

MOVING PICTURES



Xiso (Nadine) and Xiri (Eliros) are bewildered by the curious tracks of the poachers' truck that mistakenly carries them off in "The Gods Must Be Crazy II."

'The Gods Must Be Crazy II:' Not so unusual, but still good

The trouble with sequels is that they are usually follow-ups to something unusual — and the second time around, it's not so unusual.

"The Gods Must Be Crazy II" (B-, PG, 97 minutes) suffers from that generic problem but still manages to be attractive.

This time out, Xiso (Nadine), the Kalahari Desert Bushman who starred in the first "Gods Must Be Crazy," is searching for his children. Xiso (Nadine) and Xiri (Eliros). They are exceptionally charming children who, out of curiosity, climbed aboard a ivory poacher's truck while it was parked. When it started up, they were trapped.

Xiso was able to trace them and his devotion is further duty is heart-warming. But his quest is constantly interrupted by various "civilized" forces including on the desert he knows so well, an area in which he is more capable of survival than those who take him from civilized places.

Among the intruders are the ivory poachers, George (Pierre Van Helden) and Bremer (Lourens Swaneepoel), two gruff, unpleasant but incompetent types.

THEN THERE'S the Cuban Army in Angola, represented by one lost soldier, Major (Eric Brown) and his adversary, African Union Army trooper Titi (Treasure Tshabalala). Their alleged hostilities are in a worn, comic vein and not very funny but they do help keep the plot moving.

Of course, the star intruder in Xiso's world is Dr. Ann Taylor (Lana Furlong), a New York attorney and Ph.D. in law whose presence, first in Angola and then in the Kalahari Desert, occurs from a string of fairly weak and unconvincing events. Her companion is a zoologist, Stephen Marshall (Hans Strydom).

All this is tied together with an uncredited voice-over narrator who nicely spells out the situation. He and the film clearly are noting that the natural life is far better than civilization.

There's lots of nice scenery and

plenty of typically attractive African animal shots to spice up the production but some of the technical work is lacking. In particular, the special effects work on one long sequence with the two children on the truck is so poorly done that fringing around the children is present and the rapidly passing scenery clearly is a rear screen projection.

As for "The Gods Must Be Crazy II" as a parable about the modern against the primitive, it's not all that successful — although if the "Spice-and-Space" conclusion of Mr. Furlong's dress after several days in the desert is any indication, it looks like modern fabrics, if not civilization, are indestructible. Nonetheless, the film is pleasant enough and probably will attract wide audiences.

If you're eagerly awaiting a new twist on martial arts films, then "Anged Town" (*, R) is for you. A Los Angeles family troubled by a neighborhood gang gets help from a French expert. That doesn't sound like much but given all the hype and violence, it most likely will sell well.

STILL PLAYING:

"Bad Influence" (B) (R). Slow start speeds up after a while and becomes an effective thriller as Rob Lowe corrupts James Spader.

"Born on the Fourth of July" (A) (R) 144 minutes.

Touching, graphically disturbing, poignant, frightening autobiography of Ron Kovic (Tom Cruise), a paraplegic Viet Vet.

"Cinema Paradiso" (A-, 120 minutes). Excellent story of Alfredo (Philippe Noiret), the projectionist in a small Sicilian town just after World War II.

"Crazy People" (C-, R, 90 minutes). Ad exec (Buddy Moore) proves that mental patients are nicer than sane people but weak and underdeveloped structure undercuts that humorous thought.

"Cry-Baby" (B-, PG-13). Stylish, nostalgic piece about teens in the '50s.

"Driving Miss Daisy" (A) (PG) 100 minutes.

Fine acting highlights personal drama of Jewish widow (Jessica Tandy) chauffeured by a black man (Morgan Freeman) set against southern changes from 1948-1974.

"Ernest Goes to Jail" (A-, PG). Because someone stole his identity,

something everyone longs for from time to time.

