

THE GREAT GATSBY

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FULL TEXT

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THE GREAT GATSBY

(PG)

(PARAMOUNT PICTURES)

Color

144 Mins.

Cast Robert Redford, Mia Farrow, Bruce Dern, Karen Black, Scott Wilson, Sam Waterston, Lois Chiles, Howard Da Silva, Roberts Blossom, Edward Herrman, Elliot Sullivan, Arthur Hughes, Kathryn Leigh Scott, Beth Porter, Paul Tamarin, John Devlin, Patsy Kensit.

Credits: Directed by Jack Clayton. Produced by David Merrick. Screenplay by Francis Ford Coppola. Based on the Novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Photography by Douglas Slocombe. Music supervised by Nelson Riddle. Edited by Tom Priestley. Production Designer John Box. Costumes by Theoni V. Aldredge. Men's Wardrobe by Ralph Lauren.

Lavishly produced version of F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic Jazz-Age novel, top-lined by Robert Redford as the mysterious Gatsby and Mia Farrow as his long-lost love, Daisy. Within the film's period-perfect physical beauty, Jack Clayton's direction has maximized nostalgic mood and romanticism, playing down the drama and somewhat hampering the film's pace. Unprecedented media pre-sell and wide audience interest indicate strong openings. 2367

Heralded by the most intense promotion and media publicity of any film in recent years, *The Great Gatsby*—touted as a self-generating trend-setter long before its actual release—has already conjured up an almost unparalleled degree of advance audience interest. And with it, come some comparably great audience expectations. Many of those expectations will probably be fulfilled with no problem. The big-budget glamor and lavish evocation of the still-prosperous 1920's is evident in full measure; the physical production is breathtakingly beautiful; and, in Robert Redford, audiences are given what must be a perfect physical embodiment of F. Scott Fitzgerald's steadfastly romantic creation.

Nonetheless, those same fulfilling qualities, the lush romanticism and languorous depiction of nostalgic mood, have a double-edge to them. Under director Jack Clayton, the film's emphasis on style and its pervading attention to mood have, to some extent detracted from its drama. Much of the problem probably lies in the character of the original novel, but whatever the origins, the result is a downplaying of action which may make the film's intentionally measured pace too leisurely for many audience tastes. While initial commercial response should prove tremendous, whether *Gatsby's* commercial momentum can be sustained is open to question.

With Francis Ford Coppola's screenplay keeping most of Fitzgerald's original prose intact, the creative forces behind *Gatsby* were selective in what they distilled from the novel. Its implicit nostalgic appeal to contemporary audiences; the mysterious character of Gatsby himself, with underworld shenanigans somehow linked to his acquired wealth; and the socially doomed love affair between Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan (Mia Farrow).

The action in the film, as it was in the book, is seen mostly through the eyes of its sometime narrator Nick Carraway (Sam Waterston) who takes a small house near Gatsby's by the Long Island Sound and soon becomes party to the man's secrets and longings. Across the bay lives Waterston's distant cousin Daisy (Mia Farrow), lovelessly married to brutish millionaire sportsman Tom Buchanan (Bruce Dern) who makes little effort to hide his affair with Myrtle Wilson (Karen Black), the slatternly wife of a pathetically defeated garage-owner (Scott Wilson). Gatsby, who turns out to have chiseled his way into affluence with the sole goal of recapturing Daisy after losing her to Buchanan's money, eventually renews his affair with her while Waterston and Lois Chiles (as Daisy's friend Jordan Baker) recede to become passive bystanders.

Slowly, the revitalized liaison wends its way toward tragedy; Gatsby informs Buchanan of his wife's infidelity; Daisy, driving Gatsby's car, accidentally kills Myrtle without stopping; and Wilson traces the car to Gatsby (through Buchanan's aid), whereupon he kills him. No one mourns the man (least of all Daisy and Tom) and Nick, eyes opened to the fascinating ugliness of the Eastern rich, decides to leave for home.

Clayton's direction is—for the most part—faithful to the film's intents. The plush lifestyle of the privileged, the wild parties and the elegant surroundings are all lovingly lingered over. And



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the magnified romance of Gatsby and Daisy, seen mostly in misty shots of them seated talking or lying side-by-side, is lyrically heightened by photographer Douglas Slocombe's impressionistically soft focus. Clayton's sense of mood is excellent, but ultimately too pervasive. Far more effective are the rare moments—like the climactic confrontation between Redford and Dern—in which Clayton tempers the film's glossiness with a keen sense of the corruption and ugliness at the heart of overworldly success.

Redford—although the script's development somewhat diminishes his sense of mystery—provides a strong physical focus as the American spirit who uses apparently ill-gotten gains to catapult himself into society with at least the illusion of wealth and grace. If there is a stilted quality to his delivery, it does at least imply that Gatsby's aristocratic air is a veneer over his lowly origins. And Ms. Farrow—although more fragile than the Daisy of Fitzgerald's novel—delicately conveys the mixture of grace and carelessness that makes her into an ultimately destructive creature of wealth.

The supporting performances, if anything, are etched into even finer relief. Waterston truly becomes the passive but critical observer, beautifully conveying his open attraction-repulsion toward Gatsby's ethic. Dern's Tom Buchanan is a fierce, desperately selfish creature; Lois Chiles makes for a coolly beautiful disinterested onlooker; and Karen Black and Scott Wilson carry off their pivotal lower-class roles with deeply felt intensity.

Technical credits are uniformly excellent. John Box's production design and the costumes of Theoni V. Aldredge and Ralph Lauren have vividly maximized the production's overall taste and beauty. Nelson Riddle's musical backdrop consists of a variety of period standards, with Irving Berlin's "What'll I Do" serving as the recurring musical leitmotif of the film.

THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD

(G)

(COLUMBIA PICTURES)

Color

105 Mins.

Cast: John Phillip Law, Caroline Munro, Tom Baker, Douglas Wilmer, Martin Shaw, Gregoire Aslan, Kurt Christian, Takis Emmanuel, John D. Garfield, Aldo Sambrell. Credits: Produced by Charles H. Schneer and Ray Harryhausen. Directed by Gordon Hessler. Screenplay by Brian Clemens from a story by Clemens and Harryhausen. Photography by Ted Moore. Special Effects by Harryhausen. Music by Miklos Rozsa.

Enjoyable, imaginatively produced fantasy detailing the further exploits of the legendary adventurer (John Phillip Law). Film is highlighted by a bevy of bizarre creatures, effectively integrated into the live action via superb special effects. A sure bet for the kids and fantasy buffs. Test openings strong. 2368

Highlighted by a delightfully bizarre menagerie of legendary creatures who quickly take center stage, *The Golden Voyage of*

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