

"Twelve Angry Men" awakens senses

●The film's portrayal of justice and reason is still dramatic

By **KENT ANDERSON**
NEWS EDITOR

On Monday, February 24, the second film in a series sponsored as part of a National Endowment of the Arts grant program was shown. The series, arranged by Matt Dunkel, an Alpena Community College geography instructor, is being presented to communicate to its viewers the elusive nature of the American experience.

"Twelve Angry Men," a tense drama revolving around a jury's deliberation of a murder case, is the latest installment in the series. The movie explores the reality of how difficult overcoming one's own prejudices and preconceptions can be. It also conveys the necessity of surmounting irrational, emotional, and prejudicial impediments so that a lucid understanding of those around us, as well as ourselves, can be achieved.

The setting is a jury room, into which, at the beginning of the movie, the jurors are sent after hearing testimony in the trial of a teenager accused of slaying his father. Except for a few moments at the film's beginning and end, everything transpires within the confines of the jury room, as twelve men of varied backgrounds attempt to come to a unanimous decision as to the accused's innocence or guilt.

During the deliberation that follows, the theme is articulated: we must stand together, no matter how far apart our differences distort us to appear. This meaning is painted in all the vibrant hues of the often irrational human condition. Every jury member, except one, believes the defendant to be guilty.

That singular juror forces the others to take a closer and more objective look at the evidence. In doing so, many of the jurors are forced to delve into their profound depths, learning more about that essentially unknown figure staring back at them in the mirror every morning.

An excellent cast portrays the emotional mechanics involved in the convoluted corridors of their characters' minds. Henry Fonda, the star and a co-producer of the film, is the one juror who believes that the others reach their conclusion of guilt too fast.

It should be noted that the film was produced in 1957, an era when the nation was told, "Better dead than Red," and the good guys always wear white. To describe "Twelve Angry

Men" as black and white is not just to refer to the lack of technicolor. The lines are drawn, the point is clear: the man in white, Fonda, is the shining knight, stalwart against the forces of narrow-minded prejudice and illogical thinking. He will save the day.

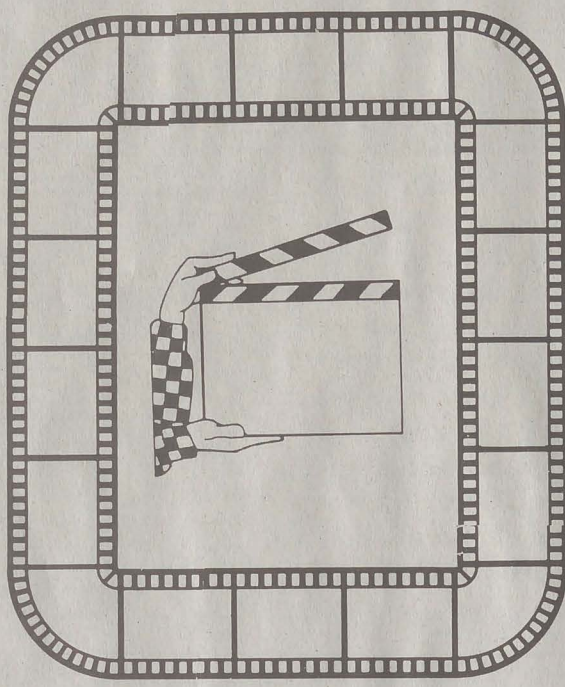
Lee J. Cobb and E.G. Marshal, the former a belligerent father deep in denial about his son's resentment of him, and the latter a starched stock broker who "never sweats," as he says in the movie, give memorable performances. The father is too subjective, seeing his son in the accused, and thus a way to vicariously punish his boy for rebelling by passing a guilty verdict. His emotions rule, often with apoplectic fury, but are founded upon air, as we discover when he breaks down, in tears, tearing up a picture of himself and his son. Cobb's performance is full of passion, full of reality, and totally believable.

Marshal's stock broker is forced to realize that he has not been looking closely enough at the facts, when a sore on his nose leads to the realization that a similar sore on a witness's nose proves that the witness wears glasses, a fact not told to the jury during the trial. Marshal is brilliant in his subtle understanding of his character's problem and masters every nuance of handling the nose-piece irritation. The meticulous attention to small parts produces a believable whole.

