

LET'S GO! MOVIES

'Outbreak' delivers clever, contagious thrills



JOHN MONAGHAN

TICKETS PLEASE

Summer has arrived early in Hollywood. It's only March and already we've got the kind of crowd-pleasing blockbuster that mixes popular stars and lots of action in a last-minute race to prevent the end of the world.

A lethal virus has surfaced in Zaire, wiping out an entire village. The chances of spreading outside the jungle are thin (the closest village is 50 miles away), yet the bug travels to America through a smuggled monkey host.

In a frightening chain of events, people on both coasts start dropping like flies. First they develop flu-like symptoms, then open sores and bleeding eyes and ears. They die within a matter of hours, their internal organs turning to liquid.

Ten years ago, we wouldn't have been spared the sight of a gooey pancreas, but director Wolfgang Petersen shows a lot of restraint. He knows that in the wake of AIDS, the mere thought of a virus this lethal is more

frightening than any gross-out special effect.

"It's a billionth of our size and yet it's beating us. You can't help but respect it," a scientist says.

One clever scene occurs in a movie theater where a man coughs and in slow motion we see the tiny white microbes float through the air. When one dot enters the mouth of a laughing woman we know her northern California town is doomed.

It takes Hoffman and company awhile longer to realize that the virus is airborne. The camera starts in a room where an unexposed man has developed symptoms, then whooshes through hospital air vents to a room full of virus victims.

Petersen and screenwriters Laurence Dworkin and Robert Roy Pool take the hum drum routine of laboratory research out into the field. With helicopter chases and political cover-ups, expect more Indiana Jones than Madame Curie.

Hoffman isn't your first choice when thinking of heroic action hero, yet he plays the part with complete conviction. It's not every day that you see him jumping from a helicopter onto a freighter.

Even the romance subplot doesn't get in the way. The recently divorced scientist wants to patch things up with his ex-wife (Rene Russo), his counterpart in the Center for Disease Control. Their love-hate relationship is believable even when other parts in the movie aren't.

Sometimes you get the feeling that, for the sake of another helicopter chase, key scenes were left on the cutting room floor. An infected mother is separated from her family, her blood sample taken and numbered. Just when you think she will play a part in the cure, she disappears.

Morgan Freeman and Donald Sutherland play military big wigs trying to cover the whole thing up. The virus has shown up before, and instead of surrendering their most powerful biological weapon they'd rather destroy an entire town.

Director Petersen fine-tuned his suspense techniques in the German "Das Boot." With movies like "In the Line of Fire" and now "Outbreak," he stands as Hollywood's most intelligent creator of big-budget action movies.

To leave a message for John Monaghan, dial 953-2047, mail-



Thriller: Kevin Spacey as Major Casey Schuler (clockwise from left), Colonel Sam Daniels, M.D. (Dustin Hoffman), Dr. Roberta Keough (Rene Russo) and Major Walter Salt (Cuba Gooding, Jr.) in Warner Bros.' medical thriller, "Outbreak."

box number 1866, on a touch-tone phone, fax him a note at 691-7279, or write him in care of Entertainment, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

Screen Scene

A sampling of what's playing at alternative movie theaters across metro Detroit as reviewed by John Monaghan.

DETROIT FILM THEATRE
Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward, Detroit. Call (313) 833-2323 for information. (\$5; \$4 students)

"Father Panchali" (India-1954). 7:30 p.m. March 17-18; 4:30 p.m. March 19. Satyajit Ray's chronicle of a poor Indian family and the maturing of young son Apu was followed by two sequels (collectively known as "The Apu Trilogy"). This is not only a joyously self-contained experience, but also one of the best films ever made.

"The Last Klezmer" (USA-1994). 7 p.m. March 20. Of the 5,000 or so klezmer musicians performing in Europe before the Holocaust, Leopold Kozlowski is one of the few surviving. The documentary focuses on the rhythms and melodies that make this music so unique. As an added feature, director Yale Strom will introduce the film.

