

Political comedy features obvious plot, laughs

Goodman, Griffith offer nothing new

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Hollywood Pictures has remade Judy Holliday's 1950 hit *Born Yesterday*. It doesn't look to have a rosy tomorrow.

The usually dependable John Goodman hams it up in scenery-chewing fashion as shady real estate mogul Harry Brock, who is in Washington to wheel and deal with senators over his latest project.

On his arm is bubbleheaded Billie Dawn (Melanie Griffith), his longtime girlfriend whose idea of an intellectual challenge is watching the Home Shopping Network.

After Billie makes embarrassing verbal blunders at political power dinners, Harry hires reporter-college professor Paul Verrall (Don Johnson) to give her speed lessons in grammar and government.

The inevitable happens when Billie smartens up, tells off abusive Harry and decides Paul's arms look more inviting.



Melinda Sue Gordon-Hollywood Pictures
When Billie Dawn (Melanie Griffith) is introduced to sophisticated Washington society, Harry Brock's (John Goodman, second from left) attorney Ed Devery (Edward Herrmann, second from right) coaxes his client into hiring a tutor (Don Johnson, right) to give his diamond in the rough a little polish in *Born Yesterday*.

Given the fact it's all so predictable, director Luis Mankoki's remake rests on characterization and how the plot is developed. That can be summed up in two words — without subtlety.

Griffith may be easy on the eyes and appealingly sweet, but her shoulders are far too frail to support this leaden comedy. (Her fans are bound to compare this movie negatively with a very similar role she played in *Working Girl*, where her character had some depth and texture to appreciate.) Although his underdeveloped character leaves him little leeway, Johnson is wooden as her foil.

And Edward Herrmann is burdened with a thankless — and colorless — role as Harry's yes man.

The result is laughs that are transparent and a pace that needs a pace-maker.

Viewers may enjoy this no-brainer — or feel the humor is so obvious they are being treated as if they were born yesterday.

Due to a live-in relationship and momentary violence, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

Book details Marian apparitions in context of last days

The Final Hour: The Century of Good Versus Evil, by Michael H. Brown; Faith Publishing Company (Milford, Ohio, 1992); 356 pages; \$11.50.

By Father Robert F. McNamara
Guest contributor

This book's subtitle helps explain its rather ominous title. Since early last century anti-God currents have grown steadily stronger. At the same time, however, the number of reported private revelations, particularly Marian apparitions, major and minor, has grown apace.

Michael H. Brown attempts to synchronize these anti-God and pro-God progressions. On the basis of wide reading (summarized in bibliographical notes), and many personal interviews with contemporary seers, he writes this report as an investigative Catholic journalist. He is careful to note whether a given spiritual phenomenon has received the church's stamp of approval, and in the case of some as yet unaccepted incidents he does not hesitate to express his personal reservations.

It is no easy task to interweave accounts of such negative subjects as Illuminism, Marxism, Eugenics, New Age occultism, "Madonna," abortion, clerical corruption, and widespread apostasy, with the revelations of Jesus to Polish Sister Faustina Kowalska,

and the many recent apparitions of Mary around the world.

Although the author is generally successful in holding the reader's attention, he sometimes becomes hard to follow. An index might have made cross-references easier. On the other hand, some of the obscurities in his account stem from the typically enigmatic character of the alleged messages communicated to the visionaries.

The Final Hour is of special value as an introduction to the increase of purported Marian interventions in the last and current centuries. No less than 50 apparitions are listed in an appendix and alluded to during the text. These alleged apparitions or signs include not only those of Rue de Bac, LaSalette, Lourdes, Knock and Fatima — all officially approved — and Medugorje (still under study), but a host of others less known in Africa, South and Central America, Ukraine, Japan, Ireland, Canada and the United States.

Mary has made her presence felt not among Catholics alone but among the Greek Orthodox in Damascus, and the Coptic Orthodox and Muslims of Egypt. Sometimes Our Lady has been visible to only one person, as at Lourdes; sometimes to several, as at Fatima; sometimes, as at Zeitun, Egypt, and Hruschiv, Ukraine, to hundreds of thousands. Mary has generally chosen rural sites to visit and unsophisticated Christians in which to confide.

Usually the Madonna has entrusted these chosen ones with the duty of penitence and urgent prayer — particularly the rosary — in order to deter God from severely punishing a human race that seems intent upon rejecting His love. Our Lord himself is reported to have said to Jim Singer, a Ukrainian Canadian, "In Noah's day I cleansed the world of sins that were of lesser degree than these in which my children now take delight."

The heavenly communications warn that a severe purge will soon come upon the world unless its people recall that there is a God to whom we are responsible, that there is a Satan still competing for our souls, and that there is a hell for those who voluntarily make the wrong choice between them. The visionaries who receive these alleged messages are ordered to recruit by word and example others to their program of prayer and fasting. This is no easy task.

We are conscience-bound to make an act of faith only in what has been publicly revealed in Scripture and tradition as interpreted by the church. We are not bound to accept private revelations, unless we ourselves are the recipients. However, when the church concludes that certain private revelations are worthy of credence, we are free to accept and to act on them.

It seems to me that what the current revelations deplore as shockingly evil


are evidenced in the headlines of any morning newspaper. The call to prayer and penance as a practical remedy is no newer than St. Paul, who reminded the Ephesians that "our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, ... with the evil spirits ..." (6:12,18).

The disasters revealed to recent visionaries may indeed be unavoidable. But they may also be revocable, as was so often the case in the Bible when people responded to the Father's call. God's desire, according to the seers, is not to wreak revenge but to shock people into experiencing a change of heart. Concern is in order, not terror. As Padre Pio used to say, "Pray, hope, and don't worry!"

And what of the apocalyptic implications of the term "final hour?" Among the visionaries Brown quotes there seems to be a consensus that it designates not the "day of the Lord" but a penultimate era in which Mary will triumph over Satan. But who will end up on her side? God is merciful, but he will not be trifled with.

The Final Hour is illustrated with more than 70 photographs, many of them hitherto unpublished.

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