**Lord of the Rings: your favorite hobbits...**

The Lord of the Rings is considered to be one of the major literary works of the twentieth century. In this film, Tolkien's trilogy is combined with the efforts of America's foremost talent in animation, Ralph Bakshi. Bakshi, whose earlier works include Fritz the Cat, Heavy Traffic, and Wizards, has introduced new techniques in Lord of the Rings that make it an awesome spectacle. Representing what is probably the state of the art in animation, this film allows you to forget it is animated.

As Bakshi himself admits, it is a film designed for those who have read Tolkien and who are familiar with the Middle Earth legend. Lord of the Rings is a story of the conflict between good and evil. It details the travels of Frodo, a hobbit, as he and the fellowship (a party consisting of elves, men, dwarves, hobbits, and a wizard) struggle across Middle Earth to destroy the ring of power that threatens to end everything and everyone good. The basic conflict is thus set and this film covers the first half of the epic description of their journey.

Part of the magic of Tolkien's prose that attracts many readers is the creation of a consistent, enchanting, complete world. Bakshi's film depends on the viewer having acquired much of this background before seeing the film. After an initial 15-minute exposition on the history of the Rings, the film takes off at a rapid pace. As a result, much of the background, consisting of 131 minutes of film, the continuity is lost. Characters seem to be thrust inexorably into 131 minutes of film, the continuity is a result of trying to put too much material before seeing the film. After an initial 15-minute exposition on the history of the Rings, the film takes off at a rapid pace. As a result, the state of the art in animation, this film allows you to forget it is animated.

By David Sole

**Watership Down's rabbits**

The most important part of the film is the characters. Unlike the Rankin-Bass Hobbit that appeared on television last year, Bakshi has attempted to remain faithful to Tolkien's descriptions. The hobbits, Frodo, the ringbearer, Bilbo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin, are the small yet adult-looking characters that readers encountered in Tolkien's work. Complete with hairy toes, they act as one has come to expect, dedicated to enjoyment, but still brave and loyal.

The other races in the party are also well represented. Aragorn and Boromir, the two vastly different humans, are portrayed accurately. Boromir is the great warrior, full of bravura and self-interest. Aragorn, the ranger, is more complex a character and never fully revealed. Glimpse the dwarf and Legolas the elf are clearly presented as outstanding members of their respective races. Filling out the party is Gandalf, the powerful wizard who leads them through.

By Shawn Wilson

Watershlp Down is an adventure fantasy that appeared as a bestselling novel by Richard Adams several years ago, relating a quest of near epic proportions and involving mythology, mythology, nationally touching, totalitarianism, and of course, a certain amount of violence. The story is destined for translation to the screen and raised as an uncommon problem for the producer, Martin Rosen: how to keep the characters from seeming cutie, cute, and adorable.

The characters of Watership Down, as you probably know, are wild rabbits. Rosen's production company, Norelco Productions Ltd. of England, has solved the problem admirably. The animation of realistic brown and grays for the colors of the rabbits, and by drawing them to look more like rabbits, rather than rabbit people, as the Disney studios might have done, it becomes easier for one to forget the images of Flopin, Mopin, Cottontail, and Peter.

The film opens with a cartoonish version of the rabbit's creation myth, and proceeds to tell the story of Hazel (voice by British actor John Hurt), whoseclairvoyant brother Fiver (Richard Briers) foretells the destruction of their warren, somewhere in rural England. While Fiver's clairvoyance is unheeded by the warren's chief, gossip does spread quickly (even among rabbits), and the pair soon has a following ready to search for a new home. They evade the Owsla, the police ruling class, with the aid of one of its defecting officers, and set out to find what Fiver feels would be the perfect place for a warren.

Even in their own world, there are no ordinary rabbits. The creation story of Elahibre preaches a justifiably paranoid outlook on life, but the characters refuse to die; when they encounter a group whose outlook is downright fascistic, again justifiably, they refuse to have anything to do with them, and continue under Hazel's leadership and Fiver's rather vague navigation.

The survival theme is clear enough: the rabbits are set upon by rats, hawks, dogs, cats, men (of course), and other rabbits (!)—specifically General Woundwort, the dictator of the overcrowded warren Efrafa. After our heroes establish a home on the hill called Watership Down, they decide to increase their number by helping some Efrafaans to escape, with the aid of a crazy seagull named Kehaar. The script, written by producer Rosen, does have to exclude parts of the six-hundred page book—such as the last Zero Mostel as Kehaar, who flies soaring and renounces.

The drawings are very good, but the animation is a bit uneven at times, especially around the mouths—yet the characterizations are brought out surprisingly well by the voices, particularly the late Zero Mostel as Kehaar. The script, written by producer Rosen, does have to exclude parts of the six-hundred page book—all but one of the myths, for example, and most of the rabbit language Lepine—but being a fan of the book himself, Rosen was faithful enough to the story to make the film, like the book, an enchanting and thoroughly disarming fairy tale for adults.