

The Fisher King: Equally well as fairy tale and as an ordinary story

By Kathy Amen

The Fisher King. Directed by Terry Gilliam; written by Richard LaGravenese; produced by Debra Hill and Lynda Obst for Tri-Star. Starring Jeff Bridges and Robin Williams. Rated R ***1/2

It's probably not fair to judge fairy tales and fables by the same standards that we use for ordinary stories. There are too many coincidences, for one thing, and the events are fairly predictable. But we can forgive such lapses in classic narratives, where we wouldn't in stories about everyday people.

The fable of *The Fisher King*, however, doesn't need this double standard. It succeeds equally well as a fairy tale and as a regular story. The success is due largely to the excellent performances of its two stars. Both Williams and Bridges have many technically outstanding and emotionally satisfying roles on their resumes, and their work here com-

pires favorably with their best.

The imaginative cinematography is a plus, too, and so is a supporting cast which fills out the movie's little universe admirably.

Careful moviegoers will, note, however, that the director is the Terry Gilliam of Monty Python fame. His previous movies (*Time Bandits*, *Brazil*, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*) have been, at the very least, somewhat odd. This latest effort is perhaps more mainstream than the others, but some of its black humor, or its fantasy elements, won't appeal to everyone.

Bridges plays a talk-radio host named Jack whose fortunes plunge from the heights to the depths, giving him a chance to learn some important lessons about life and about himself. His unlikely teacher is Parry, a street person with definite mental problems, but also an unflinching zest for life.

Parry's and Jack's stories inter-



Coffee anyone?

Jack (Jeff Bridges) and Anne (Mercedes Ruehl) plot to bring Parry (Robin Williams and Lydia (Amanda Plummer) together — first at Anne's video store, then on a date at a Chinese Restaurant — in *The Fisher King*. (Courtesy photo)

twine in several different, always fascinating ways, throughout *The Fisher King*. They basically play savior and saved, but switch places

unpredictably, constructing as they go a thoughtful and a moving modern parable of redemption and survival.