But they are constrained by the imminence of death. Despite the somber topic, the film — billed as a black comedy — is a light-hearted look at everyone's mortality.

On their way to Amsterdam's red-light district, Bancroft and Decker-mansky meet two girls, Maureen (Camille Cordell) and Hazel (Janet McTeer) whose car has broken down. Maureen is a busty little blonde to whom Decker-mansky is quickly attracted. Hazel, on the other hand, is extremely tall and she and Bancroft look askance at one another.

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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 colossally bad
	No advanced screening

"Exorcism: A Love Story" (R). Man emotionally involved with second wife and mistress is disrespected when his first wife — presumed dead in the Holocaust — turns up.

"The First Power" (D, R, 95 minutes). Executed serial killer seeks revenge against cop (Lou Diamond Phillips) who put him away in the first place.

"The Fourth War" (C+, R, 90 minutes). An American colonel and his Russian counterpart, two cold-war warriors wound up a war, square off and start their own.

"Gloria" (A) (R) 110 minutes.

The glory of the first black infantry regiment during the Civil War is captured in this outstanding film.

"The Handmaid's Tale" (B-) (R) 109 minutes.

Compelling, but structurally flawed futuristic tale of American gone wrong with permissiveness, pollution and radiation.

Behind Bancroft's blustering urbanity is a fear of life and death while Decker-mansky's jock bravado masks only his fear of death.

McTeer and Cordell turn in extremely credible and appealing performances as well and the four characters meld into a unit as each one of them is forced to confront individual and group problems and inadequacies. They do so with considerable wit, some burlesque and finally arrive at a good sense of the human condition.

The film is entertaining in spite of its somber theme and while it may have been inevitable — and impossible to avoid given what had gone before — the ending is sappy and happy but neither realistic nor dramatically satisfying.

Ted Turner and MGM/UA are cleaning out the vaults and the release of eight film classics in a package, called "Leading Ladies II," is part of the program. These have never been released before on home

"House Party" (A). Dance, dance, dance.

"The Hunt for Red October" (C-) (PG) 135 minutes.

Confusing underwater sequences are as murky as this tale of Soviet sub commander (Sean Connery) trying to defect.

"I Love You to Death" (C-, R, 96 minutes).

Excellent performances can't save this weakly plotted story of a wife's (Tracy Ullman) revenge on her unfaithful husband (Kevin Kline).

"Impulse" (D, R, 120 minutes).

Theresa Russell's performance as cop caught on wrong side of murder can't save weak plot.

"Joe Versus the Volcano" (B+, PG) 105 minutes.

A good, clean fairy tale for all ages with Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan.

"The Little Mermaid" (A) (G) 80 minutes.

Disney animation of Hans Christian Andersen tale of a mermaid in love with a human.

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

Contrived, poorly structured story of this gritty but touching story of the writer Chris Brown and his struggles with cerebral palsy.

"Opportunity Knocks" (B+, PG-13).

Dana Carvey is terrific as con-artist who makes poor.

"Pretty Woman" (A-, R, 120 minutes).

Charming, romantic fantasy with Wall Street mogul (Richard Gere) falling in love with prostitute (Julia Roberts).

"Steel Magnolias" (A-) (PG) 110 minutes.

Talented cast, led by Shirley MacLaine's performance, tells short in depicting problems of six Southern women.

"Tango and Cash" (C) 110 minutes.

Two cops — Sylvester Stallone and Kurt Russell — are framed in this mediocre cop show.

"Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" (PG). You guessed it. Lean, green and on the screen.

ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

'True Love' has true ring

By John Monaghan
special writer

Michael wants to wear a simple black tuxedo. Donna insists on gray with a pastel ruffled shirt to match the bridesmaid's dresses. The suggestion of blue mashed potatoes, however, causes the groom to counter in disbelief, "There's no such thing as blue food."

Decisions. Decisions. Behind the scenes at a massive Italian wedding, there are plenty of them. Ultimately, the strain of all these decisions makes the couple in "True Love" debate whether they want to get married at all.

