

## The Two Towers Triumphs on Home Video and DVD

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With substantial plot to cover, the middle film of JRR Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *The Two Towers*, is a solid movie that delivers on all fronts.

The plot follows nicely with the book, and even expands on parts the book only touched on. It starts out directly after the events of the first movie. The fellowship has been split, and the film follows the three separate plot lines nicely. Though all

the main characters are given appropriate attention on-screen, the plot can become a bit confusing.

The hobbit, Frodo (Elijah Wood), and his companion Samwise (Sean Astin) continue their journey to Mordor, the only place to destroy the all-powerful evil ring in his possession. Along the way the two hobbits are aided by Gollum (Andy Serkis), a being twisted by the ring's addicting malevolent power.

Meanwhile, Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen), Gimli (John Rhys-Davies) and Legolas (Orlando Bloom) are in pursuit of the other

hobbits, Merry (Dominic Monaghan) and Pippin (Billy Boyd), captured by the evil Saruman (Christopher Lee). They don't find the hobbits, however, but do find themselves, as well as the resurrected Gandalf (Ian McKellen) embroiled in the dominant plot thread. Their mission is to try to raise an army to thwart Saruman's seemingly invincible army of evil Uruk-Hai Orcs.

Finally, the third plot thread focuses on Merry and Pippin, who get caught up with a group of tree-like creatures known as Ents, of the mystical Fangorn Forest. If you're able to follow the

twisting plot, the movie becomes that much better.

The first thing to notice about *The Two Towers* is that the color in the film is much subdued. Colder, harsher with few vibrant colors at all, it nicely compliments the overall darker tone of the second film.

Of course, the star of the movie is the much hyped final battle at Helm's Deep and it's well worth it. Thousands battling on screen at once is enough to get your adrenalin going.

Unlike the *Fellowship*, *The Two Towers* focuses

more on action and plot than on the characters, who take a backseat, content to ride the rollercoaster of the movie. While not necessarily bad, because the characters were established in the first movie, it can still prove confusing for those who are viewing Tolkien's world for the first time. The upside is *The Two Towers* becomes much more accessible to action movie fans, because the action quota is through the roof.

The few touches of humor sprinkled throughout are well done and welcome, though a small reprieve from the rest of the dark atmosphere of the movie.

The extra features on the DVD are comprehensive, but still quite ordinary. There's your standard behind the scenes film documentary, featurettes about different places and people in the movie, trailers, a preview of the new *Lord of the Rings* game, etc. What's truly interesting is the first look at the final film, *Return of the King*, available as an extra.

*The Two Towers* is very well done, and while very different from the lighter tone of the first movie, it easily holds its own and very nicely sets up for the final film in the trilogy.



## Thunder Bay Theater Shoots Into a New Season

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Thunder Bay Theater's first play of the season is starting out as a remarkable success.

*Annie Get Your Gun* opened on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September to a receptive audience. All in attendance were thoroughly entertained. It will be running till October 5<sup>th</sup>.

*Annie Get Your Gun* is a musical about a hillbilly named Annie Oakley, a young woman in the Old West, who is adept at shooting guns. She joins *Buffalo Bill's Traveling Wild West Show* as a female marksman who falls in love with her male counterpart Frank Butler. Her talents begin to

outshine Frank's and she realizes that she will have to make some tough decisions to keep the man she loves.

Thunder Bay Theater will next present "Beauty and the Beast" on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, and 25<sup>th</sup>.

*Beauty and the Beast* is a romantic play about a poor merchant that gets lost and enters the castle of the Beast and decides to stay. He was too afraid to return home to his daughters as a failure. The Beast promises him riches if he sends his youngest daughter to the Beast. The merchant agrees and sends his youngest daughter Beauty back to the Beast where she sees through the hideous visage of the Beast and begins to fall in love with him.

This show promises to be great for a family outing. With beautiful songs and wholesome family entertainment.

From October 30<sup>th</sup> to November 16<sup>th</sup>, Thunder Bay Theater will perform *Our Town* and the fourth production of the fall season will be *The Christmas Schooner* on November 28<sup>th</sup> through December 20<sup>th</sup>.

Thunder Bay Theater is located at 400 N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue in Alpena, Michigan. Ticket prices range from \$6.00 for student to \$11.00 for normal admission.

Play dates are on Thursday through Sunday.



## House of a Thousand Corpses Lacks Foundation

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*House of a Thousand Corpses (HTC)* has writer/director Rob Zombie's fingerprints all over it. Equal parts shocking and disturbing, *HTC* is best compared to an extended White Zombie music video.

The plot is very much standard teen horror flick. A group of teenagers driving cross-country stop at Captain Spaulding's Museum of Monsters and Madmen, and from there go on a search for local madman Dr. Satan. After picking up a happy flirtatious female hitchhiker named Baby, their tire gets shot out. Luckily, Baby leads them to her house. Her burly brother Rufus fixes the tire, while the teens meet Baby's deranged family. The meeting becomes frightening, and after their tire is fixed they make a run for it. They don't make it far before they are captured and brutally

slain one by one. Eventually the survivors get their wish and meet the subterranean dweller Dr. Satan.

While rather uninspired the basic plot is not the film's best part. The high point comes from the fact that it is so extremely bizarre that you'll feel compelled to watch it all the way through. The stuttering, grainy and unreal-colored cut scenes seem to only be there to give you a jolt, a burst of unease to add to the always-heightening tension.

The characters themselves are memorable, especially Captain Spaulding, played by Sid Haig. His vulgar clown character steals each and every scene he's in. The family members are also quite interesting. There's Mother Firefly, the matriarch, who's best described as a washed up 1970s porn star who dosed too much acid. Otis, the young, brash and particularly sadistic loudmouth leader. There's also the massive and

deformed Tiny and the old and grumpy Grampa Hugo.

Sparse but still interesting, the DVD extras contain your run-of-the-mill behind the scenes documentaries, trailers, and even rehearsals by the actors..

Unfortunately, the bizarre and twisted nature of *HTC* is the only real reason to watch it. It's so far out there that once you start watching, you become glued to the movie. Much like a car accident, you can't look away.

In the commentary, Rob Zombie reveals that *HTC* pays homage to classic horror flicks like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

In the end, it ends up as the average slasher-flick bloody and bad entertainment.



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