

Polanski fails to capture Hitchcock spirit in *Frantic*

by kurt hildebrand
editor

Roman Polanski's *Frantic*, isn't. It isn't frantic. For a thriller, it isn't terribly thrilling, and for a movie in the Hitchcock tradition, it is not.

It is a ponderous at-

tempt at the Hitchcock tradition. It is also a black look at travel abroad.

The film stars Harrison Ford as an American doctor in search of his wife (played by Betty Buckley), who has mysteriously disappeared from their hotel room.

During the search, Ford encounters punker-with-a-heart-of-gold Michelle, (played by newcomer Emmanuelle Seigner).

The film is too slow. Too slow for the title to be sure.

While Hitchcock took his time with a film, he used that time well to build

a sense of suspense. Polanski, on the other hand, uses the time to show pretty pictures of Paris, to build moods, not suspense.

The one thing which makes this movie worth seeing is Harrison Ford.

Ford's versatility as an

actor gives him the strength to virtually carry the rest of the film, even through a predictable plot and a very slow build to the climax.

One thing *Frantic* could very easily be is a black comedy on the troubles with travel and the dif-

ferences in cultures, but I don't think that was Polanski's intention at all.

But while the film may have captured some of Hitchcock's humor, it has none of his terror.

A sad tribute to the man, but all in all a fairly fair movie.

Divine's last hurrah in *Hairspray*

by c.g. reynolds
staff writer

Think of John Waters and you think of weird, somewhat vulgar movies starring the weird, vulgar personage of Divine, the queen of schlock-shock cinema. I was somewhere in between when I went to the opening night of *Hairspray*, his newest and by far most accessible film. *Hairspray* is a fun, lively film of pop life in 1963 Baltimore that stands to finally focus the limelight on Waters and the late, great Divine.

As the story begins, it is seemingly another teenage outcast film, with

Tracy Turnblad and Penny Pingleton yearning to be part of the *Corny Collins Show*, a local American Bandstand-type show featuring glamorous teenage dancers. At this point, the story branches into several different directions, ranging from Tracy earning the respect of her grouchy mother (Divine), to a venomous rivalry between Tracy and Amber, to the issue of segregation on the *Corny Collins Show*, along with some other delightful nuances that don't interfere with the snappy pacing of all various subplots.

The key to the appeal of *Hairspray* has to be the

masterful duplication of early 60's shlock with just the right tongue-in-cheek flair. It communicates the first rising vibes of social upheaval in the early 60's with the same naivete as it uses to portray blossoming teenage sexuality, as in the scene where Penny urges Seaweed, her black boyfriend to "go to second". In its way, *Hairspray* is as valid a depiction of the absurdity of life and 1963 as *American Graffiti*, while remaining faithful to the nostalgic flavor of the era.

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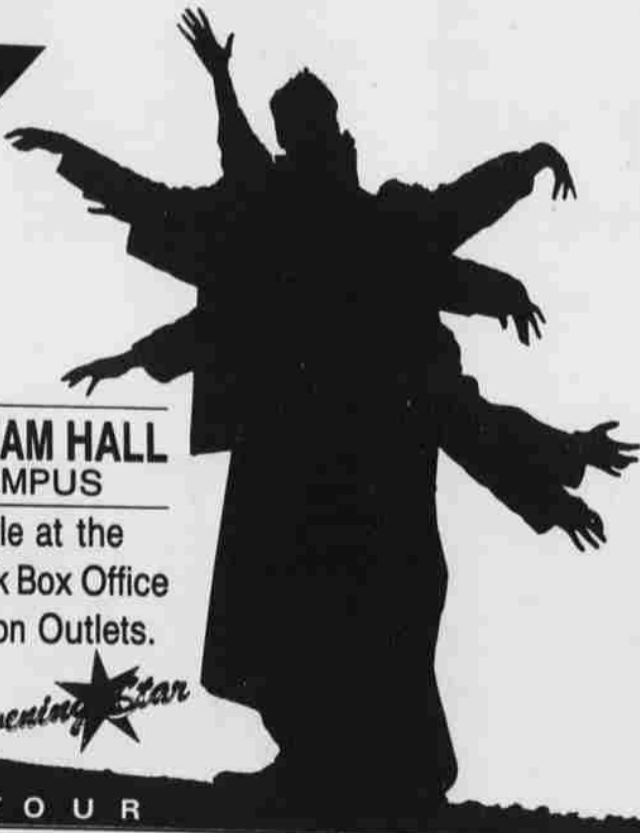
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