

Napa Valley has 4 macroclimates



Goldie Hawn stars as Molly McGrath, who takes over as a high school football coach and leads her team to victory, in "Wildcats."



the movies Dan Greenberg

Everything is easy for Goldie Hawn in 'cartoon' comedy

Even though they're fun, and fulfill our fantasy needs, I am suspicious of movies whose hero or heroine overcomes impossible odds with a determined set of the lips.

Goldie Hawn's latest, "Wildcats" (R), is one such pleasant cartoon about the daughter of a famous Chicago high-school football coach, Molly McGrath (Goldie) and her sister Verna (Swoosie Kuriz) were raised on football, and Molly wants more than anything to be a coach like her dad.

Molly is divorced from Frank (James Keach) but has custody of their two daughters, 13-year-old Alice (Robin Lively) and 4-year-old Marian (Brandy Gold). Molly teaches at Prescott High and coaches girls' track.

When the Junior Varsity coaching position opens, Molly applies but is rejected by Athletic Director Dan Darwell (Bruce McGill) whose sexist views are inordinately exaggerated. Darwell does set Molly up as coach of the inner-city Central High football team, a position that no one will accept. Central High's principal, Ben Edwards (Nipsey Russell), is desperate enough to accept a woman as coach.

ALL OF A SUDDEN, the world is against Molly. The inner-city high school players will have nothing to do with a lady coach. Ex-hubby Frank and his snooty survival for people's tight spots, are against the idea and Darwell has a pool she won't last until Wednesday.

That's all it takes and Goldie sets her lips, furrows her eyebrows and wins the City Championship with the biggest bunch of losers since the fall of Troy.

It is just that, the ease with which she accomplishes so much that disturbs me about the film. While fantasy is fun and fulfills certain needs, there has to be some semblance of struggle and accomplishment or the film turns silly and stupid.

"Wildcats" isn't all bad for there certainly are some funny situations and some swift repartee. The cartoon stereotyping does get a bit much at times. Athletic director Darwell's sexist attitudes and childish behavior are so overdone that they pander to feminist interests.

Stephanie and the administrators of the elitist girls' school from which she graduated are another bunch of stereotypes so overdrawn that they do feminism ill service.

IN THE SAME VEIN, the ghetto stereotypes bothered me. It is somewhat puzzling since the film is just a light bit of fluff and it shouldn't matter. That may be the very point: "Wildcats" bespeaks a suburban, acceptance of inner-city problems and thinks it's funny. While humor is a means of survival for people's tight spots, that doesn't justify those looking in laughing at others' discomfort.

In my book Nipsey Russell is one of those performers worth 20 bucks when they read the phone book. In "Wildcats" his toothsome smile and deadpan delivery of a sardonic, "Right" gets tiresome although the film's best moment is a variation. Accidentally, in anger, Frank slugs Principal Edwards and then apologizes, "I thought you were one of them," referring to the black football players. "I am," Nipsey replies.

"Wildcats" is a fairly successful attempt to meld rock music, aerobic football, feminism and a woman's need to be doing in the underdog. Its raunchy language will probably be justified as realistic. I've been in enough barracks and locker rooms to realize that's true but sometimes art needs to imitate life with a little restraint.

THIS COLUMN IS going to shift focus a bit. Rather than one film review, we're going to try and cover two or three films each week. Write and let us know what you think of the idea.

THIS WEEK AND NEXT very few new films premiere but in the coming weeks, starting Friday, March 21, the spring-summer schedule of new releases begins. Scheduled for Friday, March 21, are "Sleeping Beauty," "Off-Beat," "Wine-Cups," "Guns-Go," "Police Academy III," "Something in Common" and "Absolute Beginner." That should keep everyone occupied all weekend.

Throughout the spring and summer, we can look forward to "April Fool's Day," "Rat Boy," "Lucas," "Money Pit," "Rad," "A Room with a View," "Band of the Hand," "9 Miles Away to Die," "Manhattan Project," "Shogun," "Cobra," "Big Trouble in Little China," "Space Camp," "Labyrinth" and "Under the Cherry Moon." Between the word and the deed, of course, production and distribution problems intervene and all these films may not make it to your local theater.

