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Roger Ebert's Video Alert

By Roger Ebert

Universal Press Syndicate Prospero's Books (R, 106 m., 1991) is a film by Peter Greenway, whose "The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover" stirred things up not long ago.

Sir John Gielgud stars as Shakespeare's Prospero, in a film with an experimental visual style that uses rich overlays of typography, calligraphy, illustrations and books to examine the written sources of the sorcerer's magic. A difficult film, which will bore many, fascinate some and enchant a lucky few. Rating: ★★★

Beauty and The Beast (G, 84 m., 1991) is in the great tradition of the golden age of animation — a magical musical fantasy with great visuals, a compelling hero, heroine and villain, and a colorful peanut gallery of supporting players.

With songs by "The Little Mermaid" team and a story of high adventure and romance, it's robust, exciting, funny family entertainment. Rating: ★★★★★

Shadows and Fog (PG-13, 86m., 1992) is filled, as advertised with a lot of shadows and a great deal of fog, and is Woody Allen's tribute to German expressionism of the 1920's, crossed with some humor that never quite finds its way.

Packed with stars — Allen, Jodie Foster, John Malkovich, Madonna, John Cusack — it seems uncertain what to do with them. The story is a meandering series of anecdotes, loosely linked by the search for a mad strangler. The movie looks great, but to what end? Rating: ★★

Uranus (No MPAA rating, 100m., 1991) is director Claude Berri's drama about a small French village in the months immediately after World War II, as a Nazi sympathizer tries to hide from prosecution, and the search for him creates a climate of paranoia and betrayal. With an all-star cast of France's top stars, including Gerard Depardieu, Phillippe Noiret and Michel ("Monsieur Hire") Blanc. Intelligent and intimate. Rating: ★★★★★

Batman Returns (PG-13, 130m., 1992) is an odd and dark film, set during the long cold nights of a Gotham City winter. Batman faces the megalomaniac Max Shreck (Christopher Walken) and the deeply wounded, vengeance-driven Penguin (Danny DeVito) in a battle for the city's future, while Michelle Pfeiffer plays a woman who dies only to be resurrected as Catwoman.

The film is filled with possibilities, but they don't connect, and the final impression is of great art direction, haunted by a confusing story. Rating: ★★

Newsies (PG, 121 m., 1992) is a hapless musical set in the late 1890's about a New York newsboy's strike against Joseph Pulitzer, who wanted to cut their profits. The story is routine, and the performances by Robert Duvall, as Pulitzer, and Ann-Margret, as an inexplicable dance hall owner, reveal how little was written into their roles.

The songs and dances are forgettable, and there's little dramatic interest. A downer. Rating: ★1/2.

K2 (R, 104 m., 1992) is an anthology of the usual mountain climbing clichés, in which two buddies are never happier than when one has screwed up and is hanging from a rope anchored by the other one, thus fulfilling their dependent relationship.

The movie takes the usual masochistic joy in everything that goes wrong, and includes all the obligatory scenes, from the weeping wife to the rebellious porters to the unheeded warning and the unexpected snowstorm. Rating: ★★

One False Move (R, 105 m., 1992) deserves a place on the list of the great crime movies, with its story of three fugitives on the run from Los Angeles, and three policemen waiting for them in a small Arkansas town.

The film is about cops and criminals, and yet avoids clichés as it gradually uses secrets from the past to make us care deeply about what will happen. Brilliantly written, acted and directed; one of the year's best. Rating: ★★★★★

The 1993 edition of "Roger Ebert's Movie Home Companion," his best-selling book containing full-length reviews of more than 1,100 movies on videocassette, with an index of titles, stars and directors, is now available to his newspaper readers. In paperback, it can be ordered by sending \$14.95 plus \$1 for postage and handling to Ebert's Companion, in care of this newspaper, P.O. Box 419150, Kansas City, Mo. 64141.

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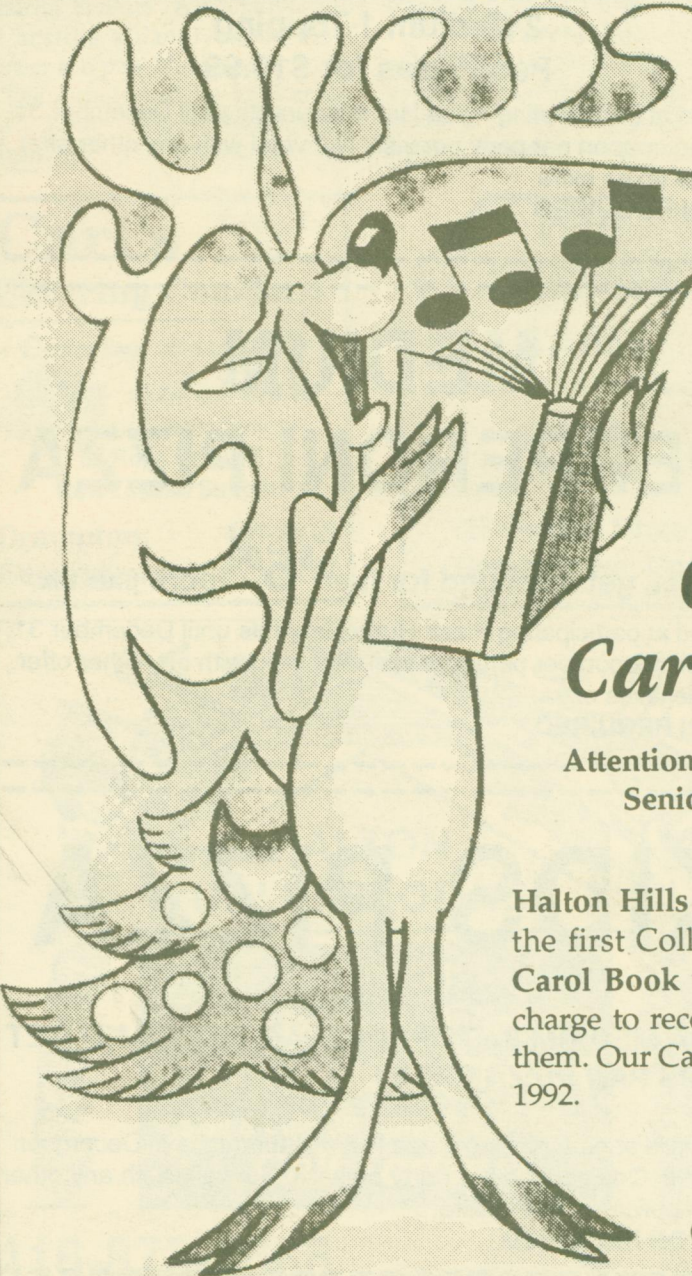
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