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BERTRAND RUSSELL: "The time you enjoy wasting is not wasted time."

one franchise to RULE them ALL

'Lord of the Rings' movies revive the classic novels, once limited to fantasy enthusiasts

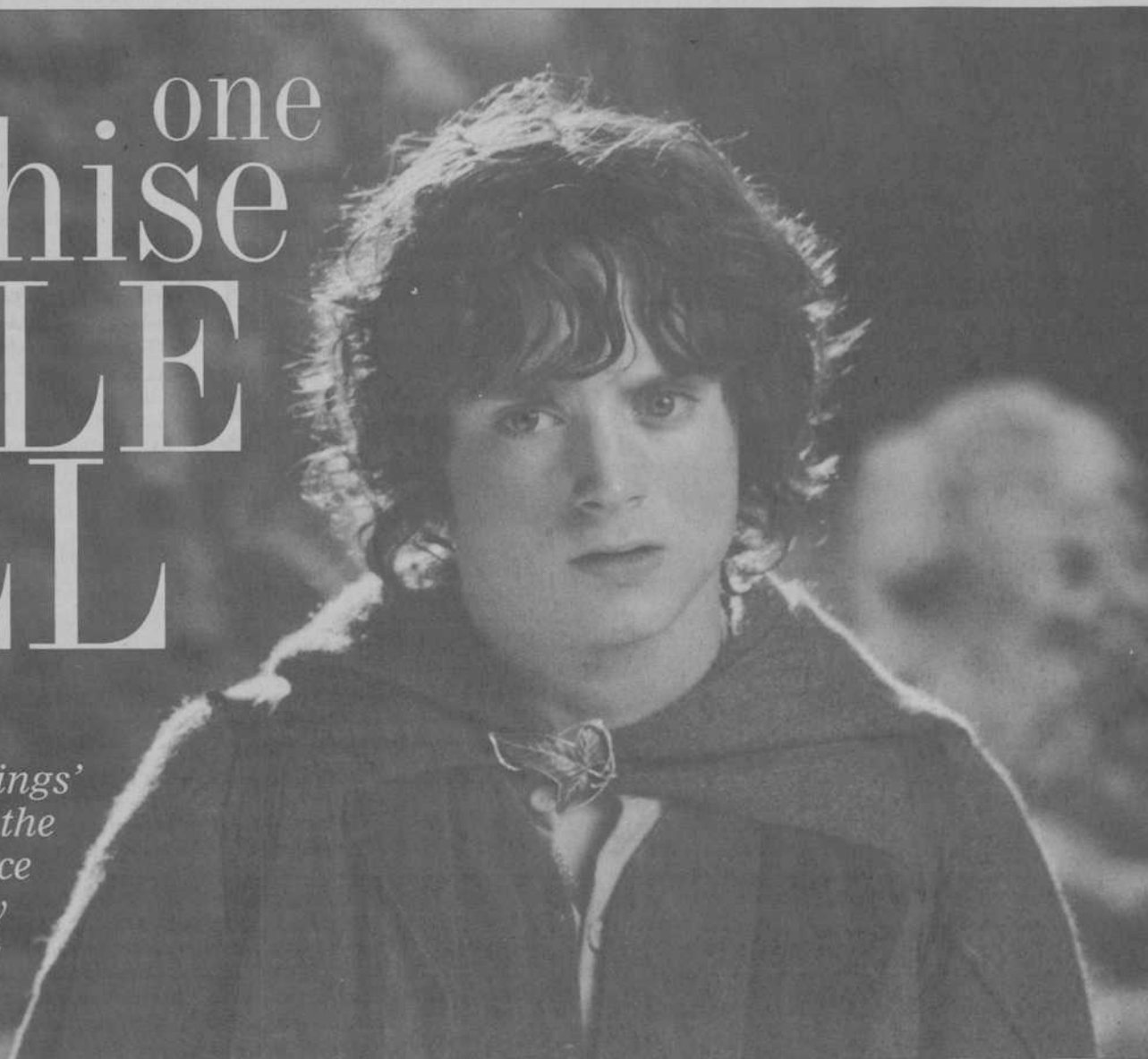


PHOTO COURTESY OF KRT CAMPUS

Elijah Wood, pictured here as Frodo Baggins in "The Two Towers," asked to keep every bit of makeup used to create his face.

