

A whale of a tale

Burton's heartwarming *Big Fish* triumphs over complications with allegory, structure – just barely



Photo courtesy of Columbia Pictures

Time stands still for Edward Bloom (Ewan McGregor) as he catches the first glimpse of the love of his life, Sandra (Alison Lohman).

By Brian Carlo
Life Editor

Glance over the list of Tim Burton's directing credits – *Batman*, *Beetlejuice*, *Edward Scissorhands*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Mars Attacks* and even recent blunder *Planet of the Apes* – and you'll find a startling preoccupation with worlds colliding, bursting with cleverness and color.

Big Fish is no exception, to an extent, pitting a dying Edward Bloom (Albert Finney) and his charming, outlandish life story against his skeptical, estranged son Will (Billy Crudup), a journalist who's concerned he'll never learn the true story about who his father really is.

The colors in *Big Fish* are rich, the cast of thousands predictably fantastic, but the breach between Edward's world and Will's, the crux of the entire film, is disappointingly large and structure choppy.

In the end, the lightbulb goes off and Will finally understands how to connect with his father in his final hour, and it's powerful. I'll admit, as I left the theater, the first thing I wanted to do was to get my father on the phone and tell him I loved him.

But to get to that point, the textbook Burton seamlessness between the two

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worlds colliding was markedly absent. The connections between Edward's magical stories and his bedridden reality seemed too contrived, and the underlying allegory of young Edward (Ewan McGregor) as Homer's Odysseus is sadly too distant.

Don't get me wrong, *Big Fish* is entertaining from start to finish. Edward's friends and colleagues are more entertaining than any dumb lumberjack or blue ox, and the deadpan one-liners from his giant friend Karl (Matthew McGrory) are classically funny. The bursting daffodils that fill the screen

from corner to corner in the proposal scene is as beautiful a picture as you'll find at the movies all year.

Something should also be said for Burton's casting, as McGregor's Edward seems to look and act surprisingly similar to Finney's elder portrayal. Danny DeVito plays a great creepy circus guy, and Steve Buscemi shows up as a bank-robbing poet, his best role since flying uncontrollably down a hill in a shopping cart as the Bum in *Big Daddy*. Their Alabamian accents are pretty weak, save for Finney, though we'll let them slide on that one.

But as exhausting and entertaining as Edward's life may be, the transitions in and out of the fantasy world are, again, often difficult, sometimes painful to watch.

I'm glad I saw *Big Fish*, that's without doubt, and if you're not touched by the ending, then you're either acting like you're too cool to be moved by father/son relationships (you're not, trust me) or you've got a heart of stone.

The disheartening thing, though, is that the journey from introductions to end credits seems cheapened in some way. I expected more from Burton in wrangling with *Big Fish*'s difficult structure. In his biggest chance to prove what he does best, he only gets it partially right.

Easy money: book buyback helps all

Sometimes frustrating process explained with tips for the best deals

By Jessica Pritchard
Life Editor

At the beginning of the semester, lugging around those books that weigh (and cost) about as much as a few gold bars, buyback time is about as far from most people's minds as what they learned in their freshman seminar.

What they don't know about this confusing and sometimes frustrating process could hurt them later, though, or at least leave them stuck with a giant biology book that no one seems to want.

Buz Moser, the director of university stores, said that this semester was the first time the bookstore had offered a buyback period during the first week of the semester.

A small table outside Taylor House was run by a temporary worker who paid some students for their leftover books.

Some students left with full pockets, others with enough for a luxurious night out at the Pit and still some with nothing. Who decides what the books are worth?

Moser said the process begins at the end of the semester when professors turn in their selections and expected class size for the following semester.

If a book is being used again, a certain number set by the bookstore will be bought back to be resold, Moser said. New books will still be purchased as well, he said, because they're preferred by some students. The used books are bought back for half the original price.

Once the quota of books for the following semester is met, the university bookstore then begins to buy back textbooks to sell to wholesalers.

Moser said they are sent a CD with the updated values of what the wholesalers will pay for books approximately every two weeks during the buyback period.

This shows a price to the cashier when the barcode on the book is scanned and subsequently bought back for that value.

Moser said what most students don't understand is that the bookstore only gets a small percentage of the book buyback price.

"The bookstore wants to buy back the book for the highest price possible: when you make more money, so do we. It's the wholesalers who set the prices," Moser said.

For example, if the bookstore buys back a book to go to the wholesalers for \$10, the store receives about \$1. The more

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they can give the student, the more they receive.

Unfortunately, Moser said, the store cannot pay more than what the wholesalers list as prices they will pay for the used books. Sometimes a book may be out of print and in high demand so buyback prices will be high. When orders are filled, the prices the wholesalers set drop, especially for those books of which there is a surplus or small demand.

While this arrangement may not always work best for those involved, with the exception of the wholesalers, Moser said there aren't many alternatives for the bookstore.

Other students have found their own way to outwit the wholesalers and get more money for their unwanted books.

Sophomore Grier May had a leftover book from her religion class that was not bought back from the bookstore.

"It was a bound packet of course material made by the professor," she said. "I found a student who was taking the course this semester and offered to sell mine to her for \$5 less than the professor's price."

