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The Great Buck Howard Magnolia Pictures

Rated PG Now Showing at: The Redmoor, April 26-28 Review by: Larry Thomas

We've all know someone who would win the award for most obnoxious laugh, or most obnoxious snort. You're about to meet the man with the most obnoxious handshake. He's *The Great Buck Howard*, as played by that master of quirky individuals, John Malkovich. Buck Howard is down-on-his-luck mentalist. He's played venues worldwide, and appeared 61 times on The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson. But times change, and Buck's career is not what it used to be. The character, and story, is based on The Amazing Kreskin, and the parallels are obvious if you remember him.

The Great Buck Howard is reminiscent of that 1982 classic My Favorite Year with Peter O'Toole. Although not as good as that

masterpiece, it has a lot of the same warmth and charm. Colin Hanks plays a law student who hates studying law. He decides to drop out and pursue something different...although he's not sure what. He answers an ad for road manager to *The Great Buck Howard* and is hired virtually on the spot. Hanks father, played by Tom Hanks in a bit of typecasting, is not pleased with this change in his son's career direction.

In finding his way through a new stage of his life, Hanks encounters all manner of colorful characters. In addition to *The Great Buck Howard*, there's Emily Blunt, from *The Devil Wears Prada* and *Sunshine Cleaning*, as a publicist from New York who has been assigned to Buck. Character actor Ricky Jay, himself a magician and sleight-of-hand expert, is Buck's agent. Steve Zahn and Middletown native Debra Monk play a brother and sister who are big fans, and self-appointed entourage when Buck arrives in Cincinnati to launch a new trick designed to revitalize his career.

Although an important part of the story is set in Cincinnati, there wasn't much shooting done here, save for some second unit location scenes. But references are included about Jerry Springer, and there are cameo appearances by many current TV hosts, including Jay Leno, Conan O' Brien, and Jon Stewart.

The Great Buck Howard is a good "life lessons" film. Hanks is believable as he searches for something more than being another lawyer, and Malkovich, as always, is a joy to watch as he plays an egotistical, sometimes unbearable, showbiz type, who basically means well without knowing how to express it.

And credit for the whole affair goes to Tom Hanks, who is one of the producers for his own company. Here's a guy who has become one of the most popular current day movie stars, has made tons of money as producer of hits like *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* and *Mamma Mia*, and yet still finds the time...and the cash...to give back by independently producing a small, low-budget film that would never make it through the studio sausage grinder system. *The Great Buck Howard* won't win awards, won't gross a lot of money at the box office, and quite likely won't be remembered much in thirty years. But for now, you'll be glad you saw it.

The PG-rated *The Great Buck Howard* is being presented by Cincinnati World Cinema at The Redmoor on Mt. Lookout Square. There are three showings: Sunday, April 26 at 3 pm, and Monday and Tuesday, April 27 and 28 at 7:30 pm. For more information about the showing, The Redmoor, and Cincinnati World Cinema.

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Frank Deford wonders why golf
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— can't make more noise.

In U.K., 'I Before E' No More Tue, 23 Jun 2009

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"I before e, except after c." It's a hallowed spelling rule that's been passed on from teacher to student the world over. Now, teachers in Britain are being told to stop because there are too many exceptions. Ben



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