



Russell Crowe takes Roman holiday

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A&E Editor

Hey, it ain't easy being a hero in the movies. Usually they have to engage in bloody battles and endure extreme injustices just to be recognized as a hero, while a delicate balance of humility, honor and courage is required for a hero to gain the audience's respect. Since Mel Gibson burst onto the screen as noble Scotsman William Wallace in *Braveheart*, the world has been waiting for the next real hero in cinema. The wait was decidedly ended when Russell Crowe (*The Insider*) brandished his sword and took over the Roman world in *Gladiator*.

Crowe plays Maximus, a greatly powerful general of the Roman forces in Germania, around the end

of the second century A.D. His soldiers would do anything for him, while the emperor Marcus Aurelius holds Maximus in higher regard than his own son.

After an extremely violent battle with the barbarians, the emperor decides to name Maximus the new protector of Rome, instead of his own corrupt son Commodus (Joaquin Phoenix, *8MM*). Predictably, this decision does not sit well with Commodus, who then takes matters into his own hands and regains the throne. Commodus reasons that Maximus and his family are a threat to his reign and therefore orders the execution of the general, along with his wife and son.

The skillful general escapes his sentence and flees to his home near in the South, where he finds a horrifying site. From there he is cap-

tured by slave traders and sold to a business man. Maximus and his fellow prisoners find they are to fight as gladiators in a small village, until Rome's Colosseum comes calling. There they will fight in front of 50,000 screaming Romans, who applaud every shriek of terror and every spray of blood from the gladiators. This is Maximus's chance to get close to the treacherous Commodus and seek his revenge, and he doesn't waste a minute.

Gladiator is the real deal, folks. This epic slams the audiences right into the center of the arena and doesn't shake you loose until the last dying breaths of the film. Every second is filled with electrically-charged emotions and a sense of tension and urgency usually lacking in big Hollywood movies.

Finally, Crowe has found some

recognition. Although he was nominated for an Academy Award for *The Insider*, the Aussie actor was not fully understood as a talent of mammoth proportions, and director Ridley Scott (*Gl Jane*) did his homework in nabbing him. Crowe pulls the viewers along through the tightly-wound world of Rome, and he does it without pity or losing the heroic sense of nobleness.

An epic wouldn't be an epic without the cinematography that knocks the viewer's collective socks off, and *Gladiator* has got that one in the bag. Battle scenes were shot in a grainy, confused light, which showed the intensity of war, and



how unsure the soldiers were when faced with such bloody conditions.

If the release of *Gladiator* signals the start of the summer movie season, then audiences are in trouble. They will have to scramble to find anything worth seeing after being totally blown away by Crowe and company. How can another movie even attempt to come close to *Gladiator* this year? The only solution that comes to mind is for Mel to start filming *Braveheart 2*.

Writers' Club Contest Winners

- Fiction**
1st Patrick Fuller
"The Fisherman"
2nd S. Myron Wright
"Tarpaper"
3rd Allyn Borland
"Implication"
Poetry
1st Bonita Richardson
"Sorting Through Old Letters/Savings words or holy fire/...after a photograph of/T. E. Laurence"
2nd Hank Slangal
"Grey Butte Cemetery"

- 3rd Elizabeth Miles
"BluesPeriod:Barcelona"
Honorable Mention
Susan Engstrom
"For Want of Defense"
Doug Pershing
"Vanishing Point"
Bonita Richardson
"Root Vegetables in a Cast Iron Pot"
Susan Rae McElheran
"Peach Ecstasy"
Essays
1st Karin Day
"Nightmare"

- 2nd Elizabeth Miles
"There's More Than One Way to Peel a Chicken"
3rd Hank Slangal
"I Never Knew My Father's Last Name"
One Act Plays
1st Blake Peterson
"Marx Wars"
2nd Hank Slangal
"Bringing in the Sheep"
3rd S. Myron Wright
"Valley of the Shadow"
The date for the awards ceremony will be announced in a later issue.

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What the hell is this?

Well, we know what it is, but this little statement carved into a wall sculpture in Barlow made us chuckle. Oh yeah, we do not condone vandalism, yadda yadda.

If you have any suggestions for 'What the hell is this' then email
Angiepoo@dazedandconfused.com.