

The Navigator

By DWIGHT BROWN

NEW YORK — With just two feature films under his belt, New Zealand director Vincent Ward has crafted an impressive epic, "The Navigator: An Odyssey Across Time." Co-writing the imaginative script and fusing a unique blend of extraordinary production design, stunning cinematography and precise editing, Ward has created an astounding masterwork. In his third movie, he exhibits a genius usually associated with more experienced directors.

Expect "Navigator" to leave art film fans in a state of ecstasy.

The year is 1348. The place is Cumbria, England, a barbaric winterland. The atmosphere in this mining town is filled with gloom. A plague has devastated the neighboring villages, and Cumbria eyes its safety with great concern.

Connor (Bruce Lyons), a young miner, returns from a trip outside the isolated village with ominous words about the approaching pestilence. The town puts its future in the hands of a small lad named Griffin (Hamish McFarlane), a clairvoyant endowed with prophetic visions and haunting, cryptic nightmares.

His prescription to save the village: Drill through the center of the earth, travel to a celestial city, place a spire atop a sacred cathedral before dawn. Do it as a sacrifice. Thus begins the life-concerning trek of Connor, Griffin and a weary band of men.

Told in a traditional linear fashion, this unique and ingenious screenplay (co-written by Ward, Kely Lyons and Geoff Chapple) would be quite an epic. But inter-

THE NAVIGATOR: AN ODYSSEY ACROSS TIME

Circle Releasing

Producer John Maynard
Co-producer Gary Hannam
Director Vincent Ward
Screenwriters Vincent Ward, Kely Lyons,
Geoff Chapple
Director of photography Geoffrey Simpson
Production designer Sally Campbell
Art director Mike Becroft
Music Davood A. Tabrizi
Editor John Scott

Color and Black & White/Stereo

Starring: Bruce Lyons, Chris Haywood, Hamish McFarlane, Marshall Napier, Noel Appleby, Paul Livingston, Sara Pierce

Running time - 92 minutes

MPAA Rating: PG

persed with Griffin's static, graphic, hypnotic visions, the plot intensifies, adding texture, dimension and thrills. Most often, the enigmatic back-and-forth, present-and-future, real-and-not-so-real juxtapositions are captivating. But on occasion they simply add confusion.

Ward's village scenes are shot in grainy, mesmerizing black-and-white. These sequences stir a somber, ravaged mood and underline these people's hard life. Griffin's dreams are in color — they're visions of hope, glimpses of the dangerous trek and nightmarish flashes. The juxtaposition of black-and-white and color is not just a gimmick — it's a work of art.

Credit editor John Scott for the constant pace. He expertly clips the more astonishing but laborious scenes while showing equal finesse at editing the moments that lead to a breathtaking climax.

Davood A. Tabrizi's musical score enhances throughout. Glenys Jackson's superb costuming peaks with miners' hats crowned by a burning candle. Makeup artist Marjory Hamlin knows exactly when to smudge a face or bloody an eye.

Young McFarlane plays Griffin perfectly. Simple, earnest and determined, his performance is connected and unwavering. Equally possessed and even more photogenic is Lyons, who plays the brave young man who knows more than he tells. The supporting cast is stellar, and never is one motion, inflection or expression out of place.