

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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Realism, comedy blend unevenly in Pryor's 'Critical Condition'

No doubt, Richard Pryor fans will appreciate "Critical Condition" (R) but I found most of it tiresome. Bathroom jokes can only carry a show so far.

The film's concept is reasonable, in fact almost clever, as small-time, impractical entrepreneur (Pryor) is nabbed in mob headquarters with a case of hot diamonds and suspect dollars just as he is about to borrow big bucks from the mob.

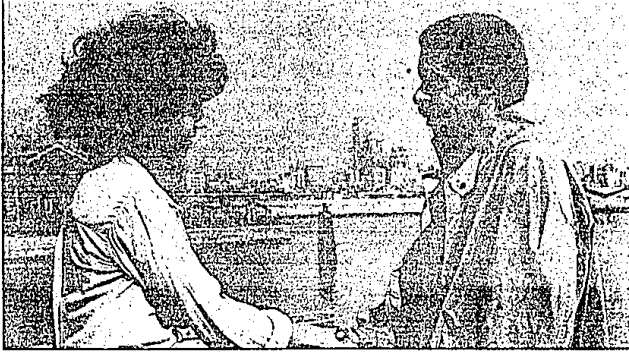
Why is he borrowing from the mob? With his track record no one else will deal with him. Why does he need the money? His latest venture: a 32-screen complex with 16 seats in each theater. Imaginative but nutty, the kind of character who could impersonate a doctor to escape a psychiatric ward where he landed on a fake plea to avoid jail.

Sounds ridiculous? Right, but that's just about what happens when Pryor cops an insanity plea to avoid jail with the mob chief who thinks Pryor faked on him.

THE LOCALE IS an island hospital not far from the World Trade Towers in Manhattan and the big storm of the season blows the power, followed quickly by the demise of the hospital's emergency generator.

Producer Ted Field notes that he has long been fascinated by hospital blackouts, and that may be part of the problem here. His five-year collection of stories and clippings about hospital blackouts divert everybody's attention from the basic comic premise of mistaken identity.

There's too much fancy stuff and irrelevant technology — using a bell-copier to air-condition a hospital and



Rachael Ticotin and Richard Pryor are happy to have survived a power failure, in this scene from "Critical Condition." Ticotin plays a hospital administrator and Pryor is a patient, on the lamb from the mob, whom she mistakes for a doctor.

blowing up a roomful of organs awaiting transplant to get at a power source — all that technology doesn't support the comic premise.

Humorous lines and funny situations are required but largely this production relies on technology, bathroom jokes and obscenities.

The truly funny but unrealized idea in "Critical Condition" is that an insignificant, impractical guy like Pryor escapes from the psychiatric ward during a natural disaster. Why escape? He faked his insanity test

and doesn't want to go to jail where the mob will kill him. He's not so nuts after all.

It really is funny that the apprentice hospital administrator, Rachel Ticotin, mistakes him for the Emergency Room duty doctor while the storm rages.

BUT THE EXECUTION by Pryor and others just doesn't make it. Amidst all this hi-tech realism, the way it's played, it's hard to believe that such an inept character could pull it

off. Certainly Pryor's nightclub style does not inspire confidence.

It takes one's credulity to think that Pryor's impractical entrepreneur could suddenly mature sufficiently to motivate people to be their very best. In addition, Pryor's medical sleight-of-hand just doesn't ring true.

While Ticotin is pleasantly attractive and convincing as a young woman in a new position, the two villains, hospital administrator Chambers (Joe Mantegna) and an escaped po-



the movies

Dan Greenberg

lice-killer (Joe Dallesandro), are flat and uni-dimensional. Taken with Pryor's heavy-handed style, clever satire turns ridiculous.

Still, there's a few good laughs and Pryorites will enjoy their old master doing his thing again.

"Outrageous Fortune" (R) opens Friday, Jan. 30, with Beate Midler and Shelley Long as rival actresses on a cross-country comic chase of the man who two-timed them both. What begins for the girls as loathing ends in friendship. It looks like a lot of fun.

ALSO ON THE 30th, Richard Chamberlain opens in "Allan Quatermain and the City of Gold" (PG). From the preview point of view, this sequel to "King Solomon's Mines" appears entertaining. It also resembles a Harrison Ford adventure. But it can't be all bad with Sharon Stone and James Earl Jones. February promises to be a big month, with at least five major motion pictures opening on Friday, Feb. 6, and three more on Friday, Feb. 13.

"Black Widow" (R) with Debra Winger, Dennis Hopper and Diane Ladd, directed by Bob Rafelson, is a psychological thriller about an investigator obsessed with apprehend-

ing a beautiful woman who seduces, marries and murders wealthy men.

"Light of Day" stars Michael J. Fox in a "contemporary drama" with music by Bruce Springsteen, while Mary Steenburgen and Roddy McDowall debut in "Dead of Winter," a suspense story about murder and blackmail.

Woody Allen's latest, "Radio Days," with Diano Wiest and Mia Farrow, is a sentimental story about the impact of radio music on a family in the late '30s and early '40s.

"From the Hip" (PG) features Judi Nelson, John Hurt and Elizabeth Perkins in a comic tale about an unorthodox young attorney. That rounds out February's first weeks of film festivities.

IF YOU'RE NOT all filmed out by mid-February, Valentine weekend offers "Meatballs III" (R), Andrew McCarthy in "Mannequin" — shades of "Fynagles" — and a new Stallone film, "Over the Top," about a cross-country truck driver out to win the world arm-wrestling championship.

Don't blame me, I just review them. I don't think them up. By the way, it's not true that "Rocky V" features Stallone in a roomful of mirrors mauling himself.

table talk

From the sea

Seafood specialties are being served every Friday at the Novi Hilton's Orchard Cafe. Fresh whole steamed lobster, iced shrimp, oy-

sters on the half shell and scallops are some of the offerings. Besides seafood, there are pasta, BBQ chicken or ribs and steamship round of beef. The buffet is served from 6-11 p.m. Fridays and priced at \$21.95 for adults, \$14.95 for children.

Cafe Rio

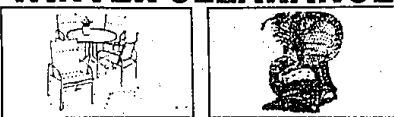
Cafe Renaissance in the Renaissance Center's Westin Hotel in Detroit has been transformed into Cafe Rio, an American restaurant featur-

ing Texan-Mexican fare. Amid a southwestern atmosphere, patrons dine on selections from an extensive menu. Among the entrees are salads, such as red chili pasta salads with mesquite chicken; beef or chicken fajitas; shrimp, chicken or beef bur-

ritos; catfish; barbecue ribs, and barbecue Texas steak sandwich. Pi-

acilla, a Mexican casserole, will be a house specialty.

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