

Pfeiffer movie about tough school based on real life

Based on a real life story, "Dangerous Minds," now playing at metro Detroit movie theaters, stars Michelle Pfeiffer as former Marine LouAnne Johnson, who leaves an officer's commission and nine-year military career to pursue her dream of becoming an English teacher.

But while earning her teaching credentials at a Northern California high school, she is assigned to a group of students who change her life forever. And she changes theirs.

As their new instructor, Ms. Johnson defies all the rules, creates her own curriculum and instructs the class of tough, inner-city teenagers from college-level tests.

Frustrated that her students, whose standardized scores range from average to excellent, have

PREVIEW

come to accept failure as a way of life, she cajoles and tricks them into learning. More important, she loves them and helps them believe in themselves.

One teacher's account of the education crisis in America, and her effort to make a difference, "Dangerous Minds" is a Hollywood Pictures presentation of a Don Simpson/Jerry Bruckheimer production. The screenplay by Ronald Bass is based upon "My Posse Don't Do Homework" by LouAnne Johnson. Buena Vista Pictures distributes.

"This is a picture about one teacher and how she goes about getting her students' attention so they can learn," said Simpson. "She helps them understand the

importance of knowledge and the ultimate power an education affords everyone in our society."

Bruckheimer agrees. "Our school systems are under-financed and under-staffed and as a result we are losing a generation of kids. Don and I would like to make teachers heroes again. We wanted to show their struggle with the system, with the kids, and with the environment in which the kids grow up — which many times is their biggest deterrent — and demonstrate that these teachers really are significant role models."

To prepare for the role Pfeiffer spent time with Johnson, read a variety of reports and studies outlining and comparing educational systems throughout the world, and for some practical suggestions, contacted two friends who

are both dedicated teachers.

"It can be more difficult to portray a real person because one feels a certain responsibility to that individual," said Pfeiffer. "In a few situations where artistic license needed to be taken and we needed to alter something in some slight way, I always felt that I had to stay within the truth of LouAnne's character and not compromise the story."

Outside the classroom, LouAnne's primary relationships revolve around three of her students: Emilio, played by Wade Dominguez whose first professional audition was with Michelle Pfeiffer; Callie, played by Brooklyn Harris who, although she has appeared in two other films, was found in an open call out of hundreds of applicants; and Raul, played by Rensly Santiago who

has dreamt of being on the big stage for as long as he can remember.

Mixing nonprofessionals with experienced actors is director John N. Smith's trademark. The chemistry such pairing inspires leads to an exciting dynamic on

set and on the screen.

"I've done a lot of work with nonprofessional actors, so I feel very comfortable introducing new film elements to people who are not experienced with film," he explains.

"Dangerous Minds" is rated R.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

- **"MORTAL KOMBAT"**
Action adventure features a group of fighters, some with superhuman powers, who compete for the title of champion in a mysterious tournament based on the best-selling home video game. Stars Christopher Lambert, Lin Sen Ashley, Taisa Seto, Ronin, Show. Directed by Paul Anderson. Rated PG-13.
- **"THE BABY-SITTERS CLUB"**
Based on the top-selling book series by the same name, the story of one summer in the lives of seven teenage women in the midst of their teenage years, bound by friendships, challenged by adventures, family crises and romantic entanglements. Stars Peter Onorati, Durnin, Brooke Adams and Bruce Davi.
- **"BEYOND RANDOM"**
On a vacation to the Far East to escape a tragic past, a young woman embarks on a dangerous, unofficial tour when her passport is stolen, and warns the true meaning of friendship and courage. Stars Patricia Arquette, U Aung My, Frances McDormand and Spalding Gray. Rated R.
- **"LIE DOWN WITH DOGS"**
A comedy about one guy man's pursuit of romance and happiness during a summer at the beach. Stars Wally White, Randy Becker, Darren Dwyer, Bash Hatcher and James Saxon. Written and directed by Wally White. Rated R.

OPENING FRIDAY, AUGUST 25

- **"THE TIT THAT BENDS"**
Thriller about six-year-old girl who finds herself caught in an explosive tug-of-war between her loving adoptive parents and the charismatic but dangerous darters who gave her life. Stars Daryl Hannah, Keith Carradine, Maria Kely and Vincent Spano. Rated R.
- **"THE SHOW"**
Documentary concert film offers a glimpse into the personal and private lives of such notable hip-hop artists as Run D.M.C., Warren G., Doctor Dre and Naughty By Nature.
- **"THE AMAZING PANDA ADVENTURE"**
A young American boy visiting his natural father in China becomes involved in a search to locate and protect baby pandas from poachers. Filmed on location in China's remote mountain jungles, the film looks closely at pandas in their natural habitat.
- **"ARABIAN KNIGHT"**
Animated magical tale about a simple cobbler, a beautiful princess and a burning thief who change their destinies as they weave a tale of courage and love in an ancient golden city.
- **"DESPERADO"**
The misadventure of a name follows a trail of blood to the last of the infamous Mexican druglords for a showdown. Rated R.
- **"UNZIPPERED"**
Amusing portrait of fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi that chronicles the evolution of his 1994 New York Fall Fashion Show.

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