

Blair witch projections

I enjoyed seeing *The Blair Witch Project* for the simple satisfaction that a cheap, independent, amateur, simple, low-concept/high-commitment film project can firmly kick Hollywood's ass.

It certainly is a remarkable cinematic event. Three actors, two directors, two cheap cameras and a rough script were all it took to make this film. No one involved expected it to be anything more than a fun thing to do that might lead to real show-biz work later. They made it for less than \$100,000 and so far it has grossed over \$40 million. That kind of news gives stock brokers apoplexy. They'd murder for that kind of return-on-investment.

As a story *The Blair Witch Project* is brilliant in its simplicity. People are calling it a horror movie, but it is not. It is the ghost story you tell around the campfire that makes you nervous once you get back to the tent and hear the first strange creaking noise. It's all about three student filmmakers who go into the Maryland bush filming a school documentary on the legendary witch of Blair, the little town nearby. They disappear but the film is recovered by searchers, and oh what a terrifying story this film tells.

Just to be clear: this whole thing is a made-up story. Elaborate marketing measures have gone into creating the idea that this is a real documentary, that three actual students did go missing, that there really was/is a Blair witch. Untrue. It's all a fictitious story. But it's hard to tell if you go into

one of these projects, and that is the difference.

El Mariachi and *The Sweet Hereafter* impressed the world, but *The Blair Witch Project* yanked the world into theatres, money in hand.

You can thank inventive and exhaustive Internet marketing for a lot of the hype, but you can thank all of the things listed above as the reason this movie flanked Hollywood and won this attack. The Internet aspect was the battering ram that opened the door for the pre-release icon building. The net was the venue for web sites that built up the idea that the movie was a real documentary, which developed the intrigue around the show before it opened anywhere. The Space Network even ran a documentary on the documentary, making it all look real. The only way anyone would know it was a hoax is if they were at the Sundance Film Festival last February when the film first came out. After huge success there, the movie was effectively and deliberately suppressed until a major release could be negotiated. That gave the web masters time to build a mystery.

You can also credit very good content. *The Blair Witch Project* is a joy to watch if you like real, honest frights. But I urgently recommend seeing it on the big screen. Video means watching it at home, and eventually you will have to try to sleep.

ART OF LIVING

Frank Peebles

the theatre not knowing that.

The strength of these amateur actors and rookie directors is in clear evidence at the end of the film when you see people heading for the exits convinced it's all real. Any passable actor can make you scared, but it takes a skilled bit of craftsmanship to make something so far-fetched seem real.

The Blair Witch Project represents a turning point in movie history. Not because of what's on the screen, though.

Movies have tried to feign reality before (*Hard Core Logo*).

Independent filmmakers like Atom Egoyan and Robert Rodriguez have made cheap films that raked in lots of fame and money.

"Reality TV" shows like *Rescue 911* and *Cops* have used hand-held cameras and real life to make shows before.

What makes this a turning point in movie history is the audience. For the first time in history, a critical mass has gathered around



Reaching for/The Fringe



Bronwyn Glover, left, practices her performance for the solo-actor play *See Bob Run* at CNC as part of the first annual Prince George Fringe Festival starting this week.

The Fringe Festival is a four-day theatre extravaganza involving local and out-of-town performers.

JOHN MCKENZIE/FREE PRESS



AUGUST 21 TO 22



Morrison's Summerfest
CHILI COOK-OFF

First prize: \$150 cash
plus other merchandise prizes!

Singles or teams. Enter at
Morrison's Mens Wear
corner of 3rd & George

562-2949

ASK FOR CHEF DOUG LIMIT OF 10 ENTRIES

Leave the Regular World

It's nice to know you can leave the regular world of traffic jams, pedestrians and paved roads. It's called 4-wheeling. And if the rat race hasn't caught on yet, well, that's just fine. With the only available 4-door compact pickup, Ranger 4x4 owners keep the joys of off-roading to themselves.



Rick Devore
See me today
for your off-roading needs.



FORD NOW AND FOREVER
CUSTOMERS FOR LIFE

Prince George Motors Ltd.
1331 Central Street 1-800-926-1331 562-9111

Prince George Railway & Forestry Museum

would like to recognize the contributions to our community by emergency services personnel:

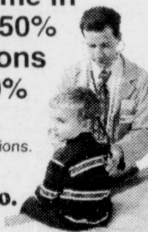
- PG Fire Department (volunteer dept.)
- Medical Professionals
- RCMP
- Highway Rescue
- Paramedics
- Search & Rescue



From Aug. 15 - 22 come in and enjoy a special 50% discount on admissions and an additional 10% off gift shop items

(Not valid with other coupons or promotions. Must show proof of affiliation.)

Call 563-7351 for more info.
850 River Road



8TH ANNUAL BACK TO SCHOOL CLOTHING DRIVE

Aug. 26-27-28, 1999

We need your support - please help us by bringing your used clothing to be recycled. Clothes can be dropped off at Sears in the covered mall.



For info please call 962-6226