BY BEN ANGSTADT

THE GAMECOCK

Fans of the "Lord of the Rings" books and movies know the now-famous quote: "One ring to rule them all."

However, in the past year, the better quote to describe the "Lord of the Rings" is "one franchise to rule them all." These stories that were once limited to the readers of fantasy literature have now infiltrated the mass market in a major way.

Since the theatrical release of "The Fellowship of the Ring" in 2001, "Lord of the Rings" has been everywhere. This new Ring-hysteria has spawned all forms of new products, including reprinted versions of the original books, action figures and multiple video games.

"The Fellowship of the Ring" DVD was a best seller when released in August 2002, and when four- and five-disc extended cut versions of the film were released in November, they were best sellers as well.

But the release of "Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers," the second installment of Peter Jackson's film trilogy, begs the question: Are the films really good enough to merit all this hype?

After viewing "The Two Towers," the answer is a resounding yes. The faster pace, intense action sequences and captivating plot will likely make the film a new favorite.

"The Two Towers" picks up right

where "Fellowship" left off. Hobbits Merry and Pippin have been taken captive by a traveling army of Orcs. The human Aragorn, dwarf Gimli and elf Legolas are hot on the Orcs' trail to try to recover their abducted friends. And Frodo and Samwise are well on their way to Mordor, the final destination in their quest to destroy the legendary One Ring.

"The Two Towers" also introduces a few new characters as well. The most significant of these is King Theoden and the region of Rohan — the next target of Saruman the White's evil army.

Gollum, the former owner of the "precious" One Ring, accompanies Frodo and Sam on their journey to destroy the ring. The Gollum character is computer-animated and, like the widely detested Jar Jar Binks of "Star Wars" fame, becomes, at times, an annoying, yet central figure in the film.

Gollum, representative of Gollum's ring-possessed side, does provide a few moments of comic relief as he is seen warring with his other personality, Smeagol, who represents what Gollum used to be before the ring changed him. The Smeagol/Gollum split is depicted as an almost schizophrenic condition in the movie, which is different from the book's depiction, yet it

proves effective.

As the film goes on, three separate story lines develop. Frodo and Sam travel ever closer to Mordor with the help of Gollum. Meanwhile, Merry and Pippin encounter the Ents, a race of moving, talking trees, who contemplate joining the fight against Saruman and Sauron. The most action-filled escapade, by far, is the journey of Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas, who travel to Rohan and encounter

the city's crippled King, Theoden. Theoden is being influenced by an advisor who has anything but the best interests of Rohan in mind. This story culminates in the epic battle of Helm's Deep, where Saruman's army attacks Helm's Deep, the legendary fortress of Rohan.

The minor differences between "The Two Towers" film and the book, while insignificant to observers of the movie, may grate on the nerves of devoted fans. The screenplay takes many liberties with the Elves and Dwarves, going so far as to include an army of Elves in the battle of Helm's Deep, which does not occur in the book. The personalities and significance of some of the supporting characters are

♦ TWO TOWERS, SEE PAGE 10

Are the films really good enough to merit all this hype? After viewing 'The Two Towers,' the answer is a resounding yes.

Middle Earth Inc.

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GRAPHIC BY DAVID STAGG/THE GAMECOCK
PHOTOS COURTESY OF KRT CAMPUS

BOOK REVIEW 'Lullaby' begins strong, falls flat



"LULLABY"

Chuck Palahniuk
★★★ out of ★★★★★

BY MEG MOORE
THE GAMECOCK

An ironic contrast to the book's soothing title, the cover of Chuck Palahniuk's latest novel "Lullaby" features the image of a neon yellow, dead bird flattened against a stark-white background.

While the morbidly curious may find such a cover intriguing, the discerning reader will recognize the cover image as a blatant warning: "Lullaby" is ultimately more bitter than sweet.

The book, which is the latest from the "Fight Club" author, hardly evokes a sense of comfort. Steeped in the supernatural, Palahniuk's latest work is as curiously engaging as it is strange, yet its original premise ultimately undermines its philosophical musings.

The novel chronicles the travels of a journalist, a real-estate agent and their occult-obsessed assistants.

Obviously, the main characters are not your typical gang of do-gooders — or bandits, for that matter. Instead, they are all troubled individuals who come together in response to a common calling.

An ancient culling song, a verbal curse of death, has surfaced amid the pages of a children's poetry anthology. Intrigued by this anthology's correlation with a string of sudden infant deaths, journalist Carl Streater realizes that at the scene of every death, page 27 appears to be the last page that was read in the book.