KINOTEX, WINDSOR FILM THEATRE
2135 Wyandotte St. West, Windsor. Call (519) 971-5160 for information. (\$4)

"The Phantom of Liberty" (France-1974). 9 p.m. March 20-21. In a companion piece to other surrealist masterpieces, veteran director Luis Bunuel concocts a series of anarchic sketches ostensibly addressing man's paradoxical quest for freedom.

MUSIC HAS THEATRE
22918 Woodward, Ferndale. Call (810) 544-3000 for information.

"Clerks" (USA-1994). 8 p.m. March 21. Kevin Smith's hilarious account of life behind the counter at a New Jersey convenience store was made for only \$23,000. The acting is sometimes



MURIMAX FILMS

Comedy: Vladimir Cruz stars in Tomas Alea's "Strawberry & Chocolate," a new comedy from Cuba now playing at the Maple Theatre.

amateurish, the jokes typically crude, but the movie sheds light on an occupation where the only way to vent frustration is to "rip into the occasional customer."

"Dead Can Dance: Toward the Within" (USA-1994). 8 p.m. through March 17. Celtic folk and Middle Eastern percussion blend in the music of Dead Can Dance, shown here in a live performance in Santa Monica. (\$5)

"Heavenly Creatures" (New Zealand-1994). 7:30 p.m. March 19. Based on a notorious murder case, this breathtaking thriller from New Zealand plots what happens when two school girls' close friendship turns to murder. (\$4)

MAIN ART THEATRE
118 N. Main Street at 11 Mile, Royal Oak. Films play through at least Thursday, unless noted otherwise. Call (810) 542-0180 for information and showtimes. (\$6.50;

\$4 students and matinee; \$3 twilight)

"The Madness of King George" (Britain-1994). A tragic-comedy based on Alan Bennett's play about the life of King George III, whose lapses in sanity made him ill-equipped to deal with his evil son. Nigel Hawthorne and Helen Mirren star.

"Shallow Grave" (USA-1995). A black comedy about three friends who discover the body of their fourth roommate and agree to dispose of it and keep the money they find in his room. Kerry Fox ("Angel at My Table") and Christopher Eccleston star.

"Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!" (USA-1965). Director Russ Meyer's fascination for strong, chesty superwomen was never more acute than in this under-ground cult classic, rereleased to much greater acclaim than when it originally came out.

"Muriel's Wedding" (Austra-

lia-1995). A young woman gets revenge on those who tell her she'll always be a bridesmaid, never a bride. Opens Friday.

MAPLE THEATRE
4135 W. Maple, Bloomfield. All titles play through at least Thursday, unless noted otherwise. Call (810) 855-0090 for information. (\$5.75; \$3.75 students and matinee; \$2.95 twilight)

"Miami Rhapsody" (USA-1995). Woody Allen didn't direct it, but you'd never know from this romantic comedy about a young woman forced to confront the true meaning of commitment when her boyfriend pops the question. Sarah Jessica Parker, Mia Farrow, and Antonio Banderas star.

"Before the Rain" (Macedonia-1994). A candidate for the Best Foreign Film Oscar this year, a love story told in three parts — an impossible love, a personal dilemma, and homecoming — linked by characters and events that alternate between modern London and the hills of Macedonia.

"Strawberry and Chocolate" (Cuba-1994). An odd relationship forms between two very different men — one a middle-aged gay character and the other a straight young columnist — fuels this new comedy from Cuba.

MICHIGAN THEATRE
503 Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call (313) 995-5356 for information. (\$5 single ticket; \$8 evening; \$25 weekend)

"33rd Annual Ann Arbor Film Festival." Through March 19 (call for showtimes). The annual collection of 16mm independent and experimental films from around the world. Among the jurors is Jay Rosenblatt, whose "The Smell of Burning Ants" was awarded the Best of Festival prize last year. Winners screen Sunday at 5, 7, 9 p.m.

Coming Attractions

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

Opening Friday, March 17

"Bye Bye Love" — Three recently divorced dads who have swapped custody of their kids get a gush course in advanced parenting while trying to maintain a semblance of a social life that the whole marriage may end, families are formed.