Though it gets off to a slow start, "True Love" offers a bull's eye view at the rituals of modern love and family weddings. The low-budget comedy, currently at the Star-Rochester Theater, will make Italians and non-Italians smile in recognition.

Though scenes occur at a bachelor party and a male strip club, "True Love" doesn't try for cheap, exploitive jokes. Writer/director Nancy Savacca obviously loves the characters who populate the claustrophobic kitchens and corner bars of a typical Brooklyn neighborhood.

Michael (Ron Eldard), with his beefy Stallone-type build, is gregarious and fun loving — perhaps a little too much so.

"I've always liked Michael," says the bride's father on the way to the wedding. "He's different from all the rest. But he's a little wild."

DONNA (ANNABELLE Sciorra) is well aware of this. Too many nights he has promised to go out "just for an hour" with his buddies, then stayed out until dawn. She, meanwhile, tries a power play to get to see him on the night of his bachelor party.

"Oh, don't worry about it," reassures the bride's mother. "When

SCREEN SCENE

ATOMIC FILM SOCIETY, Dominick House, 147 W. Windsor, Call (519) 971-0964 for information. (\$2)

"How to Marry a Millionaire" (USA - 1953), 8 p.m. April 18. Those wacky Canadian cinephiles are at it again, paying tribute to Marilyn Monroe in this dated but fun comedy about gold-digging gals on the loose in New York City. Lauren Bacall and Betty Grable round out the cast. Shown over bottles of Labatts in the basement of a Windsor bar.

DETROIT FILM THEATRE, Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 833-2323 for information. (\$4)

"My Left Foot" (A) (B).

"Mr. Hire" (France - 1989). April 20-22 (call for show times). In the tradition of Hitchcock, a stylistically designed thriller which mixes mystery, claustrophobia and sexual obsession. Starring "Vagabond's" Sandrine Bonnaire and directed by Patricia Leconte.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY, 147 W. Windsor Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-2330 for information. (Free)

"The Loveable Cheat" (USA - 1949), 7 p.m. April 16. Charlie Ruggie plays a supposedly wealthy Parisian who borrows money to help marry his daughter off to a wealthy couple. Based on a Balzac play. With Buster Keaton in a cameo role.

HILL STREET CINEMA, Hill Auditorium, 1429 Hill St., Ann Arbor. Call 789-0500 for information. (\$3)

A tribute to uncompromising documentary director Frederick Wiseman, which anticipates his appearance at the area premiere of his latest film at the Michigan Theatre.

The dreariness of "High School" (USA - 1968) teams up with a biting study of lower middle class American values in "Canal Zone" (USA - 1977). Starting at 7 p.m. April 18.

"Titticut Follies" (USA - 1967) 7 and 8:45 p.m. April 16. Wiseman's groundbreaking look at the callousness of human beings has been called shocking, terrifyingly harsh and utterly brilliant by anyone who can stomach it.

"Livonia Mall, Seven Mile at Middlebelt, Livonia. Call 476-1166 for information. (Free)

"Ryan's Daughter" (Britain - 1970), 10 a.m. April 17. In a small Irish town in 1914 a young woman (Sarah Miles) marries a simple schoolteacher (Robert Mitchum), then has an affair with a soldier stationed in town. Epic director David Lean fills the rather slight (and

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your father and I got married, we were barely speaking as we said the vows."

Despite the nightmare of preparation, the wedding is a fantasy only accentuated by the blue mashed potatoes, video cameras and tacky wedding band. For Donna's mother, who was forced to elope, it's a chance to enjoy the big wedding she never had.

By the time the band strikes up "Celebration," however, the couple is fighting again. He wants to go out with the guys after the wedding reception. It's as hilariously "real" as the scene in "Diner" where the wedding hinges on the bride's ability to pass a football trivia test.

