

MOVING PICTURES



Tim Quill stars as Brian and Stockard Channing as Nancy in "Staying Together," a humorous film about family and what it takes for families to grow and mature in meaningful ways.

This week's openings: Good, bad and terrible

"Communism" (R) has been getting lots of press based on the book's terrific sales. Now that I've read the book — and talked to the author — I should see the movie. Unfortunately, no critic's screening was scheduled. Does that tell us the distributor lacks confidence?

As Whitley Strieber tells his story, he was abducted by aliens and those terrifying experiences were buried in his mind and in the minds of his family. Through hypnosis the abduction experiences are gradually recalled.

Apparently, Strieber is developing a new literary genre, the "documentary novel." "Communism" purports to recount actual experiences. Prior to the movie, his first film work, Strieber's highly successful career was confined to writing.

Strieber wrote the screenplay based on his book and is also credited as the producer along with director Philippe Mora ("A Breed Apart," "Howling II and III") and Dan Aykroyd. Those credits include work on "Spies Like Us," "Three Amigos" and Michael Jackson's "Thriller."

Another major motion picture, "Old Gringo" (R, 119 minutes), is also opening without benefit of a critic's screening. This story of Mexico during Pancho Villa's revolution, features Gregory Peck, Jane Fonda and Jimmy Smits.

There's an unusual love triangle here with Harriet Winslow (Fonda), a spinster American school teacher traveling to Mexico where she meets General Tomas Arroyo (Smits), one of Villa's officers. Peck is cast as Ambrose Bierce, the cynical and brilliant American journalist.

LITTLE GOOD may be said for two of the movies that were screened this week. Forttely, "Drugstore Cowboy" (R, 110 minutes) is one of those films that seldom appears on local screens. Let's keep it that way.

There's about four unpleasant young folks who drive around robbing drugstores to obtain drugs. Are these fine folks? Bob (Matt Dillon) and his wife, Dianne (Kelly Lynch), Rick (James Le Gros) and his girl, Nadine (Heather Graham). First they steal the drugs. Then they use the drugs. Then they get high. Then they come down. Then they steal more drugs. Occasionally, they hassle somebody or the police hassle them.

This movie is so bad that in addition to the socially unpleasant, counterproductive subject, the acting, directing and scenario are so poorly done, so tedious that even the action sequences — robbery, assault and so on — are bland and completely lacking in tension or excitement.

The acting is so inferior that its high point is the listless repetition of four-letter words. "Drugstore Cowboy" is cinematic pollution at its worst. Leave town until the air clears.

Just a few steps up is the boring, inept and outlandishly repulsive "Up" (D, PG-13, 89 minutes). Most of its action is on the trading floor of the Chicago Board of Trade where people gesticulate frantically trading commodities in hope of big profits. That's drama?

CASEY FALLS (Nancy Allen) is a runner for the affluent male chauvinist Peter Oaks (Dean Cain). Casey's dream is to become a trader herself and make it in this male-dominated career.

But, as Oaks tells her, "We have clients who depend on us to protect the nation's economy. Do you really think that they'd let some potentially unstable woman take their futures home over night?"



the movies
Dan Greenberg

Grading the movies

A+	Top marks - sure to please
A	Close behind - excellent
A-	Still in running for top honors
B+	Pretty good stuff, not perfect
B	Good
B-	Good but notable deficiencies
C+	Just a cut above average
C	Mediocre
C-	Not so hot and slipping fast
D+	The very best of the poor stuff
D	Poor
D-	It doesn't get much worse
F	Truly awful
Z	Reserved for the colossal bad
*	No advanced screening

Enter Nike (Danitra Vance), who the producers would like you to believe is a comical, wise-cracking dealer. She wasn't funny and the script is pretty simple-minded as Nike offers Casey success in return for her soul.

Nike, courtesy of the special effects department, zaps an occasional dealer or two, but the main disappointing act by wise members of the audience who couldn't sit through this foolishness. There's no need for you to either.

"Staying Together" (A, R, 95 minutes) is a warm, sensitive and humorous film about family and what it takes for families to grow and mature in meaningful ways.

Jack McDermott (Jim Haynie) doesn't want to go to work for the new development, but he's the family's cooking chef so he sells the family chicken restaurant in Ridgeway, S.C., buys a motor home and starts traveling.

IT TURNS out that everybody in town knew that Jake was selling, everybody that is except his three sons, Brian (Tim Quill), Kit (Dermot Mulroney) and Duncan (Sean Astin). The boys thought the restaurant was their future and are stunned when they realize what dad did to them.

Because it's a small town, there aren't many career options. Brian goes to work for the new development. Kit finds a job in a small department store and 17-year-old Duncan sows some wild oats.

Eventually, after a painful but often humorous process — just like life — the family draws back together. The excellent cast whose ensemble performance strongly supports the humor, love and insight of a thoughtful script, includes Melinda Dillon, Daphne Zuniga and Stockard Channing.

