**Dead Zone has a life of its own**

The Dead Zone, written by Stephen King, starring Christopher Walken, Brooke Adams, Tom Skerritt, Herbert Lom, Anthony Zerbe, and Martin Sheen. Produced by Debra Hill, directed by David Cronenberg, screenplay by Jeffrey Boam, a Paramount Pictures release, now playing at the Sack Pi Alley.

Stephen King's novels are cinematic — they provide the reader with vivid visual images. They also tend to be lengthy. The problem, then, with making a movie from a King novel is the actual transfer of the imagery to the screen while keeping the movie's length reasonably short. The Dead Zone does as well as can be expected, but too much of the book's narrative was omitted in order to keep the film's running time down to a commercially acceptable two hours.

The Dead Zone is the story of Johnny Smith (Christopher Walken), a schoolteacher in rural New Hampshire, who suffers a stroke after an automobile accident. Upon his awakening five years later, he discovers that fellow teacher and his fiancée, Sarah Bracknell (Brooke Adams) has convinced him that Stillson will eventually become president and start a new war. Johnny decides that it is his moral duty to kill Stillson, knowing what will happen if he does not, and while his gunshots miss their mark he does ruin Stillson's political future. Johnny is killed by one of Stillson's henchmen (Geza Kovacs), but dies satisfied in the knowledge that he has saved humanity from this particular evil.

Protagonist David Cronenberg (Scanners, Videodrome) has melded the hatcheted down material for the production was collected from songs by Tom Lehrer, an Evening Musical, Tom Lehrer, and That Was the Year That Was — Walken's original record-. He was also select-. A few of the songs have been changed in an attempt to update the topical references: "Dad's" no longer has a poll tax, and in the listing of "Who's Next?" Lehrer has added "Japan has got its own devil — transvestite and half the price." Even Jerry Studus and Jerry Falwell end up dancing cheek-to-cheek. Still other songs, of political nature have lost much of their impact due to the changing times. Egypt and Israel are no longer enemies, and few people remember Senator Murphy, let alone finding anything amusing in his background as an actor.

**Lehrer's still no tom fool**

Tom Lehrer, words and music by Tom Lehrer, now playing at the Charles Playhouse.

"Be prepared!" warns the cast as this entertaining revue embarks on a journey through Tom Lehrer's musical satire and social commentary. The audience is invited to participate in the screening of the show.

Under the direction of Douglas C. Wanger and Geoffrey Ferris, Tomfoolery brings back to the Boston stage more than two dozen of Mr. Lehrer's best loved — and most tasteless — songs. Afficionados will notice, that for two numbers, the material for the production was collected from songs by Tom Lehrer, an Evening Musical, Tom Lehrer, and That Was the Year That Was — Walken's original recordings of his tunes. The true artist will also notice that many of the jokes and song introductions have also been appropriated straight from the records with few or no changes. A sense of orientation may be gained when a familiar introduction is used to lead into "Dad's a Dope Peddler - BLssb..." with his pupil, but at one point "sees" Christopher and his friends falling through thin ice while playing hockey. Johnny's insistence that they not go out on the pond costs him his job, but saves Christopher's life — the boy refuses to participate in the outing, and two of his friends drown as the ice breaks through.

Johnny now realizes that he can not only predict the future, but that he can alter it as well. An encounter with Senate candidate Greg Stillson (Martin Sheen) convinces him that Stillson will eventually become president and start a new war. Johnny decides that it is his moral duty to kill Stillson, knowing what will happen if he does not, and while his gunshots miss their mark he does ruin Stillson's political future. Johnny is killed by one of Stillson's henchmen (Geza Kovacs), but dies satisfied in the knowledge that he has saved humanity from this particular evil.

Protagonist David Cronenberg (Scanners, Videodrome) has melded the hatcheted storyline of King's book into a satisfying whole, and the visualizations of Johnny's "spells" are exceptionally well executed. Jeffrey Boam's fractured screenplay, however, eliminates some of book's plot, and "spells" are exceptionally well executed. Jeffrey Boam's fractured screenplay, however, eliminates some of book's plot, and the two new songs in the production, and audience response. Jerome was also select-. A few of the songs have been changed in an attempt to update the topical references: "Dad's" no longer has a poll tax, and in the listing of "Who's Next?" Lehrer has added "Japan has got its own devil — transvestite and half the price." Even Jerry Studus and Jerry Falwell end up dancing cheek-to-cheek. Still other songs, of political nature have lost much of their impact due to the changing times. Egypt and Israel are no longer enemies, and few people remember Senator Murphy, let alone finding anything amusing in his background as an actor.

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Christopher Walken, who won an Oscar for his part in The Deer Hunter, is riveting as Johnny. He underplays this role as just an average guy who wants only to lead an unassuming life, not fully understanding what has happened to him. This is in stark contrast to Martin Sheen's delightfully hammy portrayal of Stillson as the consummate sleazy demagogue. Both should be considered for Academy Awards come spring. The other actors are hampered by their truncated roles: only Herbert Lom (of Pink Panther fame) transcends this problem, for his portrayal is a sympathetic yet pragmatic depiction of Dr. Weizak.

The Dead Zone does have a life of its own apart from the novel, but more care should have been taken for retaining King's finely-crafted story to the screen. If a greater portion of it had been filmed, it would have been a more satisfying cinematic experience, even if somewhat longer — the film is about one hour shorter than the novel.

Ultimately, The Dead Zone succeeds as a movie, but not as an adaptation of the book.

Drew Blakeman

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