Lord of the Rings for Tolkien aficionados

The Visible Language Workshop has reaffirmed its commitment to communication by presenting a fall lecture series discussing various aspects of the cultural affairs at WGBH. It continued last fall with Topper Carew, program manager for multimedia. The series opened with Topper Carew reaffirming their commitment to community. By showing the tape illuminating a look at the community review process, Piper was able to make people aware of the role they could play in shaping a project to meet their community's needs.

Both Carew and Piper stressed the need for community involvement in television. Piper showed his tape, Capric Spenser, an illuminating look at the community review process that went into the Copley Square development project. By showing the tape at community meetings, Piper was able to make people aware of the role they could play in shaping a project to meet their community's needs.

Topper Carew's community involvement takes a different tack than Piper's. His Rainbow Television Workshop, a South End based organization, is the first independent Black production company in the country. At this time, the Workshop has completed two projects. The first is the story of a multi-generational Black family; the second a situation comedy entitled For Her Own Glory. The Workshop lecture series is not devoted to television. The next talk features Dietmar Winkler of Southern Methodist University, performing arts faculty. Soon to follow are Lynn Staley and Ron Campisi of the Real Paper and Boston Globe respectively.

Though both Piper and Carew are video visionaries, the entire Visible Language Workshop lecture series is not devoted to television. The creatures encountered, orcs, a balrog, the ring-wraiths, Treebeard the ent, and several others, are created in ways to accent their individual traits. The orcs are dark and indifferent while Treebeard is portrayed almost in the style of an old Saturday morning cartoon. In general, the focus of good are portrayed in detail and well illuminated while evil is dark and obscure. Some of the things and people met in the course of the movie are disappointing. The Lady Galadriel was not well depicted nor was Grima/Wormtongue, aide to theodred, King of Rohan. Snegol, or Gollum, is the one character with the greatest ambiguity. Never fully described by Tolkien, his appearance is open to speculation. Bakshi's drawing of him is reasonable and depicts him somewhere between the more obvious forces of good and evil. Played for comic relief in parts of this segment of Lord of the Rings, he seems somewhat out of character, not quite in place in this film. Nevertheless, Gollum does evoke the sympathy from the audience that he does from the characters.

The background were also inconsistent. While excellent for the major part of the film, they suffer in many places. Rivendell and Lothlorien, centers of beauty, do not mean any more than the majesty Tolkien ascribes to them. However, for most of the film, the work is so real that it contributes to the suspension of disbelief that surprisingly pervades the film.

The music is the weakest part of the film. One or two segments are interesting, but Leonard Rosenman, whose credits include Academy Awards for Barry Lyndon and Bound for Glory, has failed to capture the atmosphere of Middle Earth. Tolkien's world is a land rich with song, but this is a component absent from the film version of Lord of the Rings.

VLW begins fall lecture series

By Claudia Perry

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One reason that Carew was able to produce these programs is his use of a cost-effective dramatic video technique. Learning his trade in Los Angeles and at the BBC, and as production-coordinator of PBS's award-winning series, Realop, he has attained a little-doubted status as a leader in community television. At Rainbow, work is being provided for people involved in all phases of dramatic television production in the Boston area. Although Piper's video work has been confined to MIT for the most part, he sees the need for opening up decision-making processes to the community. He is particularly interested in two-way cable access as a method of making review processes more meaningful to the average viewer.