STILL PLAYING:

"After Midnight" (R) (R).

Young girl takes class about psychology of fear. Instructor is mysterious.

"Batman" (C+, PG-13) 120 minutes.

Michael Keaton is a dud in the title role, but Jack Nicholson's Joker is terrific.

"The Bear" (D-) (R) 120 minutes.

Excellent nature photography but

film often lacks continuity and gets pretty sappy at times.

"Black Rain" (D-) (R) 120 minutes.

Unpleasant, trite detective story stars Michael Douglas.

"Bloodfit" (R) (R).

Another martial arts movie.

"Crimes and Misdemeanors" (A+) (PG-13) 100 minutes.

Woody Allen at his best in this romantic comedy about family life with all its joy and sadness.

"Dad" (B) (PG) 119 minutes.

Excellent acting by Jack Lemmon, Ted Danson, Zakes Mokae and Olympia Dukakis marred by clichés.

"Dealers" (R).

Rebecca DeMornay is a brilliant securities dealer in London's financial district.

"Dork the Viking" (R) (PG-13) 104 minutes.

John Cleese, Terry Jones, Mickey Rooney and Eartha Kitt in a tongue-in-cheek tale of the good ole days.

"The Fabulous Baker Boys" (R).

Two brothers — Jeff and Beau Bridges — add Michelle Pfeiffer to their cocktail lounge piano playing act.

"Gross Anatomy" (C-) (PG-13) 105 minutes.

Bland, slow, weakly structured romantic comedy about five, first-year med students.

"Halloween 5" (R).

Donald Pleasence and others in more of the same.

"Honey, I Shrunk the Kids" (B+) (PG) 105 minutes.

It's fun, but it ain't easy to be small.

"Immediate Family" (B+) (PG-13) 95 minutes.

Childless couple adopting baby from young mother and her boyfriend who buy, but cannot afford, the baby.

"An Innocent Man" (B-) (R) 90 minutes.

Tom Selleck is unjustly imprisoned and must come to grips with the vicious penitentiary world.

"Lethal Weapon II" (B+) (R) 115 minutes.

Glover and Gibson do it again in high, albeit violent, style.

"Look Who's Talking" (C+) (PG-13) 97 minutes.

Contrived, poorly structured story of pregnant CPA (Kirstie Alley) and her search for a perfect father for her baby. Bruce Willis is the baby's voice.

"Parenthood" (A-) (R) 120 minutes.

Large, talented cast in complex but entertaining story about a family that includes Jason Robards, Steve Martin, Tom Hume, Martha Plimpton and Diane Wiest, among others.

"Phantom of the Opera" (R) (R).

Freddy (Robert Englund) is back newly disguised in an old story.

"Sea of Love" (C) (R) 110 minutes.

Al Pacino as a burned-out detective does nothing to the cliché nor does a very weak script.

"Second Sight" (R) (PG).

Detective with psychic and partner save kidnapped cardinal.

"Sex, Lies, and Videotape" (R).

Everyone's talking about this romantic comedy with James Spader.

"Sleazy Valentine" (A+) (R) 110 minutes.

Superb, comic, romantic, lovely statement about human worth.

"Snooper" (R) 107 minutes.

Wes Craven does it again, this time in the world of electronic video music.

"When Harry Met Sally" (A+) (R) 90 minutes.

Fine comic, romantic story of an unlikely couple — Billy Crystal and Meg Ryan — and well directed by Bob Fosse.

"Worth Winning" (C+) (PG-13) 95 minutes.

SCREEN SCENE

CENTER FOR JAPANESE STUDIES, Lorch Hall, 509 Monroe, Ann Arbor. Call 764-4307 for information. (free)

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LIVONIA MALL CINEMA, 29415 Seven Mile, Livonia. Call 476-1166 for information. (Free)

"The Glass Bottom Boat" (USA — 1966), 10 a.m. Nov. 14. When scientist Rod Taylor tries to woo writer Doris Day, she is mistaken for a Russian spy. One of the better Day vehicles. Part of a monthlong tribute to the popular singer/actress.

MADONNA COLLEGE, Kresge Hall, 36400 Schoolcraft, Livonia. Call 591-5197 for information. (free)

Indians — "The Forgotten American" and "Running Brave." 1:30 and 7:30 p.m. Nov. 14. The first film examines Indian life on an Arizona reservation, dominated by impoverished living conditions and sickness. The second documents the true story of Billy Mills, a famous Indian who scored an unexpected triumph in the 1954 Olympics.

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"Let's Get Lost" (USA — 1989), Nov. 15-19 (all for show times). Photographer Bruce Weber caught a dark and shattering image of the late jazzman Chet Baker, shown here in interviews and performance. Majorly depressing and definitely worth seeing.

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