All the acting in "Twelve Angry Men" is beyond doubting, yet the director, Sidney Lumet, seems to have been decidedly uninspired when he came to work on this project. The camera shots are mundane, good, but not worthy of praise. He keeps his angles clear, matter-of-fact, and tries nothing elaborate.

There is no room for the viewer to interpret, no room to ponder, for the message of the film is stark, open, and without significant insight. This however, can be seen as a strength, though also as a weakness, and the movie will endure, regrettably, as a "classic." Your mind will yawn, but your heart will applaud.

"Twelve Angry Men" will not challenge you, but it will entertain, perhaps awaken, your sense of justice and reason. And, as the movie displays, sometimes those senses do need a wake up call.



To ease the long wait for seats to "Star Wars" (left to right) Tony Rosado, Adam Dempsey, Jim Robb, Jon Mendel and CJ Bruski get involved with the display of stars. PHOTO BY BECKY BLACK

A new generation can experience the force

By **BECKY BLACK**
STAFF WRITER

I recently embarked upon a strange journey "to a time long ago in a galaxy far, far away..." Well not really, just to the opening night of the first of the three movies in the Star Wars trilogy.

In order to view the much talked about film, I had to purchase my tickets for the 9:20 p.m. show at 7:30. In order to get a decent seat, I arrived at 8:30.

While waiting for the previous show to conclude, I shuffled through the crowded corridors of the theater. At that point in time I had never been so glad I used Dial—at the same time I really wished everyone else did, too. But luckily I knew most of the other "sardines," so to speak, that were there as well.

The excitement was high, and anticipation hard to bear as we waited for over 45 minutes just to enter the theater. At long last the usher removed the rope that had blocked the crowd from entering. Immediately a flood of people gushed into the hallway to the cinema.

Upon entering, myself and my fellow comrades were faced with a problem—where to sit.

Being the pillars of wisdom that they are, my friends blurted out, "FRONT ROW!!!!" Being ever faithful, I followed—quite willingly. We must have filled five rows. I soon learned that the fourth row from the front is a prime spot to acquire a strained neck, and is very close to the speakers.

As the movie started, the audience erupted into cheers and applause as the old familiar music audiences have loved

"Star Wars" was a legacy, and my generation had never gotten the chance to experience it in the theater.

for the past two decades blasted through the sound system.

The crowd experienced a new thrill right off the bat; the intro was actually large enough to read! The adrenaline was pumping and I even heard a friend whisper, "WOW! They have changed things." After the excitement of the prologue of "Episode IV" the movie started.

The movie was pretty close to the same as it's always been. The plot didn't change at all. I noticed some changes, like new creatures running rampant through the entire movie. I sat in my seat, neck bent in a strange way it wasn't made to bend, and just watched in marvel...for about twenty minutes. After awhile I started to think to myself, "I've seen this before—there are no real surprises here..."

Then I looked to my left, where two dear friends of mine

(not to mention avid Star Wars fans) were sitting. They were way too excited for my tastes. They had taken to reciting the dialogue from the film. But it wasn't that innocent. It had turned into a competition, a fight for superiority, who knew the most phrases and who could say them first, often before the actors could.

Their display of primal battle for dominance was entertaining as much as it was annoying. This was just prior to me falling asleep. After a quick cat nap the guy next to me nudged me awake and said, "What are you doing? This is 'STAR WARS!'"

I quickly replied, "Yeah I know, Luke blows up the Death Star and that's the end. Oh yeah and by the way, Darth Vader is Luke's father. Now for the love of God I had to go to a 7:30 a.m. English class this morning, I'm tired, let me sleep!" Needless to say he left me alone for awhile. But I didn't go back to sleep. I decided to stay awake for the finale.

It was during this time that I pondered the real reason I had gone to see a movie that I had seen several times before. For crying out loud, I even own a copy. I realized that "Star Wars" was a legacy, and my generation had never gotten the chance to experience it in the theater.

Did we miss out? In my opinion, not really. But I am glad I went, it turned out to be quite a memorable experience. I will also faithfully attend the opening night shows of "The Empire Strikes Back," and "The Return of the Jedi." And most likely will do the same stupid stuff that my friends and I did at the first movie.

So until then, take care, and "MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU!!"

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