

ARTS

Saint Joan's performance Holey . . .

by Suzanne Crnic

Saint Joan
directed by Richard Monette
Theatre Plus Toronto

It's a plot that has been enacted a thousand times before in the Arts, the daily news, even our

own households; a person is inspired to do her own thing; when it goes against the Establishment, as it inevitably must, she is punished.

About 600 years ago, Joan, a young peasant girl from the village of Vosges in France, heard

the voice of God, which told her to lead the English out of France and to crown the Prince, Dauphin, the King of France. She was headstrong, illiterate and unbearable, claiming to be the ambassador of God.

After much persuasion, Joan

conquered the trust of the heads of state and church, and stood alongside generals of armies to lead their troops to victory. Eventually, since she gained too much power, the politicians acted against her, put her on trial for heresy. Joan was burned at the stake in 1431 and canonized in 1920.

Bernard Shaw's play *Saint Joan*, directed by Richard Monette, is a historical drama about having to be your own person and attaining your goals, no matter how much they conflict with societal norms.

As one who is not particularly fond of historical dramas, I found the play adequate. What was tiresome about the play was having to keep track of who was who. There were too many important characters introduced in a limited amount of time and some actors played two different characters, which was not so much confusing as it was distracting.

Actress Seana McKenna's performance as Joan was good; she played the different Joans, from peasant girl to soldier to accused heretic. It was like *Educating Rita*, where Julie Walters brilliantly changed the voices of Rita as her character developed intellectually. McKenna's performance, however, wavered, believable as the tortured Joan but not as the soldier Joan.

The performances of the other actors of the ensemble were also adequate. Dunois, played by Benedict Campbell, is a soldier who befriends Joan, believing in her as God's chosen one.

Craig Davidson who played the

Bishop of Beauvais, one of the judges at Joan's trial, gives a performance so convincing that it seemed as if the real Bishop had been transported through time for a cameo performance.

The stage design, consisting mostly of religious figures, and the costumes, rich in colour and design, tied the play together thematically.

Shaw wonderfully presents the arguments from every side, so that the audience is forced to decide whether Joan was innocent or guilty of heresy. At one point in the trial, the lights in the theatre were turned on, and each judge addressed the audience individually, explaining and supporting their view of Joan. At this point, each character became a lawyer and the audience a jury. But, what Shaw put across was that every character, including Joan, firmly held to their beliefs, right or wrong.

The epilogue was terribly important, deflating Joan's tragedy by introducing a fictitious dream scene where she speaks with those who burned her at the stake about 25 years before. Shaw noted in the programme at the first London production of *Saint Joan* that without such a scene, the play would only be sensational. An individual as remarkable as Joan, however, who had faith, humour, frankness and guts does not need a farcical dream scene to trivialize the awe we feel for her.

Saint Joan, showing at Theatre Plus Toronto until September 29, is a play to catch even if it disappoints at times.



by Andrew Kyprianou

The Watchers II
directed by Thierry Notz
produced by IVE Entertainment

In 1987, video enthusiasts were granted the opportunity of witnessing Dean R. Koontz's best selling novel, *The Watchers* produced as a movie. Starring Canadian teen dream/soon to be rehabilitated dope junkie Corey Haim, the film was quickly nudged from the silver to small screen.

The Watchers was certainly not cinematically good enough or profitable enough to be worthy of a sequel. Apparently, those nice folks at IVE entertainment were not deterred from producing this annoying sequel.

Part II continues, unfortunately, the laughable tale of two genetically transmuted life forms: a super-intelligent golden retriever named Dakai (what?) and a hybrid monster whose only function is to destroy human life.

In between naps and multiple visits to the washroom, the plot of the film became more and more shallow. Bouncing around from horror, drama, and Rambo-style action, *The Watchers II* is enough to make one pierce a vein.

Marc Singer (*Beastmaster*) portrays a Marine Corps fugitive who, due to amazing coincidence, is plummeted into "hybrid monster" country. Aided by the golden retriever, the two set out on a journey that draws in actress Tracy Scoggins — the animal psycholo-

gist appointed to study and test Dakai. Together the two actors are successfully upstaged by the multi-talented dog.

How embarrassing.

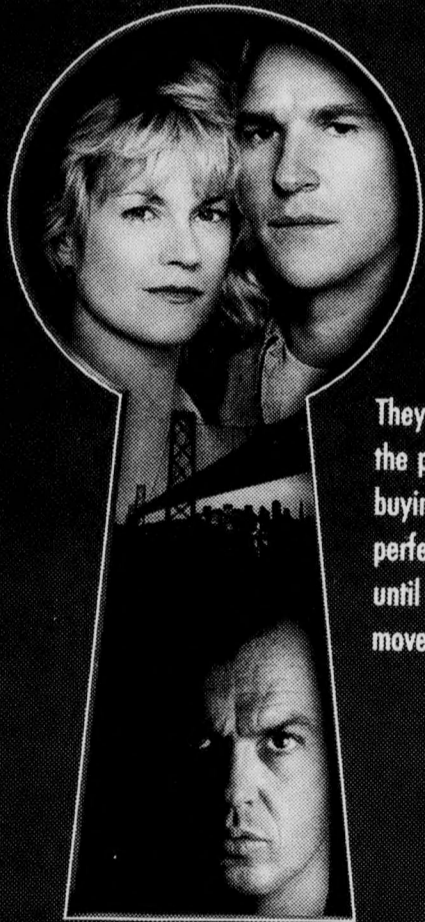
Choppy editing, foolish situations, and cliché after cliché add to the overall failure of *The Watchers II*.

How many times does one have to hear, "There's something out there," before the next video cassette is popped in?

In one (of many) moronic scenes, director Thierry Notz (who?) found it necessary to make the foolish mutant have a soft spot for stuffed animals. Now, come on Thierry; is this what they taught you in film school?

This is, however, one good thing about *The Watchers II* — the fast forward button.

MELANIE GRIFFITH and MATTHEW MODINE
MICHAEL KEATON



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the perfect couple,
buying the
perfect house,
until a perfect stranger
moved into their lives.

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