

LET'S GO! MOVIES

Branagh fashions an overwrought Frankenstein



JOHN MONAGHAN

faithful adaptation yet of Mary Shelley's classic horror novel.

He has also created his own monster, a lumbering, overwrought mass of camera movement and posturing that can sometimes startle you with its energy. Call it an ambitious experiment gone awry.

His Victor Frankenstein, unlike the brooding loner of Shelley's book, is a handsome, popular young man ready to conquer the world. His professors are shocked by his interest in unorthodox scientific theories, but one man (an amazing turn by John Cusack) takes him seriously.

Obtaining his "raw materials" from graveyards and hospitals,

Victor fashions the monster (Robert DeNiro) in an attic laboratory stocked with primitive electrical instruments. The creature, raised skyward by pulleys, shuffles across the ceiling before landing in a fluid-filled sarcophagus.

Branagh shows the monster's first steps in an endless series of shots that certainly convey the creature's awkwardness but also grate on the audience. When the doctor shuns him, the monster begins his legendary rampage.

Full of energy and enthusiasm, this "Frankenstein" overdoes on everything, but subtlety (quite a claim from the one critic who actually enjoyed Francis Ford Coppola's "Dracula"). Branagh blends a classical approach to costumes and settings with MTV-style jump cuts and camera movement, best shown in his chronic overuse of 360-degree setups where the camera spins around the actors.

In his equally dirkier role as Victor, Branagh often seems more inspired by Shakespeare than Shelley. He makes much of the scientist's tragic/heroic qualities,

even providing men who follow his orders and ride ahead to prepare his room for the night.

DeNiro, in contrast, plays the Method monster with a believable mix of violent rage and a capacity for "more love than you could ever imagine." When all else goes wrong in the movie, DeNiro perfectly conveys the empathy that the author intended.

Shelley purists will have trouble with a major story change near the end, but this is Branagh's most interesting move in the film. It's helped by a provocative performance from Merchant/Ivory regular Helena Bonham Carter as Victor's fiancée Elizabeth.

Branagh has built a reputation on making Shakespeare accessible for modern audiences.

"Frankenstein," never a hard sell, doesn't need all this hyperactivity.

If you have a comment for John Monaghan, call him at 953-2047, mailbox 1866, on a Touch-Tone phone, or write to him care of Let's Go, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36221 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150.



DAVID APPELBY

Epic drama: Victor Frankenstein's (Kenneth Branagh) obsessive desire to create life leads to tragedy for all those he loves in Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein," a TriStar Pictures release.

Screen Scene

A sampling of what's playing at alternative movie theaters across metro Detroit as reviewed by John Monaghan.

DETROIT FILM THEATER

Detroit Institute of Arts, 6200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call (313) 833-2323 for information.

(83)

"Hoop Dreams" (USA — 1994). 7 p.m. Nov. 11; 3 and 7 p.m. Nov. 12/13. This acclaimed new documentary follows two young Chicago basketball prodigies through their high-school years and into the hoped-for glory of their college careers.

"Crash" (New Zealand — 1992). 7 p.m. Nov. 14. A car accident on a New Zealand road leads to a bizarre labyrinth of passion, guilt and revenge.

MADONNA UNIVERSITY

36600 Schoolcraft, Livonia. Call (313) 591-5000. (Free)

"An Angel at My Table" (New Zealand — 1990). 1:30 and 7 p.m. Nov. 10. Before she made "The Piano," director Jane Campion created this unforgettable portrait of New Zealand author Janet Frame. Misdiagnosed with several mental disorders, Frame (played by Kerry Fox) finally emerges as a gifted writer.

MAIN ART THEATER

118 N. Main St. at 11 Mile Road, Royal Oak. Films play through at least Thursday, unless noted otherwise. Call (810) 542-0180 for information and show times. (\$8.50; \$4 students and matinee; \$3 twilight)

"Bullets Over Broadway" (USA — 1994). Woody Allen's latest, set in the 1920s, finds an ambitious playwright (John Cusack) offered the chance to direct his own play. The only hitch: he has to cast a mobster's girlfriend in a key role.

"Erotique" (USA — 1994). The female sexual psyche is explored in a trio of short works by award-winning filmmakers Lizzy Borden, Monika Truitt and Claire Law.

"Second Best" (USA — 1994). William Hurt stars in this drama about a single man who, desiring a family, sets out to prove himself a fit parent for a troubled young boy.



NEST PRODUCTIONS INC.

Animated feature: Puffin (Steven Vinovich), Speed the turtle (Steven Wright) and Jean-Bob the frog (John Cusack) come to the aid of Princess Odette in Nest Entertainment and New Line Cinema's animated film "The Swan Princess."

MAPLE THEATRE

1135 W. Maple, Bloomfield. All titles play through at least next Thursday. Call (810) 855-0900 for information. (\$6; \$2.95 twilight)

"Clerks" (USA — 1994). This low-budget comedy depicts an endless day-long shift for two presently employed slackers. One takes fairly seriously his job at a convenience store, mostly selling cigarettes to the locals. His friend, meanwhile, battles the boredom by heaping every conceivable abuse upon hapless customers.

