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Pitt bites into success with 'Vampire'

By **Jeremy Keddie**
THE BATTALION

"Interview with the Vampire" Starring: Tom Cruise, Brad Pitt, Christian Slater and Kirsten Dunst Directed by Neil Jordan
Rated: R
Playing at Schulman VI and Hollywood
*** (out of five)

The image of the vampire has played many roles throughout its ancient myth, that of romance, fear and evil. But never before has a vampire been seen as the hero, at least not until Anne Rice's "Interview with the Vampire," the first book of a series, "The Vampire Chronicles."

The film version of the book begins with Louis de Pointe du Lac, played by Brad Pitt, a vampire that claims to have experienced the highs and lows of possessing "the gift of darkness" for more than two centuries. Once welcomed, the "gift" has troubled Louis and he decides to tell his story to a present-day reporter, played by Christian Slater.

The film proceeds as Louis describes to the interviewer how he became a vampire and his encounters since.

His story begins in the 18th century with his last day as a mortal. Devastated by the loss of his daughter and wife, he welcomes

death, as he is unable to deal with the pain of his losses.

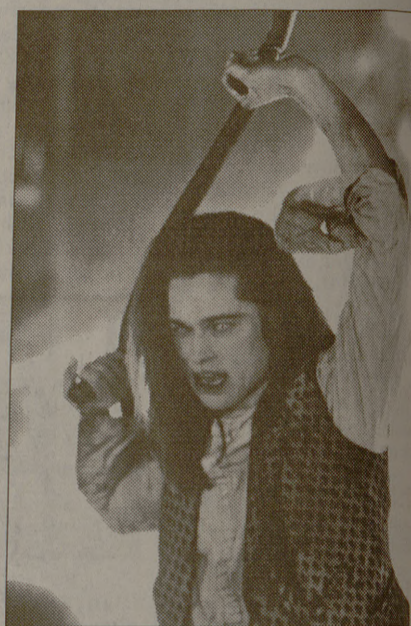
Enter Lestat, played by Tom Cruise, who takes advantage of Louis' quest for death. Lestat, a vampire who preys upon the innocent and gives "the gift of darkness" to those who beg for it, takes Louis' life. As he is about to die, Louis begs for "the gift of darkness."

The two become companions of immortality, as Louis needs to learn the ways of the vampire. However, their lifestyles do not compliment each other. Lestat is witty, sardonic and enjoys the endless adventures of victimizing at will. Louis is compassionate and realizes the hardships of his lifestyle, which captivates the audience into a new perspective about vampires.

The tension between Lestat and Louis is centered around the vampires' feeding. Louis does not want to prey upon humans and chooses to seek his blood from chickens and rodents.

As Lestat grows bored of Louis' complaints of the newly-acquired lifestyle, a new pupil is acquired in Claudia, a young girl played by Kirsten Dunst. Together, the three vampires search New Orleans at night for victims. One body after another drops and the movie becomes quite situationally humorous.

But after the laughter has died, Claudia



Brad Pitt in "Interview with the Vampire" realizes that Lestat has manipulated and forced her and Louis to accompany him everywhere. Claudia becomes fed up with Lestat's control and plots to kill him. After two attempts to rid themselves of Lestat, Claudia and Louis set off for Paris in search of an answer to the mystery of their beginnings.

As Louis, Pitt has finally made a breakthrough role other than a stoned sex symbol. His passion for life and confusion of the dead carries the movie, at times making the audience feel sorry for him.

Similarly, Dunst's performance lifts the character of Claudia. She upstages Cruise as she portrays her mental aging within a child's body well.

The special effects are disappointing, with an over-abundance of fire, the typical regeneration of wounds and growth of vampire teeth with computer effects.

The ability of vampires to fly is not complimenting, leaving the audience wondering when movies will catch up. Had Steven Spielberg been in charge, we might be able to expect more.

And the movie is disappointing without the knowledge of Rice's later novels, and the ending becomes meaningless, leaving the audience confused.

But should "Interview with the Vampire" become successful, it will set the scene well for sequels and leave the audience begging for more.



Tom Cruise plays Lestat in the film adaptation of Anne Rice's novel "Interview with the Vampire"

Benoit keeping blues traditions alive

By **Katherine Arnold**
THE BATTALION

Louisiana blues guitarist Tab Benoit combines cajun sound and jazzy guitar riffs to prove that the blues will never die.

Benoit is currently on tour promoting his second album, "What I Live For," which was released in June, and will be playing at 3rd Floor Cantina Saturday, Nov. 19.

Benoit's music is a melodramatic mix of blues, cajun influence and rock. His voice adds a hard sound

that complements his strong guitar playing.

The blues have always come easy for Benoit, simply because his lyrics and music come from his experiences.

"I don't try to concentrate hard on my lyrics," Benoit said. "I just write whatever comes to mind."

He started playing the guitar when he was nine years old. Benoit was in a church in his hometown of Houma, La. before services one Sunday, where he was going to perform for the congregation.

He turned up the microphone and started playing. The priest came running in, kicked Benoit out, and told him he was playing the devil's music. Benoit was

back the next week with his acoustic guitar.

Benoit's audiences have been much more accepting since. He finds a crowd of blues fans in most places he travels.

"Blues fans are kind of picky," Benoit said. "If it ain't the real thing, they ain't coming out. We've had a good crowd pretty much everywhere."

"Nice and Warm," Benoit's debut album, has sold more than 70,000 copies. His current album, featuring the hit single, "Cross the Line," has already sold about 45,000 copies.

Benoit said that despite having musical influences, his music is his own.

"I have always liked guys

like Buddy Guy, Albert King, and John Lee Hooker," Benoit said. "I listen to their music a lot, but I just play whatever I hear in my head."

Newcomers to his music will get much more from the live concert than from his recorded music, Benoit said.

"The album just doesn't compare to the live show," he said. "You get so much more energy from the live performance. I have a lot of fun up on stage."

The blues are going to be around for a while, Benoit said. "Blues is the only true American music," Benoit said. "It sparked rock'n'roll, country and jazz. The blues are gonna be around forever."



Tab Benoit

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