

# 'Tin Men' are funny fellows

No, Virginia, the "Tin Men" (R) will not be found on the Yellow Brick Road. In fact, these "Tin Men" will never see Kansas — they're too busy tooling Cadillacs around Baltimore, selling honest citizens overpriced aluminum siding.

A film about aluminum-siding salesmen and the scams they pulled in the good old days may not sound promising. But Barry Levinson's ("The Natural," "Diner," "Young Sherlock Holmes") has written and directed an engaging comedy that concerns Runyonese characters selling aluminum siding in Baltimore in the early '60s, before the Maryland Home Improvement Commission cleaned up everybody's act.

This essay on the life and times of Levinson's hometown in days of yore opens with Bill "BB" Babowsky (Richard Dreyfuss) backing his brand-new Cadillac out of the showroom just as Tilley (Danny DeVito) drives by in his.

The ensuing crash generates an epic feud. It's funny and sad and just as nutty as things that go on in the real world. That's probably the reason "Tin Men" is so successful. It's an entertaining look at human follies.

THE KEY to this engaging film is Levinson's ability, with a talented cast, of course, to provoke laughter at everyone's idiosyncrasies. These quirks of human behavior are presented by characters seriously involved in elaborate silliness, the kind of stuff we all do at one time or another. It makes us think about what it means to be human. That, after all, is what life and art are all about.

Fairly early in the "Tin Men," "BB" and Tilley stop bashing fenders and get serious about their feud. "BB" romances Tilley's wife, Nora (Barbara Hershey) — just to get even, of course. Nora takes it seriously and moves out on Tilley and in on "BB." All three think they've won. But have they?

"Tin Men" then gets to the truly gutsy stuff with which people torment and delight one another. It also begins to deal with everyone's need to grow up and make the best of their abilities and situations.

Dreyfuss, DeVito and Hershey are ably supported by a collection of characters from Broadway, Vegas and other spots where Runyon aficionados might expect to find Dream Street Rose, Nathan Detroit and Little Miss Marker hanging out.

Comedian Jackie Gayle and Tony

the movies  
**Dan Greenberg**



Danny DeVito is one of the aluminum-siding salesmen in "Tin Men," set in the 1960s.

Award-winning Jon Mahoney head a talented ensemble of actors playing aluminum-siding salesmen: Stanley Brock, Bruno Kirby, Seymour Cassel, Richard P. Lipton, Matt Craven, Alan Blumenfeld, J.T. Walsh and Michael Tucker.

While the names may not be familiar, the faces rarely are, from "Diner," several Woody Allen films including "Broadway Danny Rose" and many other movies as well. Even if you don't recognize these actors, you'll appreciate their shiny silk suits, their Cadillacs and, most particularly, their excellent characterizations.

THROUGHOUT the film, the entire cast manages carefree diction that enhances the image of marginal characters spending a lot of time at the track trying to get rich quick.

Next week this column will include my predictions for the Monday, March 30, Academy Awards. Since I'm the world's worst prognosticator, give me a hand.

Drop me a line, postmarked no later than Saturday, March 28, and let me know who's going to take home the Oscars. Let's see who can get the best percentage of correct choices.

You must guess in at least 10 of the 22 categories and you must pick Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor and Best Actress. The other six (or more) award categories are up to you.

The prize? My treat, lunch for two at Orchard Ridge Dining Room on the Oakland Community College campus where I teach, in Farmington Hills. In case of a tie, we'll have a tie-breaker.

THE MOVIE INDUSTRY has been riding high at the box office the last few years in spite of cable and cassette competition. When business rises, so does production, and Hollywood film starts during 1985 were up about 40 percent over 1985.

Once the excitement of Oscar night settles, a lot of new films will be opening. A good deal of them, however, are sequels of previously successful features. Look for lots of II's, IV's and even some V's, as in "Police Academy IV," "Evil Dead II," "Beverly Hills Cop II" and "Revenge of the Nerds II."

Thank your lucky stars that the numbers in "Project X," "Cherry 2000" and "Jaws '87" do not represent how long they've been around.

Don't let these titles depress you. In fact, be cheerful so many films are slated to open over the next six months that there's something for everyone's taste.

Enjoy, and don't forget to send your Oscar nominations. Mail them to me in care of Observer and Eccentric, Entertainment Department, P.O. Box 3553, Birmingham 48012.

When they're not at the track, they're out fleeing honest citizens.

Hershey's diction is not as broad and farcical as DeVito's or some of the other Runyonese types. She does manage enough careless pronunciation to fit perfectly in this ensemble of marginal characters on the make — but characters we love because they ultimately come to grips with their own humanity.

*On the Town*  
DINING & ENTERTAINMENT

## table talk

### Executive chef

Helmut Menguser has joined Jacques in Bingham Farms as executive chef. The announcement was made by Al Balooly, manager of the restaurant, which offers fresh seafood and continental cuisine.

Menguser has served as executive chef at several Detroit-area restaurants, including the Bijou in Southfield, the Lark in West Bloomfield and the Money Tree in Detroit. Menguser, 42, is a native of Vienna, Austria. His style of cooking has been presented at the Hotel Europe in Vienna, the Expo in Montreal and Trader Vic's in San Francisco.

### 'Go to health'

Banquette de Veau in Squash is a tasty veal dish, served in an edible squash, at Restaurant Duglass in Southfield. It's one of the main courses in a prix fixe luncheon at \$10 that also includes a choice of appetizer. Pasta Duglass is one from a dozen delicious selections to precede the entrée. Desserts are a la carte — with skinny chocolate torte and sauce, at \$3.50, a great finish for the meal. Best of all, everything's on the special "Go to Health" menu, emphasizing food that is good for you, as well as enjoyable.

### Mexican Fiesta

Mexican cuisine will be featured on a special dinner at 7 p.m. Monday-Tuesday, March 30-31, at The

Lark in West Bloomfield. One course is chicken roasted in banana leaf Yucatecan-style, with melon, papaya and pineapple. Another is red snapper and giant shrimp with garlic sauce, pot beans and mozzarella rice, and tortillas. The multi-course dinner, from appetizer to desert, is \$37.50 per person. Live Mexican music and a treasure-stuffed piñata will be part of the evening. Reservations are required.

### Special dinners

Special entrées are showcased Mondays, Fridays and Sundays at the Kingsley Inn in Bloomfield Hills. Canadian whitefish and Amish home-grown, range-fed chicken are both available for Monday dinners at \$9.95 for adults, \$6.95 for children. Whitefish, and prime rib from the Kingsley butcher shop are on the menu Friday evenings. Sunday Family Dinners include baked Amish chickens and sliced roast beef served family style.

### Foods festival

The ninth annual Fine Foods Festival, sponsored by the Michigan Restaurant Association, will kick off the Hart Plaza ethnic festival season in downtown Detroit. Twenty-six area restaurants will serve sample-sized portions of their house specialties at the "Taste of Detroit" from noon to 11 p.m. Friday-Saturday, April 24-25, and noon to 10 p.m. Sunday, April 26.



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Bring your birthday party of 4 or more to KYOTO during the month of March and we'll buy the honored guest a combination Hibachi Steak and Chicken dinner. Sliced and diced and sizzled right before your eyes.

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