



Judd Nelson is Robin "Stormy" Weather, who engages in courtroom theatrics, in the thought-provoking comedy "From the Hip."

Law profession gets a going-over in 'From the Hip'

the movies
Dan Greenberg

"From the Hip" (PG) treats the legal profession far more intelligently and with much greater respect than last year's dud, "Soul Man."

It's also a lot funnier and manages to segue smoothly from courtroom slapstick through romance and legal adventure to serious discussion of legal ethics — all without batting an eye.

While it may not be as slick as the Robert Redford/Debra Winger piece, "Legal Eagles," it does have the youthful enthusiasm of tyro attorney Robin "Stormy" Weather (Judd Nelson), who tries of legal research for a prestigious Boston law firm managed by Craig Duncan (Darren McGavin), Phil Ames (Alan Arbus) and Roberta Winnaker (Nancy Marchand).

Robin's name, and nickname, may be a bit too pat and cutesy but his unorthodox approach to obtaining a courtroom assignment is not. He pulls a fast one and Duncan is left with no alternative but to allow Robin to defend a major client on a minor, no-win assault case.

NEVER TELL "Stormy" Weather he can't win, as Robin makes a major assault on the canons of courtroom propriety and legal ethics — but he wins.

In the process, Robin becomes the media event he staged to win the case, thus structuring the film's primary conflict: What is an attorney's responsibility? What may, or should, any attorney do to serve his client? Does the legal profession have ethics?

"No," the cynics among you may answer, but "From the Hip" answers, "Yes," in a satisfying, intelligent way. It's an entertaining, romantic comedy any way you look at it.

Robin's notoriety leads to his assignment to defend a wealthy, egomaniacal professor of English literature. Students probably will have fun with that, even though the accused's occupation is irrelevant to the scenario. Robin defends the unpleasant Professor Douglas Bennet (John Hurt) against charges he murdered a prostitute.

Throughout the film, Robin debates the issues with his girlfriend/fiancee, Jo Ann (Elizabeth Perkins). The film is murky about their relationship, for early on it appears that they are married. This unnecessary confusion flaws a generally smooth screenplay, as does the last-minute, and unexplained, courtroom appearance of Professor Bennet's wife.

FROM ROBIN'S point of view, it all started out innocently enough.

He just wanted to be a trial lawyer. But each minor indiscretion leads to a greater breach of legal ethics. Ultimately, Robin has to deal with the issue of what an attorney must, can, should do in defending someone who may be guilty and who may be prepared to perjure himself.

Consideration of these issues strains Robin's relationship with Jo Ann, who has one of the film's best lines, summing up a sense of moderation: "I'd like to come down somewhere in the middle between Mother Teresa and Imelda Marcos."

But how does one land on the middle ground? The film answers the question with considerable intelligence, although Robin's solution to his ethical dilemma may be a little more as inappropriate as his earlier conduct.

"From the Hip" has its warm and intimate moments, as well as its brassy, comic ones, with convincing characterizations throughout.

"ALLAN QUATERMAIN and the Lost City of Gold" (PG), on the other hand, can make no such claim. What should have been a humorous, tongue-in-cheek romp at the expense of Harrison Ford and his successful adventure movies turns into a leaden vehicle that rumbles along carrying disinterested passengers whose performances fall far short of their reputations and credits.

Sharon Stone, in particular, is incredibly annoying as a blonde archeologist on a dangerous safari. "Let's go conquer East Africa," she declaims with a silly lilt in her voice, while Richard Chamberlain self-consciously grins off into the middle distance, apparently hoping no one will notice.

Supporting characterizations, special effects, monsters and scenery are the staples of such films. While the Victoria Falls footage in Zimbabwe is attractive, it isn't spectacular enough to compensate for the film's mundane monsters or copy-cat special effects, such as a boat ride overly reminiscent of Indiana Jones in a runaway mine car.

Three excellent actors waste their talents in flat, poorly paced, uninspired supporting roles. James Earl Jones appears as a tough African warrior, Umstogogas, who walks around with the phoney-looking battle ax since the Vikings left kindergarten.

Robert Donner is the cowardly guru and Henry Silva is the villain. If they had given Henry something for the dyspepsia, it might have helped him, but nothing will help this film.

table talk

New decor

Maxwell's Restaurant and Lounge has been redone, in a modified art-deco decor, at the Holiday Inn Farmington Hills. A one-of-a-kind, etched glass room divider adds distinction. Chef Dolph, a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, has created a new, varied menu. In the lounge, Pam Wallace provides music while patrons converse. A trio plays on weekends.

Appraising eye

Registered gemologist Jim Krol appraises jewelry from noon to 2 p.m. the first and third Tuesday of the month at Restaurant Duglass in Southfield. Auctioneer Frank Boos provides free appraisals of antiques and art from noon to 2 p.m. the second and fourth Tuesday of the month.

For scholars

Applications are available for fall term scholarships, awarded by the

Michigan Restaurant Association. Scholarships are open to students enrolled or planning to enroll in college foodservice programs. For an application, write the Educational Scholarship Committee, Michigan Restaurant Association, 690 E. Maple, Suite No. 205, Birmingham 48011.

Among MRA scholarship recipients for spring 1987 are two area students, Paula Deal of Southfield, who attends Michigan State University, and Anna Ucinowich of Westland, a student at Eastern Michigan University.

