"King Arthur" Starring Clive Owen, Keira Knightley, Ioan Gruffudd **Touchstone Pictures/Jerry Bruckheimer Films**

Review by David Barry

Two months behind "Troy," "King Arthur" is the summer's second course of clanging swordfights and epic battles. "King Arthur," a PG-13 rated movie, probably maxes out its bloodshed quota with the MPAA. Unfortunately, there is little else to generate excitement in this dreary, two-hour slog through ancient Britain.

A brief history lesson at the movie's beginning reveals that Arthur and his knights were plucked from their homes in Eastern Europe as youths and sent to defend the Roman Empire's territory in Britain.

The movie jumps ahead 15 years and rejoins Arthur (Clive

Owen) and his band of knights as they near the end of their military service to Rome. They are dark, bitter men, sick of fighting must complete one last mission—rescue a Roman official from a for Rome and ready to go home.

Before they are freed by their Roman masters, however, they



PHOTO COURTESY: TOUCHSTONE PICTURES

Owen (right) and Knightley star in the action-adventure "King Arthur.

remote outpost before it is overrun by the murderous Saxons. At the Roman outpost, Arthur finds the lovely Guinevere (Kei-

ra Knightly) locked in a dungeon. A refreshingly strongheroine, Guinevere quickly recovers from her incarceration begins to cast lusty looks at Arthur and Lancelot (loan) fudd). Guinevere's legendary love triangle could have things interesting, but the movie quietly shuffles that plot the bottom of the stack.

After all, there are more important things: The Saxons at BOIS F proaching (we can hear them banging on their drums in the tration ground), and that means the director can milk a few more tonal rul scenes from the movie before the credits roll. ional 1

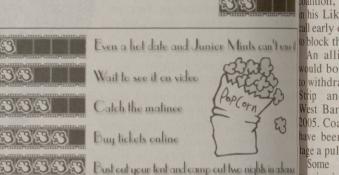
Some of the action scenes are fun to watch, like one battle states tween knights and Saxons on a frozen lake. Others are boring ban on predictable, with confusing, jumpy camerawork that makes for Enviro pleasant viewing. The knights are a mixed bag of characters.0; is believable as Arthur, and Gruffudd succeeds as handsom, ndustry g nest Lancelot. His verbal jousting with Bors (Ray Winstone), Under alleged father of as many as a dozen bastard children, provid

Bors tries to serve up the comic relief, but he is no knight of national Monty Python sort - his bawdy humor falls flat on its face will wou one joke in the movie worth laughing at belongs to Guinever. The ru remaining knights, who receive only flashes of camera time, the Clinto lifeless as chess pieces

Merlin (Stephen Dillane), the leader of the body-pain forest-dwelling pagan Woads, plays a minor role in the s first as enemy and then as ally of the knights. The real vil is left up to Cerdic (Stellan Skarsgard) and his ferocious & army. Skarsgard manages to energize the plodding script, an army maintains an invisible, driving presence that helps

When the Saxons are off screen, and their presence is kn By Gav only by the distant beating of drums, the audience may even THE AS a tinge of suspense.

Unfortunately, that suspense is tossed aside once the amy JERUS pears in the open, and "King Arthur" becomes another uning good v. evil melee. londay in



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