Mixed in this bag is a little bit of everything, although nothing as enticing as the past season's offering of "Prizzi's Honor," "Kiss of the Spider Woman," "Color Purple" and "Out of Africa," to name some of the top films in contention for Oscars.

Coming up are all the usual teen-oriented films and the summer silly season stuff: "Police Academy III" probably will tell those who are tired of Academy I and II and want a slight change. "Rad" is about BMX bicycle racing and freestyling but has Tia Taira and Ray Walston in its cast.

There's a considerable range of offerings, however, including Maggie Smith in "A Room with a View," opening Friday, March 28, a social comedy about a young English couple whose personalities clash in Italy contrast with the "Vivian Maier" background. Opening March 21 is another kind of love, Mary Tyler Moore and Sara Waterstone star in "Just Between Friends," a story about discovering that one's recently deceased spouse and one's best friend had been having an affair.

There's much more coming, so stay tuned. Next week (Monday, March 17) will be my annual column predicting the Oscar winners.

First-time and occasional visitors to the Napa Valley see one of the world's most renowned grape-growing regions as an extended vista some 17 miles long and six miles to one mile (in the north) wide.

They see it as a whole, a lush flatland surrounded on the east and west by mountains and capped in the north by Mount St. Helena as she overlooks the panorama. Beginning at Yountville, heading north, it is an almost wholly cultivated series of vineyards only occasionally broken by the presence of human habitation.

To the beginner, Napa is a continuous expanse of vines, undifferentiated and lovely. It is the place where the greatest of the California wines originate.

But in a very real sense, it is not a viticultural whole. It is not all the same in its excellence. For there are within this area at least four macroclimates, each capable of producing wines of distinction, yet not all of the same kind. Experience, especially over the last two decades — the interval of Napa's greatest days — has shown that some of its regions do work with certain varieties and considerably less well with others.

DISCOUNTING the effects of soil, the major cause of this is the variable temperatures that occur within the valley. So substantial are these differences that there are clearly discernible regions within it.

The principal determinant is the distance between any given piece of land and the San Pablo Bay to the south, itself an extension of San Francisco Bay. Prevailing winds from the southwest make for a tempering condition in the south of Napa, the effect lessening as one moves away from the bay and goes north.

Cooler air and tempering fogs make the southern region the coolest, while in the far north around Calistoga, where the valley narrows almost to a point, the critical summer weather is dramatically warmer.

Entering Napa County from San Francisco to the south, you are in the Carneros region, an area of undulating, treeless hills, until recently used as grazing land for sheep. It is now heavily planted with cool-weather grapes, the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir most predominant. Prevailing winds from the bay make this an ideal location for these grapes. The sheep are now gone to less expensive pasturage.

From Oakville to above Rutherford is the land of the great Cabernet Sauvignon, home of some of the most elegant clarets in the world. Here the "Rutherford dust" is said to be significant, mixing with the Eucalyptus and other earthy flavors to produce the great grapes they do.

AT THIS POINT especially, the valley is heavily, nearly fully planted, from the Mayacamas Mountains in the west to the Silverado Trail in the east,



wine Richard Watson

some five miles wide. This is the area of Martha's Vineyard, the Latour grapes, Mondavi's Reserve and John Shafer's best.

The temperature zones for grapes in California, and elsewhere, are measured in "degree days" (cumulative temperature means above 50 degrees during the growing season) and then grouped into regions. Carneros is Region One, Rutherford is Region Two, somewhat warmer and ideal for Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc.

