

'Conspirator' unfolds history

By John Simmons
Copy Editor

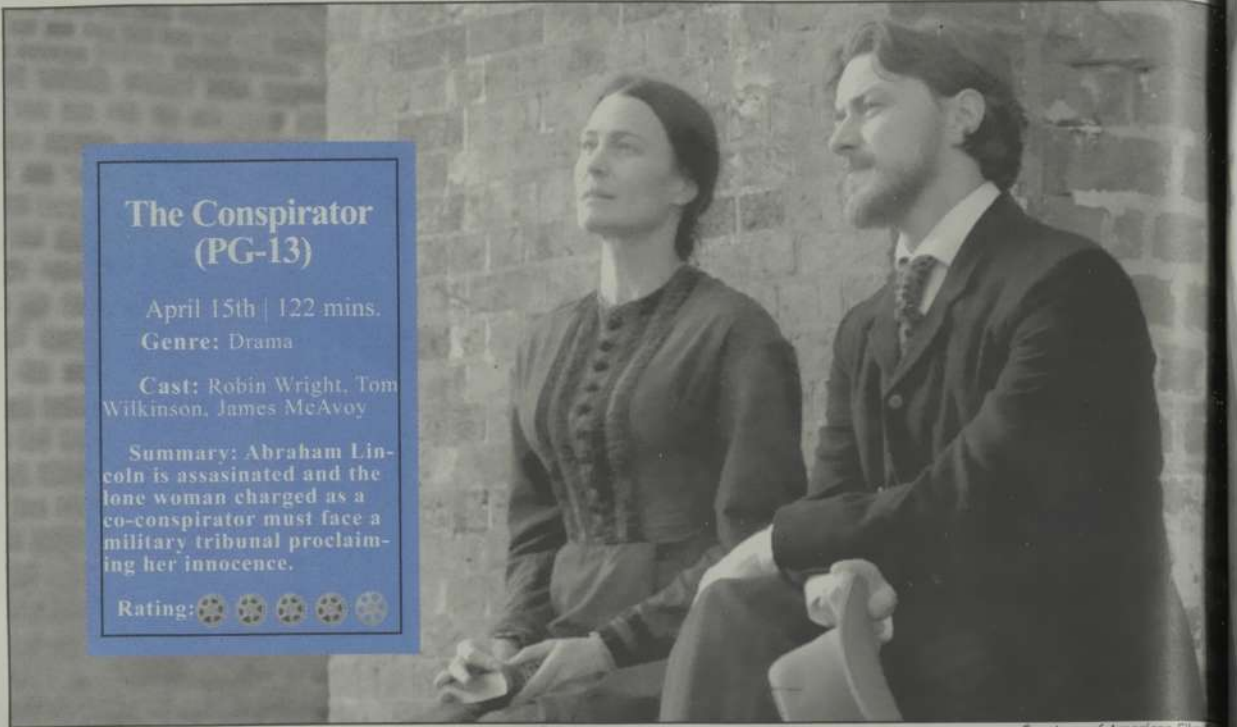
Few films these days seem to have any sort of merit to them. We are so constantly bombarded with such drivel as "Grown Ups" and "Sex and the City 2" that we forget what a good movie looks like. But that's where "The Conspirator" sweeps in and reminds us all that film companies can, indeed, still achieve excellence.

"The Conspirator" is the debut film of the American Film Company, which produces feature films on true stories from American history. The company believes that real life is often more compelling than fiction, and I for one, have to agree with them.

Highlighting a dark time in our nation's past and the past of our judicial system, the film tells the story of Mary Surratt (Robin Wright), the only woman charged as a co-conspirator in the Abraham Lincoln assassination and the first woman to be executed by the United States federal government. Mary was the proprietor of the boarding house where several of the conspirators had stayed leading up to the assassination and was the mother of conspirator John Surratt.

The story begins with the Lincoln assassination itself and then proceeds from there, focusing mainly on the trial of Mary. She is given a military tribunal rather than a civilian trial, and her judges are all men who served under Lincoln.

Senator Reverdy Johnson (Tom Wilkinson) believes Mary should not be tried in a military trial but could not take the case himself because he was a Southerner and would negatively impact her case as a result, so he has his mentee Frederick Aiken (James McAvoy), a Union war-hero, take it. Frederick is reluctant at best because of the crimes she is accused of and the damage it may do to his



The Conspirator (PG-13)

April 15th | 122 mins.
Genre: Drama

Cast: Robin Wright, Tom Wilkinson, James McAvoy

Summary: Abraham Lincoln is assassinated and the lone woman charged as a co-conspirator must face a military tribunal proclaiming her innocence.

Rating: ⭐⭐⭐⭐

career, but he eventually agrees.

As the film progresses it becomes more and more apparent that the evidence against Mary is largely circumstantial: a picture of John Wilkes Booth found in her boarding home, an account of a private conversation with a known drunk in which she allegedly made some incriminating remarks, her failure to recognize at night a man who had been staying in her boarding house in disguise and under a false name.

Unfortunately for Mary and her lawyer, the jury had already made up their minds on the subject of her guilt.

The worst part of it all is not that she was executed but that there was no way of proving she was guilty.

She was convicted as a scapegoat for her son's crimes and died for no reason other than to appease the bloodlust of a grieving nation.

