



Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner costar in "Romancing the Stone," a romantic adventure-comedy from an original screenplay by Diane Thomas. Filming was in Mexico for the story set in South America, about a romance novelist who gets involved in a hunt for a gemstone treasure.

the movies
Dan Greenberg

Candy tastes good, and light films offer that same pleasure

Popular, successful films make money because they provide an entertaining hour or two of excitement and relaxation. They provide escape from the humdrum monotony of daily living. Audiences pay well (and often several times) for the simple pleasures of musicals, westerns, adventures, love stories and sci-fi fantasies.

Most popular and financially successful films are light and fluffy but thin on top, as the millions-plus daily boxoffice-grossers for "Footloose" and "Splash" testify. Sometimes serious movies strike a general concern and become popular, as did "The China Syndrome."

Or, a very well-made movie dealing with serious social questions entertains and becomes critically successful and important box office, as "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" did.

Mike Douglas (Kirk's immediately recognizable son) produced both and starred in the former. This time out, "Romancing the Stone," Douglas is going strictly for the jellies. He's turned out a tasty one but unfortunately it has Godiva Chocolate pretensions.

THE FILM HAS a clever premise, is lots of fun to watch but lacks some of the exciting flavor one expects from first-class candy.

"Romancing the Stone" is the story of prissy retiring New York romantic novelist Joan Wilder (Kathleen Turner). Though a successful writer, her personal life largely is limited to fantasies such as those she writes. Her friend and agent, Gilda (Holland Taylor) describes her as the girl who gets sick riding the escalator at Bloomingdale's.

Suddenly, Joan Wilder is swept up in a mystery-adventure akin to those she writes. Her sister, Elinor (Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio) is kidnapped by two semi-competent, unlikely named thugs, Rafe and Ira (Danny DeVito and Zack Norman). Naturally, there is a treasure map at the bottom of the whole mess.

Our heroine, Joan, must deliver the map to shown in Colombia to save her sister, and with the roar of jet engines she is quickly plunged into all the danger and excitement of jungle living.

Her first major problem is escaping the evil Colombian Colonel, Zolo (Manuel Ojeda), who also wants the treasure map. That's easily accomplished when the hero of her novels as a personal fantasia, Jack Colton (Michael Douglas), appears swooping against the sky, furiously pumping bullets from his Winchester 12 gauge.

AFTER MANY adventures, and one love scene where they both look uncomfortable (it's not the position for small talk), Jack and Joan sail away down Lexington Avenue, or whatever New York street was used for the cutesy gag ending.

"Romancing the Stone" will probably be another box-office success because it does provide 101 minutes of carefree entertainment. However, the film falls short of the tongue-in-cheek thrills that made "Halders of the Lost Ark" so successful.

"Romancing" is all too predictable, easy and self-conscious. Douglas tries too hard to be cool, indifferent and rich. The long movie stereotype of the lonely, strong silent type about to be warmed and humanized by the leading lady needs to be played with less obvious attention to the camera.

Turner's transition from prissy novelist to knife-wielding adventurer is clever but too rapidly achieved for the film to flow smoothly.

Only Mexican star Manuel Ojeda as Colonel Zolo plays the joke with the necessary unharmed indifference. His apparently serious manner is convincing as if to say, "For enough pesos I'll play along with this gringo joke, but it doesn't matter."

DANNY DE VITO and Zack Norman, particularly the former, bumble through their incompetent hoodlum routine pretty well. DeVito played it for laughs and gets quite a few but doesn't seem to be unwound enough to enjoy the joke.

"Romancing the Stone" is rated PG mainly because of — well, I'm not sure any more what "parental guidance" means, at least not in terms of the movies.

During the last quarter century, the acceptable standards for public behavior have changed dramatically. The civil rights and consumer movements, a long series of First Amendment decisions and many other dramatic changes in the world have led to contemporary standards.

Just what does "parental guidance" mean in terms of an entertaining film like "Romancing"? The one nude scoundrelly merits mention these days, other than to note that they're uncomfortable and the images lack passion. But what does parent tell the children?

The Rating Code also supposedly warns parents that they need to guide their children through violent episodes.

"OKEY, LISTEN, Son, don't have bad dreams when you see the mechanical alligator bite off the bad editor's hand. After all, he was a bad man and it's just a fake, movie special-effect, you know."

Does that help the kids dream sweet dreams of childhood? Wouldn't it be just as well to let their imaginations work, as in the case when Colonel Zolo falls into the alligator pit? Why supply them with gross images to build upon in their minds?

But, then again, the moviemakers are only giving the public what it wants. Conclusion: Jelly beans will rot your teeth but they sure taste good, even when they're a blue-light episode.

table talk

Now Poseidon's

A six-foot six-inch statue of Poseidon, god of the sea, dramatizes the main dining room at the newly renovated restaurant called Poseidon's Place at 1019 1/2 Mile Road, Clawson. Formerly Zilla's and before that the Pagoda, the restaurant and lounge offers dining and dancing. American and Greek dishes are available, with entrees ranging from fish to broiled lamb chops. Flaming saganaki, homemade soups, spinach pie and caramel creme pudding are other selections that take the diner from appetizer to dessert.

Secretary's Day

Secretaries who think the date of Secretaries Day may ailp their boss' minds are being given an assist by the Kingsley Inn of Bloomfield Hills. Reminder cards (with a Quotation to Re-

member, primarily for women secretaries to give to male bosses) are available without charge at the Kingsley. Secretaries Week is April 23-27, Secretaries Day, April 25.

Gourmet dinner

Nachus Red Fox in Birmingham is doing its share to help the U.S. Chef's Culinary Olympics team, with a gourmet dinner to raise funds for the October 1984 Olympics in Frankfurt, Germany. The \$100-per-person dinner, to be held Sunday, April 29, begins with five appetizers at 6 p.m., followed by dinner at 7. Lobster bisque flambéed, scallops soufflé with fennel sauce, breast of pheasant with grapes and supreme sauce, roast tenderloin à la bouquette, and saucy foie and green peppercorn sauce are included on the dinner menu. Cheeses, fresh fruits, pastries, tortes, espresso, petit fours and truffles complete the

meal. Four fine wines will be served. For further information or reservations call 826-4200.

For bartenders

A seminar to help bar employees recognize signs of intoxication, as well as learn more about their moral and legal responsibility regarding service of alcoholic beverages, was held recently at the Main Event restaurant at the Pontiac Silverdome. The Techniques of Alcohol Manage-

ment seminar, sponsored by the Michigan Licensed Beverage Association, is the first of its kind in the country. The association hopes to train 15,000 employees this year.

Money raised

A total of \$1,613 was raised for muscular dystrophy at a recent day-long anniversary celebration at the Roman Terrace and McFrick's Ballroom in Farmington Hills.

— Ethel Grummon

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