Chefs to teach

Five chefs will teach individual classes in the Chefs of Michigan cooking series, offered by Kitchen Glamour on Sunday afternoons beginning March 1 at the store's West Bloomfield kitchen. They are: Harlan (Pete) Peterson, chef and owner of Tepawing's, March 1; Executive Chef Remy Berdy of the Sberaton Oaks, Novi, March 8; Chef Brian Polcyn, chef and proprietor of Austrian Pine Farms, March 15; Co-Chefs Elvin Greenwald and Mary Mandich of the Vay Dyke Place, March 22, and

Chef Keith Farnie, chef of Chez Raphael in Novi, March 29. Classes are \$30 each, or \$135 for the series of five classes. For more information call 537-1300.

Valentine's Day

Brunch for two and/or Valentine's Day breakfast for two is part of the St. Valentine's Day package offered by the Hotel St. Regis in Detroit. Also included is a deluxe room for two, freshly cut flowers, chilled half bottle of champagne and specially chocolates. The package includes one overnight stay (\$149 per couple) or two nights (\$199 per couple). Call 873-300 for reservations.

New menus

Customers are now ordering from new menus, prepared by Executive Chef Marty Wilk, at the Excambur in Southfield. For lunch, soups, salads, omelettes, a la carte offerings, entrees, sandwiches and dessert are available. Entrees range from Chicken Teriyaki at \$8.95 to New

York Strip Steak, Scallops, Jumbo Fried Shrimp or Lake Perch Saute at \$10.95.

The dinner menu has entrees in the categories of fresh fish and seafood, poultry, beef, veal and lamb and pasta. One of a half-dozen milked provini veal dishes is Veal Excambur, with peppers, tomatoes, onions and sherry wine, at \$18.95. Specialties include the Excambur New York Strip, 24-ounce, marinated and served with brown butter sauce, at \$20.95.

There's a one-page wine list at the back of the full dinner menu. Wines from France, California, Germany and Italy are available.

Hot drinks

The Clarkston Cafe, which hosts many après-ski gatherings, has created tummy-warming drinks, including some containing no alcohol. The cafe offers bottles labeled "Designated Driver" to identify the person responsible for the safety of others on a group's return trip. Wearers of the button receive non-alcoholic drinks free. All hot drinks are served in a 13-ounce glass on a stem.

Critic looks at 'The Children's Hour'

Here are some additional comments by theater critic Barbara Michals on the Birmingham Village Players' retelling of production of Lillian Hellman's "The Children's Hour," a play about a wild accusation that shatters many lives. Because of limited space in Thursday's paper, all of the comments could not be included in Michals' review.

Libby Seiter is excellent as Mary.

She manages a facade of sweetness and wide-eyed innocence where necessary, though she positively glows with malice most of the time. Seiter is easy to hate, and there is a strong temptation to hiss and boo at her curtain call.

Mary Lou Johnstone convincingly portrays Karen's anguish as she casts away all that she holds dear. Barbara Underwood's brusque, authoritative tone (in the role of Martha) carries just the right touch of

masculinity to lend credence to the lie.

Hodges is fine as Mary's loving grandmother, a virtuous woman swept up in her own self-righteousness. Joan Reddy is very good as Martha's foolish, totally self-centered old aunt.

Michael Block projects a strong stage presence as Joseph, Karen's fiance. Despite his no-nonsense approach to Mary and his professed loyalty to Karen, he, too, is affected

by the sinister lie.

TINEKA BECKER, Kim Higgs and Julie Stewart do very nice work as Mary's classmates, Rosalie, Peggy and Evelyn. Though each has plenty of spunk, they are no match for Mary's overpowering will.

Director Florence (Neal Brown) keeps the pace taut. The handsome, genteel sets are effective counterpoint to the insidious evil in their midst.

upcoming things to do

● LUNCHEON THEATER

The Peanut Butter Players, professional children's luncheon theater, is presenting "The Electric Sunshine Man," Saturdays-Sundays through April 26 (except Easter weekend April 18-19), at Austin Hall in Detroit. The musical salute to Thomas Edison is being presented in honor of Edison's 140th birthday Feb. 11. Ticket price of \$8 includes both lunch of hot dog, potato chips, cookie, fruit and beverage, at noon, and the show at 1 p.m. For reservations call 559-6727. The 26-member group includes local residents, from

Southfield, Lathrup Village, Rochester, Troy, Bloomfield Hills, West Bloomfield and Birmingham.

● MUSIC THEATER

Human League will perform at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 13, at the Royal Oak Music Theatre. For tickets at \$15 phone 546-7610. Tickets also are available at all Ticket Master locations.

● MUSIC HALL

The one-woman play, "Love to All, Lorraine," a portrait of the late Lorraine Hansberry's life, will be pre-

sented as school-day matinees at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday-Friday, Feb. 10-13, at the Music Hall Center in Detroit. Tickets are \$8 general admission, \$4 students. The National Cultural Theatre and Dance Company of Gambia will perform at 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 14, at the Music Hall. Tickets are \$18-\$14. For more information call 983-7680.

● PLYMOUTH THEATER

Auditions for the Plymouth Theatre Guild production of Herb

Gardner's comedy "A Thousand Clowns" will be held immediately following the guild's general meeting at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 17, and also at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 18, at the Plymouth Central Middle School cafeteria. Six roles will be cast, including four men, one woman and one boy age 10-14. Show dates are May 8-9, 15-16. Anyone interested in auditioning or in helping with the production may attend. For further information, call 451-0037.

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On the Town

DINING & ENTERTAINMENT

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