

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

Page 3 • Thursday, June 17, 2004



"The Stepford Wives"
Starring Nicole Kidman, Matthew Broderick, Glenn Close
Paramount Pictures and Dreamworks Pictures



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Review by Jimmy Hissong

Few films offer the audience the chance to see the decapitation of a silver screen icon, but with advancements in CGI technology, the list seems to be growing longer. Despite this seemingly gruesome notion, the 2004 release of "The Stepford Wives" actually marks a transition from its original roots in the horror genre.

Joanna Eberhard (Kidman), a television programming demigod, finds herself in the queer surroundings of the town Stepford, Conn. after losing her job and suffering a nervous breakdown. The town seems all too perfect for the suspicious Joanna, so naturally she attempts to unearth the confidential aspects of the town's secretive Men's Club. Aided by a sharp-witted, slovenly novelist (Bette Midler) and a flamboyant, fashion-conscious homosexual (Roger Bart), she finds a complete automaton factory in the basement of the organization.

Directed by Frank Oz (The Score/Dirty Rotten Scoundrels/and yes, the voices of Yoda and Miss Piggy) the 2004 film revisits the 1975 film of the same title inspired by Ira Levin's novel, featuring dimly lit hallways, menacing characters, and other suspense building factors, but the 2004 film utilizes comedy to hold the audience's attention. However, simply labeling the film a comedy is not enough to evoke laughter from spectators between mouthfuls of Junior Mints and popcorn.

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"Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban"
Starring Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson and Rupert Grint
Warner Bros. Studios

Review by Jose Cruz

If the first two "Harry Potter" films can be described as bubble gum, then this film is described as chewing tobacco, definitely cooler and more grown up, but ultimately dangerous.

Reprising their lead roles from the first two "Harry Potter" films are Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint and Emma Watson as Harry Potter, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, respectively. Alfonso Cuarón directs the third movie based on the third book from the popular series by J.K. Rowling. This time a dangerous wizard, Sirius Black (Gary Oldman), has escaped from Azkaban Prison, and is searching for Harry and wants him dead.

This film is dark, dank and dirty. The sun only shows up for three scenes throughout the film. While the first two "Harry Potter" films were sparkling clean, Cuarón chooses instead to shed the superficial layer and portray a more realistic magical world.

The streets are wet and the stone buildings are mossy. The costumes look worn and scruffy. The sets look dilapidated and old. Cuarón makes it easy for the viewer to believe this world has been lived in and immerse himself in the story. This is a far less pretentious magical world than that of the first two films.

The dark look of the film matches the subject matter. Harry begins to feel the weight of his powers on his shoulders. Harry frequently plummets into fits of rage whenever his long deceased parents are mentioned. Also, as if a murderous wizard after your head wasn't enough, Harry must deal with soul-sucking Dementors hanging around school. The darkness of this film hints at the burden Harry begins to feel as a part of growing up alone. Cuarón's touch points out that magic is not all fun and games.

Cuarón places Harry inside a world thriving with life of its own instead of just serving as a backdrop for Harry's adventures. He brings this far away imaginary world closer to the viewer. Cuarón's frequent use of wide-angle lenses allow for the viewer to revel in the rich detail of this world. "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" invites the viewer for an enchanting stay in a lush, magical world that envelops the viewer.



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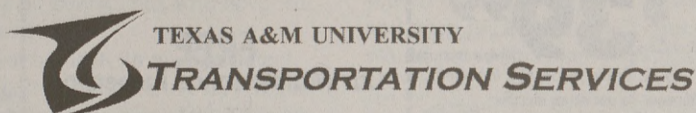
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