"Losing Isaiah" — Drama about a social worker and her husband who adopt an African-American baby, only to have the birth mother return several years later to regain custody of her child. Stars Jessica Lange, Halle Berry. (Rated R)

"Candy Man: Farewell to the Flesh" — Sequel to the 1992 thriller, a young woman probes

into the mystery of why her family is cursed by a book-wielding Candyman. (Rated R)

Opening Friday, March 24

"Dolores Claiborne" — A successful New York journalist is forced to confront her troubled past when her mother is accused of murdering her employer. Stars Kathy Bates, Christopher Plummer.

"Muriel's Wedding" — Comedy about a young woman who, determined to make something of her life, sets out to find a wedding dress, a man and ultimately, the confidence to believe she deserves both.

"Gordy" — A charming comedy for the whole family that revolves around the adventures and



DEAN WILLIAMS

misadventures of a pig named Gordy.

Opening Friday, March 31

"Born to be Wild" — (Formerly titled "The Great Gorilla Getaway") A teenage boy forms a

friendship with a young gorilla who communicates through sign language, and embarks on a funny and enlightening adventure to help a unique animal return to the wild.

Daddys: The cast of "Bye Bye Love," includes Matthew Modine (front, left), Paul Reiser and Randy Quaid.

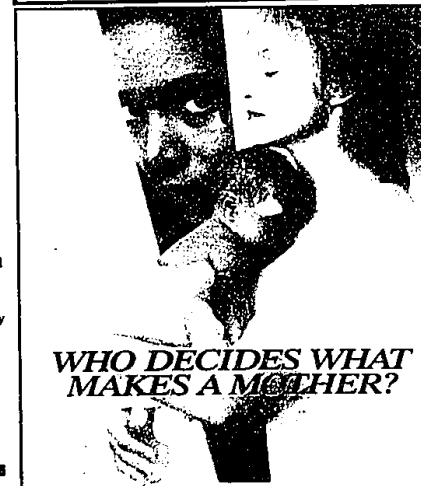
"HELLO LAUGHTER!"

Gene Shalit, THE TODAY SHOW
"A 'PARENTHOOD' FOR THE '90'S!"
Janet Maslin, THE NEW YORK TIMES

MATTHEW MODINE RANDY QUAID PAUL REISER



STARTS FRIDAY, MARCH 17TH		
AMC AMERICAN WEST	AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC WONDERLAND
AMC WOODS	SHOWCASE ALBANY HILLS	SHOWCASE PORTLAND 1-19
SHOWCASE STERLING HILLS	SHOWCASE WESTLAND	STAR GRATIOT
STAR ROCHESTER	STAR TAYLOR	UNITED ARTISTS FAIRLAKE
UNITED ARTISTS LAKESIDE	UNITED ARTISTS 12 OAKS	UNITED ARTISTS WEST RIVER

JESSICA LANGE HALLE BERRY
Losing Isaiah

PARAMOUNT PICTURES PRESENTS A HOWARD W. KOCH JR. PRODUCTION JESSICA LANGE
HALLE BERRY LOSING ISAIAH DAVID STRATHAIRNS CURA GOODING JR. AND
SAMUEL L. JACKSON CASTING BY SETH MARGOLIS COSTUME DESIGNER HARVEY ROSENSTOCK
PRODUCED BY HOWARD W. KOCH JR. AND NAOMI FONER WRITTEN BY NAOMI FONER
DIRECTED BY STEPHEN GYLLENHAAL

STARTS FRIDAY, MARCH 17TH		
AMC AMERICAN WEST	AMC DET AID 10	AMC EASTLAND
AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC YOUTH/LEED CITY	AMC CANTON
RENAISSANCE 4	SHOWCASE 22	SHOWCASE 22
SHOWCASE 22	SHOWCASE 22	STAR GRATIOT 12
STAR TAYLOR 12	STAR TAYLOR 12	STAR ROCHESTER HILLS
STAR TAYLOR 12	STAR TAYLOR 12	STAR TAYLOR 12
STAR TAYLOR 12	STAR TAYLOR 12	STAR TAYLOR 12
STAR TAYLOR 12	STAR TAYLOR 12	STAR TAYLOR 12