

LET'S GO! MOVIES

Grant exudes charm in eccentric 'Englishman'

By JOHN MONAGHAN
It isn't exactly a mole hill, but according to the precise measurements of a pair of English map makers, it's also 16 feet short of a mountain.

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OF THE SUMMER!**

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SHOWCASE ALBANY 11 SHOWCASE ALBANY 12
STAR GRANT 10 STAR JOHN R. 14 STAR LINCOLN PARK
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TERRIFICALLY
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DAZZLER!"

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STARTS FRIDAY, MAY 19TH

AMC AMERICANA WEST	AMC BEL AIR	AMC EASTLAND	AMC LAUREL PARK
AMC SOUTHWEST CITY	AMC STERLING CTR.	AMC WONDERLAND	AMC WOODS
QUO WOODS	REVENANCE	SHOWCASE ALBANY 11	SHOWCASE ALBANY 12
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mountain. Besides, it's wartime and what kind of homescoming will the boys have to find their mountain reduced to a hill?

"The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill but Came Down a Mountain," currently enjoying wide release, is one of the year's most charming films. While some might consider it a one-joke affair, it bubbles over with eccentric characters and subtle English humor.

Hugh Grant plays the younger of two cartographers, a slightly stuffy Englishman released from military service (it's 1917, toward the end of World War I) for shell shock. He's not all that disappointed when their car mysteriously stalls and passenger train schedules can't accommodate them.

The villagers' plan, you see, is to haul dirt up to the top of the hill, raising it to the required height. They'll stop just short of murder to make sure they get the job done.

The project forms an unusual alliance between Reverend Jones (Kenneth Griffith) and the town stud/barkeep Morgan the Goat (Colm Meaney). When it becomes necessary to work on the sabbath, the clergyman reluctantly agrees, as long as Morgan doesn't sell beer.

Much of the comedy revolves around the stuffiness of the Englishmen and the earthiness of the villagers. It's far from an original concept, first pioneered in countless Ealing Studio comedies in the '40s and '50s and more recently in the Scottish-made "Local Hero."

This one has a certain freshness, thanks in part to Grant's performance. He hits the right notes, though I'm starting to tire of his politely nervous act — the stammering and pushing back of his hair — that he does in every film.

Meaney, still best-known to the masses for his work on TV's current "Star Trek" series, again proves himself a likable, robust character actor. One of the funniest gags comes early, when it's revealed that all of the infants in the church congregation have Morgan's red hair.

Other memorable characters inhabit Fynnion Garw. There are a pair of addled, elderly twins ("not too dotty not to know we're dot-



Hardly a mole hill: Hugh Grant in Christopher Monger's "The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill But Came Down a Mountain."

ty") and a young woman (Tara Fitzgerald playing opposite Grant for a third time in as many years) who again stalls the young map maker by seducing him.

Written and directed by Christopher Monger, "Englishman" celebrates the oral tradition, as its story gets passed down from grandfather to grandson. Though everyone's tongue is firmly in

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)

"Amateur" (USA-1935). 7:30 p.m. May 19-20, 4, 7 p.m. May 21. The latest from low-key director Hal Hartley has a cast of characters including an ex-nun who writes exotic stories, an amnesiac, and a porn film director on the run.

"Temptation of a Monk" (Hong Kong-1993). 7 p.m. May 22. Filmed in China, this one is set in the Tang Dynasty of 626 A.D. as a warrior disguised as a monk takes refuge in a Buddhist temple.

ELM GIG THEATRE
2218 Woodward, Ferndale. Call (810) 544-3030 for information. (\$4)

"Clerks" (USA-1994). 9 p.m. May 23. Kevin Smith's debut feature, made on a shoestring in black and white, charts a day in the life of New Jersey convenience store clerks. The jokes are crude, the performances and camera-work sometimes amateurish, but

the result is cutting edge comedy.

MAPLE THEATRE
118 N. Main Street at 11 Mile, Royal Oak. Films play through at least Thursday, unless noted otherwise. Call (810) 855-9090 for information. (\$5.75; \$3.75 students and matinee; \$2.95 twilight)

"The Sum of Us" (Australia-1995). When a son comes out of his closet to his father, dad not only accepts the news, but helps him get dates. This gay-friendly comedy stars familiar Australian actors Jack Thompson and Russell Crowe.

"Bar Girls" (USA-1995). A searomatic melodrama about the lifestyles of eight lesbians who frequent the same neighborhood bar.

"Muriel's Wedding" (Australia-1995). In this hit comedy from Australia, a young woman dreams of marriage but can't seem to get her life together.

"The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill but Came Down a Mountain" (Britain-1995). Hugh Grant stars in this new comedy about a pair of mapmakers who find they're not match for the people of a small town who will stop

Tell us why your pet's a hero

Kids — write and tell us why your pet is a hero to win four tickets to see "Gordy," and a plush Gordy toy. Six prizes will be awarded. This contest is open to kids age 12 and younger. Deadline to enter is Monday, May 22.

Send or fax entries to: Koely Wygonik, Let's Go editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48160, fax: (313) 591-7297.

Winners will be notified by phone.

"Gordy" is a young pig on a mission — to save his family in the movie by the same name playing at metro Detroit movie theaters.

In the course of his travels, Gordy saves the life of the son of a billionaire industrialist.

"Gordy," a Miramax release, is rated G.

Coming Attractions

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

Opening Friday, May 19

■ "Die Hard — With a Vengeance" — Detective John McClaine is back in the thick of things, this time working to thwart a mad bomber. Stars Bruce Willis, Samuel Jackson, Jeremy Irons. Rated R.

■ "Forget Paris" — Funny, touching and insightful look at what happens when the honeymoon ends and the marriage begins. Stars Billy Crystal, Debra Winger.

arranged marriage to a man in Hawaii in 1918. Winner of the audience award for Best Dramatic Film at the 1995 Sundance Film Festival.

■ "Queen Margot" — Epic love story set in France during the religious wars between Catholics and Protestants. Based on novel by Alexandre Dumas. Rated R.

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★★★★ Touching, Funny, Unforgettable.

Romance, Comedy And Billy Crystal As An N.B.A. Ref. A Sure Hit!

★☆☆☆

STARS: Billy Crystal, Debra Winger

FORGET PARIS

STARTS FRIDAY, MAY 19TH

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