Other moments convince you that they were made for each other. Donna reads a compatibility test in "Cosmopolitan." Michael doesn't like the stock choices and comes up with his own — which place him in the life he's in right now.

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lengthy) story with beautiful location scenery. As part of the mall's month-long tribute to Michigan.

MICHIGAN THEATRE, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call 668-8397 for information. (\$4, \$3.25 students and senior citizens)

"Near Death" (France - 1989), 8 p.m. April 22. Frederick Wiseman chronicles the workings of an intensive care unit in Boston's Beth Israel Hospital. The six-hour long documentary will be shown in its entirety this day and then screened in two separate parts during the next week. The director will appear to answer questions after this performance. (45 admission this film only)

Note: Ann Arbor's Hill Street Cinema features other Wiseman films earlier in the week.

REDFORD THEATRE, 17360 Lahser, Detroit. Call 587-2560 for information. (\$2.50)

"Tom, Dick and Harry" (USA - 1940), 8 p.m. April 20-21. Ginger Rogers plays a free-spirited woman who must choose between three anxious suitors.

Murphy, a wealthy Alan Marshall and a nonconformist Burgess Meredith. Directed by Garson Kanin. Great fun.

TELE-ARTS, 1540 Woodward, Detroit. Call 963-3918 for information. (\$2.50, \$2.50 students and senior citizens)

"Gay pride - "Virgin Machine" and "Looking for Langston." April 20-22 (call for show times). Two acclaimed films about homosexuality. In the first, a young journalist travels from Hamburg to San Francisco and finds the romantic love she has been looking for in the thriving lesbian scene. With "Looking for Langston," an exploration of black and white gay identities.

"Seduction: The Cruel Woman" (Germany - 1986), April 20-22 (call for show times). In this bite-size drama, a con artist stages elaborate S&M shows for her customers. She grows disturbed when a male performer breaks the master/slave relationship and falls in love with her. From Monika Treut, the director of "Virgin Machine."

TRIO PUBLIC LIBRARY, 510 W. Big Beaver, Troy. Call 524-3538 for information. (Free)

"Great Radio Comedians" 7 p.m. April 18. Three short films trace the evolution of radio comedy. Featured are greats like Edgar Bergen, Burns and Allen and Jack Benny.

— John Monaghan

VIDEO VIEWING

By Dan Greenberg
special writer

Timothy Dalton, the current James Bond, and Anthony Edwards of "Top Gun" don't sound promising as a couple of terminally ill patients (bone-marrow cancer) but "Hawks" (1989, color, R, 105 minutes) proves otherwise.

It will also warm your heart from time to time as a brilliant English lawyer, Bancroft (Dalton) and an American football player, Decker-mansky (Edwards), escape from the rigidly managed British hospital where they are confined for the treatment which only delays the inevitable.

Their in-hospital antics are mild compared to what happens when they steal an ambulance and head for Amsterdam and it's well-regarded brothers for a last fling.

Determined to live their few remaining days to the fullest, they escape not only from the hospital but from life's many restraints as well,

something everyone longs for from time to time.

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video, are listed for \$29.95 and will be available April 17. All are in black and white and unrated but the standards of their times being what they were, there is no offense to be found.

LEADING THE list in my book, one of the world's greatest films, Grete Garbo in "Queen Christina," (1933, 100 minutes), produced when Garbo was at the peak of her career.

Her luminous performance as Queen of Sweden in the 17th Century is not to be missed. John Gilbert, Garbo's off-screen love interest, co-stars as the Queen's lover.

Garbo's last film, "Two-Faced Woman" (1941, 91 minutes) also is included in this collection. It's a romantic comedy and Garbo plays a ski instructor who masquerades as a girl twin sister in order to win back her husband's affection.

Irene Dunne, Alan Jones, Helen Morgan and Paul Robeson star in the perennial favorite, "Show Boat" (1928, 110 minutes). Edna Ferber's tale of life and love on a Mississippi riverboat.