

## MOVING PICTURES



Looking for adventure and freedom from their high-pressure careers, Bruno Kirby (from left), Billy Crystal and Daniel Stern sign up as cow-

boys on a week-long cattle drive in "City Slickers."

## 'City Slickers' has cure for turning 40 — laughs

An excellent, comic, unique approach to mid-life crises surfaces in "City Slickers" (A, PG-13, 108 minutes), an unusual buddy-film which should solve everyone's problems, not just those approaching 40. Laughter is good medicine.

Mitch Robbins (Billy Crystal), Phil Berquist (Daniel Stern) and Ed Furlong (Bruno Kirby) are the buddies in this case — three friends facing middle age with less than proverbial grace. Each has his own hangup.

Phil's wife, Arlene (Karl Tammen), is one tough cookie who makes his life miserable while he manages her father's supermarket. Ed is obsessed with sexuality. Mitch's fine, supportive, albeit somewhat stereotypical family members are nicely played by Patricia Wettig as his wife, Barbara, Linda Crystal as his daughter Holly and Jake Gyllenhaal, son, Daniel.

Mitch (Billy Crystal), the broadcasting account executive who begins questioning the meaning of life as he approaches his 40th birthday, is the character that makes this movie work so well.

Mitch sums up much of the anxiety that aging stimulates in everyone and Crystal is the top performer. He could probably make you laugh reading the obits. In particular, his delivery of biting, satirical lines in a pleasant, unoffensive and very comic manner will appeal to everyone.

Phil, Ed and Mitch have a tradition of unique vacations and for his 40th birthday, the three join a cattle drive. No, this is not a dude ranch, this is a real cattle drive.

The happy, tongue-in-cheek approach to this unlikely scenario, along with excellent performances by all concerned, works very well. The ultimate touch, however, is Jack Palance playing Jack Palance as only he can. He's Curly Howard, cattle drive, the roughest, toughest, quietest hombre the west has ever seen.

THE PLAY begins with this taciturn cowboy and Crystal's garrulous city-slicker is the ultimate wry joke.

It's not necessary here to describe how the three solve their mid-life traumas. Suffice it to note that "City Slickers" ride the rails everyone should take to maturity. So get on down to your local corral, podners. Once again Spike Lee manages to stir audience emotions with his latest release, "Jungle Fever" (B+, R, 125 minutes), dealing with the trauma of an inter-racial love affair in particular and race relations in America in general.

Flipper Purily (Wesley Snipes) is sort of a New Age yuppie from Harlem, complete with the loving devotion of his wife, Drew (Loretta Devai) and their daughter. That's the motivation he needs to succeed. His new secretary, Angie Tucci (Annabella Sciorra), from a traditional Italian-American background, may not be the "woman of color" he requested but after a few nights working late and sharing dinner, Flipper refines his attitude and an affair develops.

Flipper's guilt — and the friend to whom he confides — betray him and Drew throws him out. In addition to adultery, Angie's blue-collar father has some pretty strong ideas about inter-racial associations of this sort and he, too, throws her out. Cut loose from all family connection, Flipper and Angie move in together. "Excellent" performances by all concerned, including Anthony Quinn, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee and John Turturro plus sharp writing and directing by Spike Lee add up to an entertaining and interesting examination of racial relations in the United States. (Reviewed by Kevin Shimmura.)

SUMMER is upon us, and along with hot days and pool parties,

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

there's the usual onslaught of mindless movie entertainment to satisfy restless teens freed from the bonds of homework. The first such movie of the summer this year is "Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead" (C, PG-13, 95 minutes), starring Christina Applegate of "Married... With Children" fame.

She's Sum Ellen "Swell" Crandall, whose summer begins with every teenage girl's dream — her divorced mother is leaving the country for two months. Unfortunately, her visions of 60 days of true freedom are shattered by the babysitter's arrival.

Mrs. Sturak (Eda Reiss Merin) has been hired to watch Swell and her motley crew of siblings. She's a tyrannical, drill master stereotype and not at all well-received. Her death (by natural causes) is not mourned either and, as soon as they discreetly rid themselves of their lifeless babysitter, the kids are ready for a terrific summer.

