

MOVIES

'Waterworld' has thrills amidst the silliness

TICKETS PLEASE



JOHN MONAGHAN

Forget for a moment that Kevin Costner is among the screen's blandest actors. Tell yourself that plot isn't that important in an action movie. Tilt your head just right, squint a little with one eye open and you may actually have a good time at "Waterworld."

Long before shooting concluded, Hollywood insiders branded the movie "Fishtar" and "Kevin's Gate." They reported on the bad weather, ego trips, and massive script changes that pushed the budget to \$175 million, making it by far the most expensive movie ever made.

Part of Costner's problem had to do with his character, The

REVIEW

Mariner, who fights for survival in a world where melted polar ice caps have covered the planet in water. Costner, who also serves as co-producer, thought his cold fish character would turn audiences off, so adds bits that make him a more sensitive, '90s kind of guy.

You might say you're in trouble when the first shot of the entire film is Costner's posterior, even if he is urinating into a device that provides him with precious drinking water. Amazingly, there are none of the bare butt shots that audiences come to expect from a Costner picture.

For the most part, Costner swashes and buckles effectively, deftly operating his Rubie Goldberg-style sailing ship while fleeing from the movie's jet ski-riding villains, called Smokers. They're led by Dennis Hopper, whose eye

patch-wearing baldie is over-the-top even by his standards. "Waterworld" is essentially "Med Max" with the ocean standing in for the Australian outback. Visually it has a limited palette of muted browns and blues (when the weather cooperates) that can grow pretty dull after while.

Director Kevin Reynolds offers sweeping shots of The Mariner surveying the horizon high above the mast, but doesn't hold our interest during the slower scenes. Had he stuck to his guns (or better yet hired another actor) The Mariner could have been an ac-

tion hero to contend with, silent and steely-eyed like Clint Eastwood and without all the mush.

Fortunately much of the budget went into the action sequences, some of which are astounding. At first his shipmates don't understand why the Mariner drags behind the boat with a harpoon gun until a monster fish takes a gulp at him and he blasts it from the inside.

The Mariner has webbed feet and gills behind his ears, allowing him to swim like a dolphin and breathe underwater. In one of the movie's few romantic moments

that isn't incredibly corny, he provides the heroine with underwater mouth-to-mouth while Smokers' bullets whiz by.

After the liberating effect of Linda Hamilton in the "Terminator" movies, it's hard to watch a heroine who just sits there while the guy does all the work. The main reason for Helen (Jeanne Tripplehorn) and her young charge Enola (Tina Majorino) is to soften the Mariner and create a post-nuclear family.

If Hopper hasn't chewed up all the scenery, you can savor the details, like The Mariner's gadgets and treasures (paper is a valuable commodity in the water-soaked future) or the rusted hull of the Exxon Valdez where the Smokers can take in the costumes, which appear fashioned from fish skins or castaway rubber.

Another clever bit occurs even before the credits roll, as the Uni-



Kevin Costner

versal logo (the earth as seen from space) transforms into a world of water.

Though hardly worth 175 mil, this might be worth the price of matinee admission. On a hot summer afternoon, after you've seen most everything else, c'mon in. "Waterworld's" fine.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

OPENING FRIDAY, AUG. 4

• **"VIRTUOSITY"**
A futuristic thriller set in Los Angeles about an ex-cop with a tortured past who hunts a murderous computer-generated personality who has brought himself to life. Stars David Duchovny, Kelly Lynch, Russell Crowe, Stephen Spinella. Rated R.

• **"BABE"**
A live-action comedy based on the children's book, "Babe, the Gallant Pig" blends state-of-the-art special effects with performances by animal actors. Stars Magpie Soberani, James Cromwell, Jack Thompson, Sandy Gore. Rated G.

• **"BUSHWHACKED"**
When a group of Cub Scouts on their first camping trip mistake an innocent escaped convict for an experienced guide, they help each other survive — and come to terms with their individual problems. Stars Daniel Stern. Rated PG-13.

• **"SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT"**
A story of three generations of women

in a Southern horse-raising family, and their relationships with the men in their lives. Stars Jada Roberts, Dennis Quaid, Robert Duvall, Kyra Sedgwick and Gene Rowlands. Rated R.

OPENING FRIDAY, AUG. 11

• **"DANGEROUS MINDS"**
A drama based on the real-life experience of a Marine LouAnne Johnson who left behind 10 years in the service to become an inner city high school teacher. Stars Michelle Pfeiffer, George Clooney, Courtney B. Vance and Robin Bartlett. Rated R.

• **"A KID IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT"**
A family adventure about a 14-year-old Southern California boy who finds himself transported back in time to medieval Camelot. Stars Thomas Ian Nicholas, Joss Ackland and Kate Winslet. Rated PG.

• **"A WALK IN THE CLOUDS"**
A tale of romance, passion, family and tradition about a young returning GI who offers a chance encounter, agrees to pose as a young woman's husband, and help her face her domineering widowed over father. Stars Keanu Reeves, Alvaro Sanchez-Gilja, Anthony Quinn and Giancarlo Giannini. Rates PG-13.

SCREEN SCENE

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

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

• **"Crumb"** (USA - 1994). Aug. 4-6 (call for showtimes). Another amazing documentary that didn't

get the attention of last year's Oscar, this fascinating, disturbing portrait of cult cartoonist Robert Crumb defies all expectations. Director Terry Zwigoff has been a friend of the reclusive Crumb for years, yet he doesn't let his obvious respect keep him from exploring the artist's troubling darkness. The most unforgettable moments occur during interviews with Crumb's disturbed brothers.



JOHN BRAMLEY

Comedy/adventure: Captain Sam Cahill (Danny Glover, left) has made a promise to the Montagnard villagers of Dak Nhe, Vietnam, to replace their prized elephant in time for an upcoming ceremonial ritual. Along with a reluctant Green Beret contingent in "Operation Dumbo Drop".

"PURE DISNEY MAGIC!"

- Peter Travers, ROLLING STONE

"A SUCCESS! GLORIOUSLY COLORFUL, A LANDMARK FEAT!"
- Janet Maslin, THE NEW YORK TIMES

"A FILM THAT EARNS A PLACE OF HONOR AMONG DISNEY'S FILM STUNNERS!"
- Richard Corliss, TIME MAGAZINE

"DISNEY'S DONE IT AGAIN. IT'S DAZZLING & WILDLY ENTERTAINING. IT'S A FILM YOU HAVE TO SEE!"
- Joel Siegel, GOOD MORNING AMERICA

"TWO THUMBS UP!"
- SISKEL & EBERT



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