



'Renaissance Man' inspires Army recruits to learn

BY BARBARA WILSON
SPECIAL WRITER

Writing clever ad copy to sell Roach Motel to the masses was hardly in Bill Rago's grand career plan. But after being dumped from his lucrative job as an advertising executive he discovers he's not exactly qualified to do anything else.

This sudden outrageous reversal of fortune finds Bill down and out, and suffering the slings and arrows from an imperious unemployment office counselor who, after going to great lengths, can only find one job for which Bill may be vaguely suited — a short-term assignment teaching basic comprehension to a group of borderline washouts at a nearby Army post.

Desperate times call for desperate measures and Bill has no choice but to accept the job.

This is the premise for the newest Danny DeVito film, "Renaissance Man," appearing in local theaters starting this week.

"Renaissance Man" was written by Plymouth Township resident Jim Burnstein and is a

PREVIEW

Touchstone Pictures release.

The origins of the story can be traced to the hallowed halls of learning at the University of Michigan where Burnstein remembers he was first captivated by the power of reading Shakespeare.

"It was so challenging. Like climbing Mt. Everest," he said. After graduating from the university, Burnstein taught Shakespeare to soldiers at Selfridge Air National Guard Base.

In the movie, Bill (Danny DeVito) has difficulty adjusting to the regimentation of life on an Army post and initially, he has an equally difficult adjustment in the classroom. He doesn't want to be there, and neither do the recruits. He butts heads with the Drill Sergeant (Gregory Hines) who tells him, "The difference between you and me, Bill, is I care about what I do."

Taking up the challenge, Bill finally starts to teach. What he ends up with teaching is a big surprise. By accident he has a copy of "Hamlet" with him in class, and the students, hoping to

waste time, cajole him into reading from the play.

Much to their surprise, they find something that connects them. As his teaching methods begin to inspire and motivate this class, made up of kids passed over and abandoned by our educational system, Bill proves to them and to himself that they can achieve more than they ever dreamed.

Producer Sara Colleton developed "Renaissance Man" with Burnstein as part of her Colleton Company production deal with 20th Century Fox. Touchstone Pictures picked up the project, partnered with Cinerge and put the film into production.

Penny Marshall was tapped to direct the film.

"I especially liked that the story has something to say about the lack of education in our society, and how the teaching system has fallen apart," Marshall said.

In addition to DeVito, the film stars Gregory Hines as a career noncommissioned officer whose dedication to the training of recruits runs counter to an English literature class being run by DeVito's character.



Breaking through: Danny DeVito stars as a burned-out ad salesman turned Shakespeare instructor for a group of Army recruits in "Renaissance Man" opening this week in area theaters. The screenplay was written by Plymouth Township resident Jim Burnstein.

Fox announces summer releases

Here's a sneak preview of Twentieth Century Fox releases coming to big screens this summer.

■ "Speed," opening June 10 — stars Keanu Reeves as SWAT cop Jack Traven, who is given the challenge of his career when a crowded bus — wired to explode if it slows to under 50 mph — is set loose on the freeways of Los Angeles. The film also stars Dennis Hopper and Sandra Bullock, and is directed by Jan De Bont. The producer is Mark Gordon; the script is by Graham Yost.

■ "Airheads," opening June 17 — is about three rock 'n' roll musicians who inadvertently take a radio station hostage in an attempt to get their demo played. The film stars Brendan Fraser, Steve Buscemi and Adam Sandler, and is directed by Michael Lehman. The producers are Robert Simmonds and Mark Burg, and the screenplay is by Rich Wilkes.

■ "Baby's Day Out," opening July 1 — is a big-scale comedy in which 9-month-old Baby Bink becomes the target of a big city search. The film stars Joe Mantegna, Lara Flynn Boyle and Joe Pantoliano, and is directed by Patrick Read Johnson. John Hughes and Richard Vane are the producers, and the script is by John Hughes.

■ "True Lies" opening July 15 — stars Arnold Schwarzenegger as Harry Tasker, who is a special agent for Omega Sector, a top-secret government agency charged with nuclear terrorism intervention.



Thriller: Keanu Reeves is Jack Traven and Sandra Bullock is Annie in "Speed" a thriller about a cop who must remove a bomb planted beneath a bus.

PREVIEW

Fluent in six languages and skilled in all forms of counter-intelligence, Harry is an international spy who has kept his real profession secret from his wife, Helen, for as long as they have been together. Harry has the skills, the resourcefulness and the courage to save the country. Now if only he can save his marriage. "True Lies" also stars Jamie Lee Curtis and Tom Arnold. The film is written, produced and directed by James Cameron.

■ "The Scout," opening Aug. 3 — is a comedy in which Albert Brooks plays floundering New York Yankees scout Al Percolo who is sweating bullets as his new discovery — rookie phenom Steve Nebraska (Brendan Fraser) shakes up the sports world with his baseball brilliance and his thoroughly eccentric behavior.

The film also stars Dianne Wiest and is directed by Michael Ritchie. The producers are S. Ruddy and Andre E. Morgan, and the script is by Andrew Bergman, Albert Brooks and Monica Johnson.

UPCOMING MOVIES

There's something for everyone at the movies. Here's a list of what's in the wings:

Opening Friday, June 3
■ "The Princess and the Goblin" — An animated magical fable of mystery, excitement and innocent romance based on the book by George MacDonald. Focus on the coming of age of a naive young girl who learns to overcome her fears. Directed by Joe Zeff.

■ "The Cowboy Way" — An action-comedy about modern day rodeo cowboys from New Mexico taking New Yorkers for the ride of their lives. Stars Woody Harrelson, Kiefer

Sutherland, Dylan McDermott, and Ernie Hudson. Directed by Greg Clampton.

Opening Friday, June 10
■ "City Slickers II" — The city dudes are getting into the saddle again in search of a lost treasure and along the way must overcome many obstacles.
■ "Speed" — A thriller about a cop who must remove a bomb planted beneath a bus and is set to explode when the speed of the bus drops below 50 miles per hour. Stars Jeff Daniels.

Opening Friday, June 17
■ "Wolf" — A romantic thriller about a book editor who is bitten by a wolf he was trying to

help. From that moment on, nothing, not his job, his marriage or any part of his life will ever be the same.

Opening Friday, June 24
■ "Wyatt Earp" — An epic of the American West from the 1860s to the turn of the century, seen through the exciting and tumultuous life of Wyatt Earp from youth to middle age. Stars Kevin Costner.

Opening Wednesday, June 29
■ "Little Big League" — A 12-year old ardent baseball fan inherits the slumping Minnesota Twins and becomes the youngest owner-manager in baseball history.

Reader comments sought

Share your comments about any newly released movies with your friends and neighbors on our movie page.

We're interested in hearing from readers of all ages — your comments are important to us.

Send comments to Keely Wygonik, Taste/Entertainment Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. Call (313) 953-2105 or fax comments to (313) 951-7279.

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STAR TAYLOR	STAR TAYLOR	STAR TAYLOR

NO PASSES OR COUPONS ACCEPTED

Watch "The Lion King - A Musical Journey With Elton John" Wednesday, June 15 on ABC