Much to their chagrin, however, they soon discover that the money for summer living expenses was disposed of with Mrs. Sturak's body, so they're thrust into the "real" world and forced to fend for themselves.

"Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead" doesn't have dreams of grandeur, nor does it achieve distinction. The plot is predictable, the characters often stereotypical and the acting mediocre. It's a mildly entertaining film with a few laughs but staying home and watching a video may not be a terrible alternative. (Reviewed by Brian Dunn.)

"Kickboxer 2" (G, R) is more of the same as only the number has been changed to protect innocent martial artists.

#### STILL PLAYING:

"Ambition" (F, R). Lon Diamond Phillips, writing the perfect thriller, finds himself trapped in the mind of a murderer. "Backdraft" (C, R, 130 minutes). Disappointing, cornball, clichéd story of two brothers, both Chicago firefighters. "Dances With Wolves" (A, PG-13, 180 minutes). Kevin Costner's magnificent ode to brotherhood and brutality on America's western frontier during and after the Civil War.

## ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

# Alternative films flourish during long, hot summer

By John Monaghan  
special writer

Alternative film fans usually greet the summer months with dread. When the Detroit Film Theatre takes its customary warm weather hiatus from May through August, we are usually at the mercy of Hollywood blockbusters like "Hudson Hawk" and "Rocketeer."

Not so this summer. The Fox Theatre recently unveiled its summer lineup, again making presentation of vintage films into a major event. For starters, the movie palace, along with the DFT and Detroit Symphony Orchestra, will present the silent silent classic "Robin Hood" (1922) on Aug. 1-4.

The Fox also will present the 50th anniversary restoration of "Citizen Kane" (1941) on June 20-30 and newly restored 70mm print of Stanley Kubrick's "Spartacus" (1960) in July 3-14. Opening night for "Spartacus" will benefit the DFT with tickets for all Fox films priced at \$10.

The Maple Theatre continues to juggle art films on its three screens, with "Daddy Nostalgia" as the latest addition. There has been talk, however, that the theater will book more mainstream films this summer.

THE STAR John R in Madison

Heights is ready to pick up any slack. In recent weeks, the theater has devoted one of its screens to alternative film fare, though the film choices have been weak and audiences haven't been showing.

Krys Byland, advertising manager for the Grand Rapids-based Star Theatre chain, admits that the films need better promotion.

"Still, I feel confident that there are enough people to support another screen showing art films," she said.

The Magic Bag Theatre Cafe in Ferndale devotes most of its nights

Please turn to Page 4.

## SCREEN SCENE

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY, 13871 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-2330 for information (free)

"No, My Darling Daughter" (Britain — 1951). 7 p.m. June 10. A rich teenage tomboy rebels against the social graces until she finds herself tamed by love. Starring Juliet Mills and Michael Redgrave.

LIVONIA MALL, Seven Mile and Middlebelt roads, Livonia. Call 476-1166 for information. (free)

"Lust for Life" (USA — 1956). 10 a.m. June 11. Kirk Douglas plays Vincent Van Gogh with amazing depth and power in this wide screen masterpiece. Vincente Minnelli directed the film that traces the troubled artist from his early days preaching in a coal mining community to madness as an artist. With Anthony Quinn as Gauguin. Shown in CinemaScope and luscious '50s color.

MAPLE THEATRE, 4155 W. Maple, Birmingham. Call 855-9090 for information. (\$4, \$3.50 twilight; call for show times)

"Impromptu" (Britain — 1990). The relationship between female French novelist George Sand and composer Frederic Chopin is recounted in this witty, slightly irreverent romantic comedy. The most fascinating twist is how the very masculine Sand (wonderfully played

by Judy Davis) relentlessly pursues frail Chopin.

"Truly, Madly, Deeply" (Britain — 1991). Compared favorably to "Ghost," this British fantasy finds a widow still mourning her dead husband, surprised when he returns as an apparition.

"Daddy Nostalgia" (USA — 1991). Director Bertrand Tavernier ("Sunday in the Country") plots this story of a screenwriter who becomes reacquainted with her ailing father (Dirk Bogarde) after a long rift between them.

