Top 5 movies

"Payback"	"Patch Adams"	"Saving Private Ryan"
\$21.2 million	\$4.4 million	\$3.6 million
"She's All That"	"Varsity Blues"	--top grosses as of Feb 12.
\$11.7 million	\$3.8 million	

The 22nd Annual Portland International Film Festival

The Portland International Film Festival began on Feb. 12 and runs through Feb. 28. Films are being shown at four locations:

•Guild Theater
9th and Taylor

•Regal Movie House
1220 SW Taylor

•Regal Broadway Cinemas
SW Broadway and Main

•Mission Theater
1624 NW Glisan

Several Academy Award-nominated films are being shown including "Tango" (Argentina) and "Central Station" (Brazil). For more information about film schedules and prices, go to <http://www.nwfilm.org>.