"The Shawshank Redemption" (USA — 1994). Tim Robbins and Morgan Freeman star in this drama, based on a novella by Stephen King, about a new arrival and a lifer in a maximum security prison in the 1950s.

"Quiz Show" (USA — 1994). Robert Redford's film about the 1950s quiz show scandal.

RABBIT COFFEEHOUSE

22010 Harper, St. Clair Shores. Call (810) 779-0707 for information. (Free)

Warner Bros. Cartoon Festival, 10 p.m. Nov. 14. Two hours of some of the most inventive comic animation ever created, featuring Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, and some rarely screened surprises.

UNITED ARTISTS OAKLAND MALL

578 Fourteen Mile at John R, Madison Heights. Call (810) 585-7040 for information. (\$6; \$3.75 for shows before 6 p.m.)

"... And God Spoke" (USA — 1994). In this mock documentary, a group of low-budget moviemakers try to mount a Biblical epic for the 1990s. Produced and directed by Birmingham natives Mark and Arthur Borman.

Coming Attractions



There's something for everyone at the movies. Here's a list of what's in the wings:

Opening Friday, Nov. 11

"The Santa Clause" — A divorced father competing for his son's affection ends up spending a magical night playing Santa only to learn it's no temporary job. With Tim Allen.

"Interview with the Vampire" — A gothic thriller from the Ann Rice novel about a vampire who describes his 200-year life to a newspaper reporter. Stars Tom Cruise.

Opening Friday, Nov. 18

"Miracle on 34th Street" — Remake of the 1947 holiday classic about a six-year-old's doubts about the existence of Santa Claus. Stars Richard Attenborough and Elisabeth Perkins.

IN PUTTING ON THIS SUIT AND ENTERING THE SLEIGH, THE WEARER WAIVES ANY AND ALL RIGHTS TO PREVIOUS IDENTITY, REAL OR

This Holiday's Biggest Comedy!

TIM ALLEN

Walt Disney PICTURES Presents

THE SANTA CLAUSE



WALT DISNEY PICTURES presents In Association with HOLLYWOOD PICTURES TIM ALLEN "THE SANTA CLAUSE" An OUTLAW Production
JOSEPH REINHOLD WENDY CRAYSON DAVID KRAMER PETER BOYLE Executive PRODUCERS RICHARD BAKER RICK MESSINA JAMES MILLER
Written by SYLVE BEAUVENOT & STEVE RODRIGUEZ Produced by BRIAN KELLY JEFFREY SILVER ROBERT NEWMYER Directed by JIM PASQUIN
CASTING BY JIM PASQUIN COSTUME DESIGNER JIM PASQUIN EDITOR JIM PASQUIN EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JIM PASQUIN PRODUCED BY JIM PASQUIN
COLUMBIA TRISTAR PICTURES PRESENTS A WALT DISNEY PICTURES FILM "THE SANTA CLAUSE" STARRING TIM ALLEN
FLORIDA TRISTAR PICTURES PRESENTS A WALT DISNEY PICTURES FILM "THE SANTA CLAUSE" STARRING TIM ALLEN

STARTS FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11TH			
AMC AUBURN	AMC LANSING	AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC SOUTHFIELD CITY
AMC BIRMINGHAM	AMC LANSING	AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC SOUTHFIELD CITY
AMC BIRMINGHAM	AMC LANSING	AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC SOUTHFIELD CITY
AMC BIRMINGHAM	AMC LANSING	AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC SOUTHFIELD CITY
AMC BIRMINGHAM	AMC LANSING	AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC SOUTHFIELD CITY
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AMC BIRMINGHAM	AMC LANSING	AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC SOUTHFIELD CITY
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AMC BIRMINGHAM	AMC LANSING	AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC SOUTHFIELD CITY
AMC BIRMINGHAM	AMC LANSING	AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC SOUTHFIELD CITY

Win 'Princess' tickets

"The Swan Princess" Opening Friday, Nov. 18 at metro Detroit movie theaters, is timeless tale of romance and adventure. A valiant prince battles against the forces of evil to find his one true love, a courageous princess who has been turned into a swan by a ruthless enchanter. With the help of three faithful friends from the forest, a French frog, a slow but determined turtle, and a plucky puffin, the Swan Princess and her handsome prince are reunited in a happy ending.

"The Swan Princess" is a children's tale about growing up. Write and tell us what you want

to do when you grow up to win tickets to see the movie, 7 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 15 at the United Artists Theaters at Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi.

All entries will receive a special thank-you gift from the "Swan Princess."

Send or fax entries to Keely Wygonik, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36221 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia, 48150 or fax (313) 691-7279, by Friday, Nov. 11. Winners will be notified by phone.

Call (313) 963-2106 if you have any questions.