Not too many years ago it was common for the various locales of Napa to be planted to a wide variety of grapes. What the grape grower wanted to grow was what went into the ground. Now, the importance of temperature (and soil and drainage) is better understood and areas are being planted more exclusively to their particular best grape. Somewhere below St. Helena the land turns into a Region Three and up in California it is a clear Region Four. (There is no Region Five in Napa. That occurs almost exclusively in the San

Joaquin Valley to the east.) This is excellent land for Zinfandel, Syrah and Chenin Blanc, though the first of these does well wherever it is planted. By now the valley is little more than a mile wide and grapes are planted less densely.

Meanwhile, up on the mountain slopes, a whole different set of growing conditions exists. A decent discussion of this would require a separate column.

THE TWO AREAS are perhaps the most closely monitored agricultural regions in the United States. What is being measured, now that the macroclimates are essentially understood, are the microclimates, those small areas that have idiosyncratic attributes, some only a few acres in size.

Napa, then, in its uniformity of visual delights, is a series of growing regions, each rather different from its neighbor. It is the increased understanding of the special nature of the acreage that helps it maintain its excellence.

table talk

Exotic game

Chef Hussain is featuring wild game for dinner, with a different presentation each day of the month, at the Crystal Swan restaurant at the Novi Hilton. Included are such fare as wild boar, wild turkey, buffalo, lion, partridge, mallard, pheasant, antelope, venison and elk. Four chef's specials of wild game will be on the menu Tuesday, March 11. Hussain, a native of India, is a Westland resident. He was Executive Sous Chef at the Capital Hilton in Washington, D.C. before joining the Novi Hilton on its opening last August.

Irish menu

A menu of all-Irish dishes will be offered by Chef Jim Lebane all day Monday, March 17. St. Patrick's Day, at Nicky's in the Top of Troy. There's an appetizer of "Little People's bits of lamb" on a stick, with green mint sauce for dipping, and Tipperary-style corn

and chicken soup. Choices for entrees are sauteed, imported Irish scallops, topped with fresh chopped lucky shamrocks; corned beef and dressed cabbage with fresh vegetables "Kilroney-style," Fennel Fiddlehead, and County Roscommon-style steak with dumplings. Desserts are John Jameson Irish Whiskey cake, Irish Coffee Toffee ice cream and fresh hillside strawberries floating in Bailey's Irish cream. Irish entertainment goes along with the meal.

Shares heritage

Michael Moylan, new head chef at the Hotel St. Regis in Detroit, shares some of his heritage, with an Irish menu planned for lunch and dinner on St. Patrick's Day. Limerick Green Pea Soup will be followed by bibb, ruby red and endive lettuce with artichoke heart, scallion flower and radish rose. Then it's on to Irish stew, Gaelic steak, jardiniere of seasonal fresh vegeta-

bles, blackberry and rhubarb pie with fresh cream, scones, Irish coffee and Black Velvet stout.

Map dedicated

An 1857 map of Oakland County, the oldest known document available, was recently dedicated by John W. Anhalt, president of the Botsford Inn in Farmington Hills, and Oakland County Executive Daniel Murphy. Discovered three years ago in the attic of the Botsford Inn, the map has been restored at the Detroit Institute of Arts, mounted and placed under glass for permanent display in the lobby of the County Courthouse.

Russian feast

Cuisine of the Russian Empire will be offered at a special dinner at 7 p.m. Monday-Tuesday, March 17-18, at the Lark in West Bloomfield. Smoked

salmon, caviar assortment, duck and lazy cabbage soup, and duck prozki, lead up to river crayfish souffle with brandy and crayfish sauce, followed by roast loin of veal with forest mushrooms and sour cream, along with braised onions and carrots and fluffy egg dumplings. The dinner continues with salad assortment, Charlotte — Charlotte russe, and Vecherny Teal — tea or coffee. Price is \$70 per person including vodka or champagne served with the caviar.

Free appraisals

Diamonds, pearls and other gemstones are appraised free by gemologist James R. Krol during lunch the first and third Tuesday of each month at Restaurant Duglass in Southfield. Auctioneer Frank H. Boos tells the value of antiques or objects d'art the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. Lunch is from noon to 2 p.m.

DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

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