MICHIGAN THEATRE, 16301 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call 669-3397 for information. (\$5, \$4 students and senior citizens)

"Taxi Blues" (USSR/France — 1990), through June 12 (call for show times). The relationship between a Moscow taxi driver and an alcoholic Jewish musician is recounted in this controversial Soviet film.

"Raging Bull" (USA — 1980). 7:15 p.m. June 12. Robert DeNiro plays boxer Jake LaMotta who grows from a lean young fighting machine into an overweight nightclub entertainer. This is the legendary picture where DeNiro (in an Academy Award-winning performance) gained 40 pounds in order to portray the role more effectively. A treat in wide screen and black and white. Directed by Martin Scorsese. Continu-

ing a monthlong tribute to the heralded actor.

"The Sheltering Sky" (USA — 1990), through June 20 (call for show times). Bernardo Bertolucci directed this impossible adaptation of Paul Bowles' novel about an American composer (John Malkovich) and his wife (Deborah Winger) who set off for remote parts of the globe in the 1920s.

"Reversal of Fortune" (USA — 1990), 9:35 p.m. June 14 and 7 p.m. June 15. The sensationalized von Bulow case, in which an aristocrat (Jeremy Irons) was accused of murdering his wife (Glenn Close) through fatal injections of insulin, comes to the screen through the lens of talented director Barbet Schroeder. Surrounded by such amazing performances, Ron Silver pales in comparison as the defending lawyer.

REDFOOT THEATRE, 17360 Lahar, Detroit. Call 537-2560 for information. (\$2.50)

"Take Me Out to the Ball Game" (USA — 1949), 8 p.m. June 14-15. A turn-of-the-century musical about a baseball team taken over by a beautiful woman (Esther Williams). Sparks fly with some of the players, especially Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra, who sing and dance through lively musical numbers penned by Adolph Green and directed by Busby Berkeley.

— John Monaghan

## VIDEO VIEWING

By Dan Greenberg  
special writer

A number of recent, major motion pictures highlight videocassette releases for the first part of June. Leading the list is "Mr. and Mrs. Bridge" (1990, PG-13, color, 127 minutes) with Joanne Woodward and Paul Newman in the title roles. She received a best actress nomination from the Academy for her role in one of 1990's better films.

Another film with Oscar-winning ladies was less successful and not nearly as good but it's always fun to watch Shirley MacLaine and Meryl Streep work. "Postcards From Eden" (1990, R, color, 101 minutes), the Debbie Reynolds-Carrie Fisher story, is somewhat scattered and overly melodramatic.

Another film with Oscar nominations, "Green Card" (1990, PG-13, color, 107 minutes) stars Gerard Depardieu. From one big guy to another, Schwarzenegger's "Kindergarten Cop" (1990, PG-13, color, 111 minutes) leads MCA/Universal's list of June laser disc releases.

Other laser discs available June 13 include an interesting thriller

about an innocent man facing execution for a murder he didn't commit, "Somebody Has to Shoot the Picture" (1990, R, color, 104 minutes).

"DESTINY RIDES AGAIN" (1939, NR, black and white, 94 minutes) is a particularly interesting among the laser releases this week. One of the top westerns from Hollywood's Golden Age, "Destiny Rides Again" stars Marlene Dietrich, Jimmy Stewart and a host of other stars.

But the largest group of home video releases this week are pointed at the youth market with distributors cranking up to entertain the kids as they stream out of school for the summer.

Jack London's "White Fang" (1990, PG, color, 109 minutes) from Disney is a good choice. Maybe it will stimulate kids to read Jack Lon-

don, a great way to spend the summer.

Disney also has a major promotion with a Pluto hand-puppet and six new releases to add to its 65 animated titles in six different programming categories. That ought to keep the kids off the streets and out of trouble.

Those six categories are mini classics, "The New Adventures of Winnie the Pooh," cartoon classics, "Duck-Tales," sing-alongs and "Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers."

Leading the list of six new releases is the "Prince and the Pauper" (1990, G, color, 24 minutes) which was recently playing theaters along with "The Rescuers Down Under." This is the first Disney animated film to be released directly to video from theaters.

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