

Movie making at its finest

By JIM ELLIS and
DANNY SAMSON.

The Color Purple, despite (or rather with) its many problems, is a terrific example of Hollywood movie making at its best. The story of the downtrodden, struggling against the odds is America's favorite tale, told and retold on the screen each year. More often than not movies of this type collapse under the weight of their own sentimentality; this one succeeds.

The story centres around Celie (Whoopie Goldberg), a girl of fourteen whose incestuous abuse by her father has already produced two children. Given, literally, as a wife to a man she knows only as Mister (Danny Glover), she allows herself to be an outlet for Mister's frustrations and desires. But Celie's determination to remain strong is evident from the beginning, and as her self-esteem grows over the 30 years encompassed by the film, the viewer is treated to one of the best characterizations on the American Screen in years.

One cannot help be moved by Celie's eventual triumph. Abused and ridiculed, she retains her dignity and hope. Surrounded by selfishness and false-pride, she endures with humility and eventually develops an awareness of her own self-worth.

Whoopie Goldberg is superb as Celie, and brings to the screen all of the humour and depth of Alice Walker's character.

It is important to remember that this is not simple a black rising out of the depths of oppression. Celie is a woman, and her problems stem more from this than the colour of her skin. Her situation, while exacerbated because she is black, is the result of her being bound by men. Other women around her fight back, but are beaten down. Celie grows by her observations of other women's failures; their rebelliousness is no stronger than the men's false pride.

That the importance of Celie as a woman is slightly obscured may not be Spielberg's fault. In the book it is easier to focus on Celie's plight as that of a woman's. Perhaps Spielberg's desire for authenticity to rural, southern, black America was visually too strong, leaving the viewer with a powerful force

in competition with equally important themes. The visual strength of these scenes, in combination with occasional prejudiced whites, obscures the point that this is a film about oppression, not just racial but also intellectual, marital, familial, and of course, sexual.



Danny Glover stars as "Mister", who heaps thoughtless abuse on Desreta Jackson as young Celie, who has been "given" to him for a wife, in "The Color Purple".

Probably the most frequently asked question about the movie is how it compares to the book. This question is perhaps an unfair one. To expect the novel to be transferred to the screen unchanged is to deny the artistry of the director, making him a mere technician in the whole process. Perhaps the question should be 'how well did the director make use of the available material'.

In this instance, the temptation to compare the film to the book is great. Alice Walker's story of a black woman's emancipation was hugely successful both critically and commercially, winning the Pulitzer prize and selling millions of copies. The director, Steven Spielberg, is also hugely successful in his own field of fantasy and and adventure movies.

In fact, his very success with that genre prompted many people to question his suitability for this particular film.

Unfortunately, fears that Spielberg was not equal to his material were well founded. If there is any big problem with *The Colour Purple* and it does have a problem- it is Spielberg himself. Although the adaptation was spirited, and at times imaginative, some aspects of the movie have Spielberg writ-

ten all over them, almost always to the film's detriment.

He obviously had trouble slowing down his usual runaway- train pace, and his tendency towards exaggerated (and at times slapstick) action is disappointing and distracting.

Furthermore, while Spielberg did not compose the music it still bears his stamp. When you think of music in a Spielberg film you think of John Williams- unfortunately, Quincy Jones thinks the same way, and the result is pure Hollywood. Every glorious and uplifting scene is announced well in advance by the building layers of violins. The superb acting in this film could elicit tears on its own, making these heavy handed orchestration superfluous.

Despite these flaws, *The Colour Purple* is an excellent film, and certainly one of the year's best. The strong acting from a solid cast, and the skillful screenplay adaptation of Walker's novel combined to produce a profound and moving from of exceptional power.

RATINGS (out of five stars)

JIM

DAN

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A Touch of Brass will be performing at the d'Avray Noon-time Series on Wednesday, January 29, 1986 at 12.30 pm in the d'Avray Hall Auditorium. Admission is free to all UNB/STU students and CAC subscribers.

Bare as you dare Productions presents *Girls just wanna have fun* featuring the band *Second Generation* and *Pro Sound DJs*. Tickets are \$4.00 and they are available at the SUB.

Valerie Tyron, a pianist of exceptional talent, will perform at the Playhouse on Sunday, Jan 26, as part of the Creative Arts Committee's virtuoso Sunday evening concert series. The concert begins at 8 pm and admission is \$10 for adults, \$5 for senior citizens and school children, \$2 for students of UNB or STU.

Internationally acclaimed soprano Rosemarie Landry will perform in concert with the resident musicians of UNB on Thursday, Jan 30, at the Playhouse. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for seniors and school children, and \$2 for students at UNB or STU.

At the Woodshed Friday and Saturday night from 8.30 to 11.30 is Leslie Ferguson, accomplished pianist and synthesizer artist.