Gallipoli: More Brilliance from Director Weir

Gallipoli, starring Mel Gibson and Mark Lee, directed by Peter Weir, now showing at the Nickelodeon Theatre.

The figure of a man, arm raised, pistol in hand, the look of terror etched on his face. His lips stammer uncontrollably as he tries the last of previous acting experience shows through in the unrefined energy he exudes. He is the perfect example of adolescence, the raw and sometimes awkward exclamation he gives as a young man who doesn’t know his own strength.

Lee is complemented by the more accomplished Mel Gibson, who portrays the amanuense but still fascinating reality of Frank. Gibson’s experience as an actor is also suited to his role as the more mature character — this is indicative of the genius of director Peter Weir, who selected the two actors almost by accident. Together, Frank and Archy make a formidable pair as they join the army to prove their manhood in World War I.

The cinematography is perhaps the most memorable aspect of Gallipoli. In a strikingly beautiful scene, Frank and Archy must cross the fierce Ottoman lines back to Perith, where they are battered in a landscape of intense blue sky and wide expanses of gorgeous sand, their isolation in the vast emptiness of the desert foreboding their ultimate doom at Gallipoli.

About two-thirds into the film, the fun disappears and the boys make their purpose in the war. Their initiation with danger occurs in a picturesque scene, with Archy and Frank bathing in the ocean when gunshots are heard. In order to escape the gunfire, they submerge and see the water suddenly turn red — one of their fellow Aussies has been hit. In typical bush fashion, Archy dismisses the incident as an accident, almost telling himself that no harm could ever befall him.

In the final climactic scene, we find “Archy next on line to go over there.” Frank, noted for his track skills, is chosen as a messenger from the front line trenches back to headquarters. Major Barton, the leader of the troops at the front line, witnesses the salvation of his men and sends Frank back to headquarters.

Finally he tells himself that the order must be carried out. Did Frank make it? Did he do something he wouldn’t do himself?”

In an intense scene of parallel action, the audience is gripped in wonder as the boys almost by accident, almost telling themselves that nothing could ever happen to them. Their peril is only increased when they are caught in a personal dilemma.

The excitement of moral justice, the hard-hitting journalism of a crooked politician. When John Belushi has his thugs work overtime, he finds a way to intervie...