Overall, the acting in "The Conspirator" is strong. McAvoy proved to be a pleasant surprise. I was a little dubious about whether he could handle a leading role as I have not seen him in anything big, but he certainly rose to the occasion. His scenes with Wright are very touching at times, and his courtroom speeches are some of the best in the film.

Wright is the one who truly shined, though. She is amazing in her role and brings such poise and devotion to the character of Mary that it is hard not to be in awe every

time she's on camera. Although she wasn't the main character, Wright carried the film. It was her powerful and moving performance that brought true emotional weight to the movie.

There were a few casting decisions that I found odd, such as Justin Long and Alexis Bledel as Frederick's best friend and wife, respectively. They are both fine actors in their own right, but I felt that they (especially Long) did not suit the mood or intensity required for the film.

Despite those poor casting choices, the cast as a whole succeeded in bringing history to life, which is hard to do. At times I was on the edge of my seat as the action unfolded,

caught up in every word of the trial and anxiously hoping that something Frederick said would have impact on the tribunal and them in her favor.

For most of the film I was utterly infuriated about the rigidity of it all, which is a testament to the script writing, the acting, the directing (done by the actor Robert Redford, founder of Sundance Film Festival).

A movie has not affected me this in a very long time, and as the theater was inspired to go into the world and do something to help bring an end to injustices like this. That's when you know you have a good film on your hands when it truly inspires you to act

Courtesy of American Film Company

Students recommend top ten best movies you've never seen

By Brittany Anderson
The Clackamas Print

Have you ever been told to see a movie but never got around to it? Most of us forget or simply get too busy. Others blow the suggestion off; but should you? What makes a movie so great that everyone needs to see it? And what movies make this list?

Digital Multimedia Communications instructor Thomas Wasson is hoping that some will look in to the following: "Street of Crocodiles," by the Quay Brothers; "Madame Putli," made in 2007 by Lavis and Szczerbowski; "A Movie," by Bruce Connor; "Scorpio Rising," by Kenneth Anger and "Peter and the Wolf," the 2006 version by Susie Templeten. The above movies are all animated.

"I'm kind of a geek when it comes to the obscure animated films," Wasson said. "Most of these are masterpieces and should be watched. They fit in this area of film. It's like an experimental area that expands your mind. They will change your entire concept of what a movie is."

Some have a quite different view of what the greatest movies that most have never seen are. Some, like Clackamas Community College student Jessica Porter, said, "I don't watch too many movies, but I've never gotten to the end of 'Monty Python and the Holy Grail.'"

Other CCC students such as Trent Beaver, Ethan Reviere, Anthony Headrick and Aria Kelland were able to come up with a list of 12 fantastic movies in a matter of minutes. Headrick said, "Anything by Gene Wilder or Mel Brooks should be on the list."

The top ten best movies most people have



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never seen are:

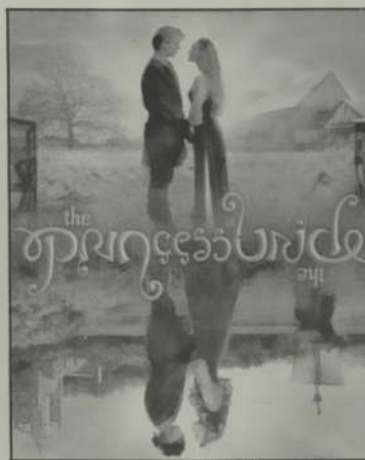
"This is Spinal Tap," a mockumentary film about a band trying to make it big and their adventures while on tour.

"The Princess Bride," a positively hilarious story. Mix together several bandits, a pirate, true love, revenge, a big-headed prince and his unwilling princess, and you know something great is to come.

"Space Balls," a "Star Wars" spoof where in a princess is captured and one man and his loveable companion are her and her world's only hope.

"Donnie Darko," a serious film that focuses on the main character and his delusional visions. This story follows his path to find meaning and significance, along with an obsession with what the future holds.

"Monty Python and the Holy Grail" portrays the story of King Arthur riding around



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the country side, banging coconuts together to mimic the sound of a horse and collecting Knights of the Round Table, all during his quest to find the Holy Grail.

"Robin Hood Men in Tights," a spoof of the classic story of Robin Hood: how he meets Little John, rights the kingdom and finds his true love. Chastity belt and genitalia jokes are definitely in there so get ready to laugh.

"Schindler's List," the story of a Nazi scientist who doesn't believe in the Nazi cause and his journey to save those he can from the horror of concentration camps.

"Pulp Fiction" is an ironic mix of humor and violence. The movie has a lot of swearing, guns and everyone is set on the possession of a locked briefcase, one of which includes a crime boss and his rather violent associates.

"Blazing Saddles," a spoof western movie



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with racial tension, which goes through several movie sets and has good evil and Mel Brooks' "Young Frankenstein," a doctor who is ashamed of his family history must go through a will. The witty word play throughout gives this clever take on "Frankenstein" humorous, if not brilliant, feel.

"Rocky Horror Picture Show," the story of an unsuspecting engaged couple who find themselves in the middle of nowhere. They end up in a mansion containing a transvestite and his friends. When events force them to stay the night, the trouble really begins.

Other movies to check out include "The Gingerdead Man," "Strange Brew," "Mallrats," "Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory," "Top Gun," "Camp Nowhere," "Fat Camp," "Can't Buy Me Love" and "Monkeys."