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Next issue: Thursday 30th January
Deadline: 10am, Wednesday 29th January

Wednesday 29th JANUARY 2003 (2nd Week)

COMING

Oxford Amnesty Lectures 2003
present
Richard Rogers
Architect. Author of *Cities for a Small Planet*.
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CINEMA REVIEW

Ghost Ship *Odeon George Street until Thurs 30th*
It is May the 21st, 1962. On board the luxury Italian ocean liner Antonia Graza, a little girl looks on, bored, as adult passengers dance together. On the bridge, after a switch is furtively pushed to 'massimo', a cable grows visibly more and more taut. The little girl joins the captain in a dance, when suddenly the cable jerks across the ballroom floor, slicing all the dancers neatly in half.
It is the present day. Captain Sean Murphy (Gabriel Byrne) and his crew are hired by pilot Jack Ferriman (Desmond Harrington) to salvage an ocean liner which he has spotted adrift in the Bering Sea. Despite their strong sense that something is not quite right about the unmanned Antonia Graza, the crew is only too willing to profit from the ship, especially when they discover the crates of gold bullion on board - until, that is, they all start dying, one by one, under mysterious circumstances...

Despite its promising prologue, once 'Ghost Ship' reaches cruising speed it sets a direct course for predictability. If I tell you that only two of the crew are not white, can you guess which two die first? If I say that only one of the crew is female, can you guess who gets to survive? The cast is adequate, but all the characters are merely stock clichés, each of whose grisly demises becomes ever more welcome, if only because it indicates that the film is so much closer to being over. Believe me, if you haven't worked out the film's 'shock' conclusion within the first twenty minutes, this is only because the film has failed to grab even a quarter of your attention.
As the salvagers move through the ship's dark corridors, periodically losing radio contact with one another, and discovering ever more evidence of some terrible past event, one can't help thinking of the beginning of 'Alien'. And as Epps (Juliana Margulies) keeps seeing the ghost of a little girl, and the abandoned ballroom miraculously comes to life, one can't help thinking of 'The Shining'. But, unlike either 'Alien' or 'The Shining', 'Ghost Ship' has committed the cardinal sin of all horror films: it has forgotten to be scary.
Anton Bitel, 27.01.03

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ATHENA / Jazz duo / 11pm-2am / Freud's, Walton St; Tel: 311171

CINEMA

Ultimate Picture Palace 245288
28 DAYS LATER (18) Wed & Thu: 9.15pm
Rage-making virus escapes lab. See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER (15) Thu: 7pm
Manuela tracks the father of her dead teenage son
Odeon George Street
0870 5050007
GANGS OF NEW YORK (18) Wed & Thu: 4.15, 8.00p
Di Caprio, Day-Lewis, Diaz & Broadbent in Scorsese's 19th century NY. See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
8 MILE (15) Daily: 12.15, 3.00, 6.00, 8.45
Eminem stars in biographical tale. See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
GHOST SHIP (18) Daily: 1.30, 4.00, 6.30, 9.00
Gabriel Byrne & fellow salvagers trapped in a haunted ship. See review, above
ABOUT SCHMIDT (15) Daily: 11.30 (not Weds), 2.30, 5.30, 8.30
Jack Nicholson & Kathy Bates in the tale of a failed man. See review, below right
DIE ANOTHER DAY (12A) Daily: 12.30*
Bond needs no introduction... See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
CATCH ME IF YOU CAN (12A) Wed & Thu: 12.30*, 3.45*, 7.45*
Hanks, DiCaprio, Walken & Sheen in true story of successful conman
SENIOR SCREEN: BILLY ELLIOTT (15) Wed: 10.45am. Over 55s only!
11-yr-old Billy finds ballet at the heart of the 1984 miners' strike
Odeon Magdalen Street
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CHICAGO (12A) Daily: 12.00*, 2.45*, 5.30*, 8.30*
Zellweger, Zeta-Jones & Gere do sex & violence, 1920s-style. See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
PRE-RELEASE SCREENING: PUNCH DRUNK LOVE (15) Daily: 6.00, 8.45
Adam Sandler as small-time businessman on romantic journey (win tickets & find review at dailyinfo.co.uk)
HARRY POTTER & THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS (PG) Daily: 1.45
Contains intense combat & fantasy horror. See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
Phoenix Picture House 512526
THE PIANIST (15) Wed: 3.00 Thurs: 3.00, 6.00
A Jewish pianist's tale of survival through WWII. See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
SPIDER (15) Wed & Thu: 4.45, 9.15
Ralph Fiennes in Cronenberg's latest psychodrama. See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
SPECIAL PREVIEW: THE HOURS (12A) Wed: 6.30
3 women in different times are affected by Virginia Woolf's work. Plus Q & A with Director Stephen Daltry
THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT (U) Wed: 2.30, 7.00
Alec Guinness as young inventor who creates an immortal cloth...
THE EYE (15) Thu: 11.45pm
Scariest Far Eastern horror since the 'Ring' films
ONE HOUR PHOTO (15) Thu: 11.15pm
Robin Williams as photo obsessive. See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
THE LAVENDER HILL MOB (U) Thu: 2.30, 7.00
Ingenious bullion robbery in one of Ealing comedy's finest
* = Wheelchair access

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Burton Taylor Theatre 305350
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| 20 All Saints' Ch. | 42 South Cloister | 64 South Osney Isle |
| 21 St. Mary's Ch. | 43 Refectory | |
| 22 All Souls' Coll. | 44 Infirmary | |

CINEMA REVIEW

About Schmidt *Odeon George Street until Thurs 30th*
A man sits alone at a desk in an empty office, watching with a look of anxiety and resignation as the seconds tick by on the wall clock. The man is sixty-six year old actuary Warren Schmidt, and he is waiting for the clock to strike five, as this will mark the beginning of his retirement from Woodmen Insurance.
This brief introductory scene to 'About Schmidt' encapsulates the essence of the whole film, which, unusually for a Hollywood feature, has no conventional narrative. To be sure, there are events in the film - chiefly the funeral of Schmidt's wife (June Squibb) and the wedding of his daughter (Hope Davis) - but these tend to happen around rather than to Schmidt, and he remains in the end unchanged - a bitter, lonely man, waiting apprehensively for death, and convinced that he has failed to make any impact on the lives of those around him. Although he travels from state to state in his Winnebago Adventurer, ultimately Schmidt ends up right where he started, and so the film is not much more than a kinetic portrait.
But what a portrait! Schmidt is a monster of a man: curmudgeonly, angry, arrogant, unappreciative, miserly, misanthropic, manipulative, insincere, selfish, and full of disappointment, fear and self-loathing. In short, not a nice man, but just as fascinating to watch as a car hurtling out of control towards innocent bystanders. The entire cast of 'About Schmidt' is excellent, but this is ultimately Jack Nicholson's film. Odius one minute, pitiable the next, Nicholson gives his all to this role, but without resorting to any of the exaggerated theatrics which he has shown in recent films like 'Batman' and 'As Good As It Gets'. AND you get to see his wrinkly arse!
Director Alexander Payne, who debuted with the sardonic high school political satire 'Election', shows here that he is still, along with Todd Solondz, the master of mean-spirited comedy. Thanks to Payne's unflinching attention to cringe-worthy detail, this study of an actuary unable to pass his own audit is an uncomfortably mordant piece of entertainment.
Funny, defiantly un sentimental, and in the end genuinely moving.
Anton Bitel, 27.01.03

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