

Film

Funeral home humour haunts Beetlejuice

Beetlejuice
The Geffen Film Company
Capitol Square, Gateway, West Mall 5

review by David Smith
Whatever happened to subtlety? Remember the good old days when you went to the movies, and if a scary or disgusting part came you could look away but it didn't really matter anyway because moviemakers weren't allowed to show guts and goo?

Well, those days are gone, and for proof, I refer you to a new comedy/horror film called *Beetlejuice*. From Tim Burton, the man who brought you *Peewee's Big Adventure*, comes more Hollywood gore than most people can appreciate. Actually, these two pictures have more in common than just a director: both of them involve very surreal landscapes, strange storylines, and stars who are more adept at directing themselves than at being directed.

I am, of course, referring to Michael Keaton, who fairly walks through this picture; this man (er, ghost) can fire off a myriad of one-liners and fast-punches without even blinking. Whenever he is on screen (which does not happen nearly enough), he manages to dominate every shot of film with his thoroughly repulsive, crude, and yet ceaselessly funny antics.

Keaton's *Beetelgeuse*, who has nothing to do with either the star in the sky, the biblical personality, or any of the other 22 known references, is 'the ghost with the most', the 'Afterlife's Leading Bio-exorcist', and all-around troublemaker.



Michael Keaton as *Beetelgeuse* — repulsive, crude, yet ceaselessly funny.

Beetelgeuse is hired by Barbara (Geena Davis) and Adam (Alec Baldwin) Maitland, two unhappy ghosts who have been confined to their old house following their accidental

death. Although warned not to, they summon him to help frighten away the morons who have purchased and tastelessly "renovated" their once-beautiful home. *Beetelgeuse* has

his own way of doing things, and the Maitlands soon come to realize that they've made a big mistake.

To complicate matters further, the new tenants discover the existence of the three spirits and decide it's time to establish America's first Netherworld ThemePark — complete with Fantasy Hotel (sound familiar!) and insect zoo. What inevitably happens is that everyone tries to use everyone else to get what they want, and life-after-death gets very weird.

There are a lot of hilarious moments in this film, so many in fact, that I actually considered seeing it again. But director Tim Burton's obsession with grisly deaths and mutilated flesh had me wondering after a while whether or not it would be worth the investment.

Certainly some of the "humour" in this picture can be derived from the thousands of ways that one can die, but after two trips to Death Administration (a cross between Dante's *Inferno* and the place you go to apply for student loans), I'd had enough torched bodies and truck accident victims to last me the decade. It probably would have been an easier film to sit through if there had been a firmer story line. As it was, the plot seemed to self-destruct towards the end, and I wasn't sure what I was watching.

If you like "gore humour", good special effects, and the unpredictability of Michael Keaton, then rush off to see it. If, on the other hand, you hate a shaky plot (no pun intended), redundant and incessantly heavy "funeral humour" (that's dished out by the shovel load), and a stereotyped view of the afterlife, I recommend that you save your money and wait until it hits the video stores.

Homosexuality in England at the turn of the century

Maurice
Princes Theatre
April 8 - April 14

review by Peter Cole
This film adaptation of E. M. Forster's novel of the same name deals with Maurice Hall's sexual development while he is at Cambridge in the first decade of this century.

At first he is horrified when one of his chums, Clive Durham (Hugh Grant) makes an overt pass at him. Overcoming this shock, Maurice (James Wilby) develops a deep love for Clive but the required relationship is brief and ends unhappily. Maurice is deeply hurt and eventually tries to have his homosexual urges purged through hypnosis.

The hypnotist, Lasker-Jones (Ben Kingsley) employs strange methods to try to exorcise "the stream of longing" from Maurice but gives up and suggests that he move to France or Italy where the gender of one's loved one is not so important.

Maurice, though hurt by Clive's rejection of him and by his subsequent marriage,

spends much of his free time at Pendersleigh, the Durham estate. There he is surrounded by beautiful, bright, witty women. Though fond of the family and ever-present guests, Maurice is not completely happy until he is assailed by Alec Scudder (Rupert Graves), the gamekeeper's assistant. Scudder mounts a ladder at midnight and interjects himself unannounced into Maurice's room and his life. Afraid that this association with a member of the working class will result in blackmail, Maurice resolves to hypnotise homosexuality out of his system. It doesn't work.

Though the cinematography is engaging and seductive, at times it leaves one feeling uninvolved, removed. This film hasn't the sweeping pans and grand panoramas of *A Room With A View* nor has it so universal an appeal; but it does present atmosphere and pathos sensitively. The overall editing is somewhat jerky because the film tries to incorporate too much of the book. The transition from scene to scene was often abrupt.

Overall, *Maurice* left one feeling dis-

satisfied because so many ideas and relationships remain unresolved. The director (James Ivory) tries so hard to present the audience with a feeling of time and place that the

development of the characters suffers. It is worth seeing but be prepared to fill a lot of blanks which the film's smooth dialogue is unable to do.



How would homosexuality fit in with this society?

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