May said she was pleased with getting any money back for something that wasn't even a "real" textbook.

Freshman Danny Ball said he missed the buyback period during last semester and this semester. It wasn't very well publicized, he said, citing a lack of posters or flyers.

Ball instead sold two of his books to friends, making \$60. He said he gave some books away and still has others. He had not considered selling them on *Amazon.com*.

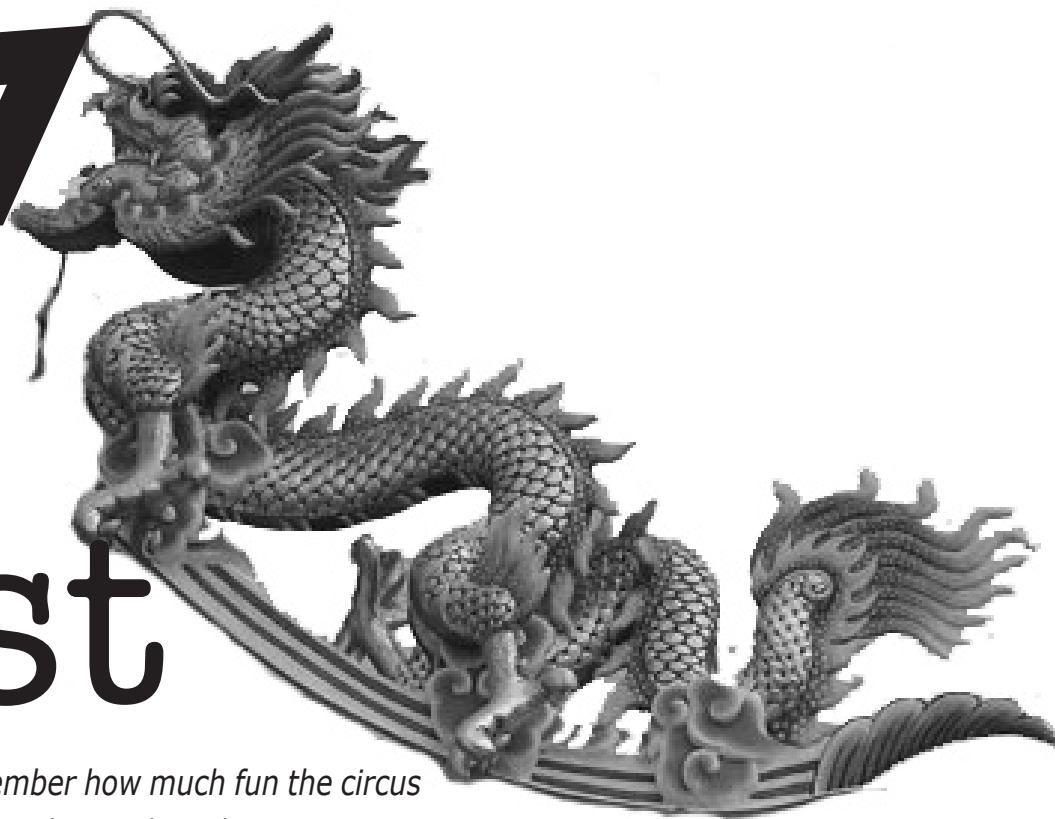
Sophomore Victoria Borowski said she didn't feel like waiting in line at the end of last semester to sell back her books.

"Once I was done with finals I just wanted to get home," she said.

Instead, Borowski took her books with her and sold them online at *Amazon.com*, making over \$100.

Moser said that if a student had a book that was not being bought back they could always check back again at the end of the buyback period for a better price, but he also said that there were no guarantees.

the HOT list



Life's best picks to see and do this week

1 Out with the sheep and in with the monkey. What better way to celebrate the Chinese New Year than by attending the Festival Jan. 24? Attendees should expect demonstrations on Chinese calligraphy, paper folding, a traditional lion dance by members of the Asian Student Interest Association, as well as authentic Chinese food from Winston-Salem's own Peking Restaurant for a nominal fee. The festival runs from 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Reynolds Gym, 201.

2 Tonight the Triad Indie Film Network teams up with the Green Bean Coffee House to present a short film night. The Triad Indie Film Network is a group of actors, directors and writers based in downtown Greensboro. The Green Bean Coffee House is located at 341 S. Elm Street in Greensboro. There's no charge for the screenings, so if you enjoy independent films, good coffee and an inviting atmosphere there's no excuse or reason not to go.

3 Remember how much fun the circus used to be? Relive the excitement of the big tent by checking out the Toby Tyler Circus at the LJM this weekend. Traveling all over the country, the circus will have acrobatics, animals, clowns and all the little things that make the circus great. With pledge night another week away, you're going to have to find something to do this weekend, right? Contact the LJM for more information, tickets are \$20 for adults.

4 Waking up before noon on Sunday requires something very special, right? Well the Men's basketball game is on at 1 p.m., so there's no need for concern. The team has dropped a couple of games now and they are due to pick up a win. Look for the game to be broadcast on Jefferson Pilot. In Skip We Trust ... Go Deacs!