He investigates the poem on page 27 and soon realizes, and becomes burdened with, its power. If he so much as subconsciously recites the song's lyrics in his head, he is likely to kill someone.

His research introduces him to another carrier of this verbal plague — a real estate agent named Helen Boyle. Boyle; Streater; Boyle's assistant, Mona; and Mona's boyfriend embark on a mission to destroy all known copies of the culling song and expose all those who have memorized its message.

The novel centers on the supernatural, and at first, Palahniuk's engaging writing style almost makes the events believable. Palahniuk often repeats key phrases in the book, which not only causes readers to wonder if they are experiencing déjà vu, but also spotlights passages that are important to the work's questioning theme.

The tale flows well until a confusing barrage of black magic and cryogenically frozen bodies takes the story by storm. A reader, who was at first intellectually stimulated, is now left with the after-taste of a storyline gone sour.

"Lullaby" asks significant questions, but lacks the integrity of a truly intellectual tale. The novel drowns in its own attempts at originality and enters an unstoppable downward spiral toward the irredeemably strange.

If Palahniuk had kept "Lullaby" from being drowned in the disturbing, it likely would maintain a more resonant tone. As is, Palahniuk's latest novel

♦ LULLABY, SEE PAGE 9

Gothics gather in Victorian-era lingerie for Elysium

Haven at New Brookland Tavern invites underculture

BY COREY GARRIOTT

THE GAMECOCK

Columbia's Gothic underground celebrated Elysium on Dec. 28 at the New Brookland Tavern, mingling in the nicotine with fellow creatures of the night.

They were actually quite pretty, if corsets are your thing. They're models — thin and as pale (it might be the makeup) as an antebellum southern lady. And they're dark enough for a playful spat with the creator being, the jerk who is responsible for their tragic existence.

Also tragically, only 15 exist. Maybe it's another nose-jab at the creator, but Columbia's Gothic haven't gone forth and multiplied. And, how embarrassing, I heard a Carolina twang in a few of their voices.

In fact, their escapist roots illustrate how much fun it would be to join in.

"The people here are a lot more mellow than in other places,"

Kurt Gigginbam said. "Go to bike week — the odds of getting in a fight are a lot less than at Spring Break."

The New Brookland Tavern is the perfect place for Goths, said Pet Balbuer, Columbia's Elder Goth, who has been Gothic since high school. "The problem is that Columbia doesn't have a central hub for Goths to go to," he said. "We have Baby Bats, Goths under 21 and new to the scene. Because the Art Bar is 21 and up, there's no way we can get Baby Bats in."

He solved the problem by playing host to Elysium at the 18-and-up New Brookland Tavern. Elysium is so popular, Goths travel from Charlotte, Raleigh-Durham and even Washington, D.C., to attend.

If you too would like to increase their numbers — and who that is male wouldn't? — I have prepared a quick guide for you.

Goths are fairly fashionable, so if you want to join the fun, be prepared to develop a killer outfit. For Goths, the '80s are back in style — the 1880s. Corsets and lace dresses are all the rage — Goth fashion reincarnates the Victorian Era.

The color scheme is simple.

Hair, of course, is black or red. Lips and nails also are black or red. Faces are white.

Tall boots with clips are a must. Instead of shoestrings, though, secure them with belt buckle fasteners. Your boots should substitute for a growth spurt; shimmer; and clink, clink, clink.

Guys can find suitable pants at the same store where the corner shops. They should have chains or wisps of superfluous cloth — both communicate your recent reincarnation. Anything suitably aristocratic (and black) will do for the top — vampires are supposed to be wealthy, sort of like Bruce Wayne. Try a cape.

For girls, there's a veritable cemetery of Gothic apparel available. Laced dresses worn with a



PHOTO BY COREY GARRIOTT/THE GAMECOCK

Two creatures of the underworld play-act as members of a vampire clan.

corset are popular. But if you're aiming to look more recently deceased, try a sheer, red thrift store dress with X's taped over sensitive areas.

Celebrated bimonthly, this vampire masquerade ball isn't for everyone. Fans of music lighter than Nine Inch Nails need not ap-

ply. "Bow down before the one you serve — you're going to get what you deserve," instructed one of the DJ's riffs. But if you're looking for an interesting night out, the next Elysium will be this month.

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecockmixeditor@hotmail.com