

Movies

Gere's 'David' an unemotional bore

By SHAWN BEHLEN
Co-Editor

Apparently, two heads are still better than one — especially if you can whack them off your enemies so that they go bouncing in the sand.

And there dies the appeal of "King David" — in the sand. Director Bruce Beresford ("Breaker Morant" and "Tender Mercies") has said that he set out to make this film as realistic as possible, forsaking the usual grandeur, majesty and scope associated with a biblical epic. Well, it is realistic — painfully so. By taking away the mystery and simplifying the subject matter, Beresford has made a film that is incredibly emotionless and stale, despite the extreme amounts of violence, blood and aforementioned bodyless heads.

We first see David as a young teenager. At this time, he is played by English actor Ian Sears, who will never grow up to look like Richard Gere. Anyway, David is tending his father's sheep and the prophet Samuel arrives to anoint him as the future king. He is then taken to the site of the battle between the Israelites and the Philistines to sing for King Saul.

The next morning, David hears the single combat challenge from Goliath's champion and, inspired by Samuel's prophecy, he steps forward and kills Goliath. This scene, filmed quite effectively, is one of the best in the film and marks the start of the great friendship between David and Saul's son, Jonathan.

We then see David ten years later. He is now played by Gere and is serving in Saul's army



David (Richard Gere) marries his first wife, Michal (Cherie Lunghi), who is the daughter of Saul (Edward Woodward) and Ahinoab (Aiche Nana).

with distinction. David's fame eventually eclipses Saul's and on David's wedding night to Saul's daughter, Saul orders his arrest. But with Jonathan's help, David escapes. For some years, David and his followers live in the wilderness and are tracked by Saul.

Eventually, however, David forms an alliance with the King of the Philistines. When the Philistines, without David's help, defeat Saul's troops, killing both Saul and Jonathan, David is crowned King of Is-

rael. In triumph, he strips down to a loin cloth and dances into the city. At this point, girls, you better look good because this is as much of the infamous Gere flesh as we get to see.

Once he's king, David is mostly concerned with building a temple to house the Ark of the Covenant. That is until he sees Bathsheba bathing. Struck by her beauty (which could strike a blind man), he contrives to have her husband killed in battle and marries

her. Meanwhile, David's daughter is raped by her half-brother, Amnon. Absalom, David's oldest son, kills Amnon in return, forcing David to banish him to Hebron. Beresford directs all of this in the coldest way possible.

Then Absalom plans a rebellion, but he and his army are ambushed and massacred. Lucky Absalom gets speared through the head with several tree branches. Lucky us get to see him dangle there, still alive, for quite a while. Upset over

the death of his favorite son, David then destroys the model of the temple for the Ark of the Covenant.

We then see David 40 years later and are told that, during that time, he has carried out the wishes of the prophets — "a light unto his people, like the light of the sun." I might be wrong, but it seems to me that 40 years is a rather large chunk of someone's life to sum up with one sentence, especially when trying to give "the full story of the man." Anyway, he dies.

By then, I didn't care. And most of the blame I place on Gere. Beresford's straitforward, bash-heads approach might have worked had Gere's performance been a great one. The proof of that is Edward Woodward's portrayal of King Saul. Woodward gives a tremendous performance as the king, going through varying degrees of madness and emotional states. When he is on the screen, the story comes alive and the people seem more important than the events.

Gere, however, plays David as one-dimensional and emotionless. When he dances through the streets or trashes the model of the temple, it is hard not to laugh because it is so obviously Richard Gere we are watching and not King David. It's not that I don't admire Gere's ability (I thought he was great in "Cotton Club"), but this is simply a case of miscasting. Some critics have dubbed this film "Israeli Gigolo" and they have good reason to. The only difference between Gere's approach to "American Gigolo" and "King David" is that in "King David" he has no pants to take off. **A-**

Music

By WALTER LEE SMITH
Music Reviewer

Minneapolis is the new breeding ground for a very incestuous kind of urban contemporary music. And Jesse Johnson reveals his musical liaisons in his self-produced debut album, "Jesse Johnson's Revue."

Johnson can be seen playing lead guitar for the Time in the Prince movie, "Purple Rain." On his newly released 8-song LP, Johnson teams up with other men out of Time, and creates a perfect cross between the styles of his musical mentors.

Because he co-wrote The Time's hits, "The Bird" and



Jessie Johnson's Review
Jessie Johnson

"Jungle Love," his new music is in much the same vein. Pieces of Prince are reflected in the band member's attire and song ideas, although the lyrics never get quite as lewd.

"Be Your Man" and "Let's Have Some Fun" are the strongest cuts on this dance-oriented album. While Jesse Johnson is good, not much sets him apart from Prince *et al.*

Joan Armatrading has discovered the secret to success in her newest release, "Secret Secrets." In the last decade or so that she's been recording, she consistently has received praise from music critics and apathy from record buyers. However,



Secret Secrets
Joan Armatrading

with her new rock-directed musical stance, she is sure to attract and maintain the attention of new listeners.

The album's cast is impressive; the talents of members from Simple Minds, Paul Young, Peter Gabriel and Joe Jackson all augment Armatrading's wonderfully powerful voice. Producer Mike Howlett manages to capture an intense and compelling mood to create Armatrading's strongest and most accessible album to date.

"Secret Secrets" contains no artificial fillers or by-products and is guaranteed to be 100% fun and excitement. This LP should *not* be ignored. **A-**