

'Money Train' offers lots of action, but plot is confusing

By Ron Thomas

They're brothers — Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson. Not blood brothers, mind you. Woody was adopted by Wesley's mother as a young boy. So the two men grew up together, and now they're partners in the New York subway police.

That's the premise you're asked to buy in "Money Train," no more of a stretch than Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito as "Twins." But that was comedy,

and "Money Train" has so few laughs, so much action and so much confused plotting that it's sometimes hard to tell the cops from the bad guys.

Snipes and Harrelson take turns posing as reeling delinquents on subway platforms, acting as bait for potential thieves. When they goof up, which is often, they face the wrath of their cholerical chief, Robert Blake.

Blake considers the subway his private fiefdom and is fanatical about the schedules of his trains.

REVIEW

Especially the Money Train, a heavily fortified car that collects revenues from the stations' toll booths.

A new member joins the squad, Jennifer Lopez, who proves her toughness by taking on Snipes in the gym boxing ring and landing some telling blows. Feminists might question this seeming validation of a female officer's worth.

Both men are smitten with Lopez, and that adds tension to their already raucous relationship. (They even use a line from the old Smothers Brothers routine: "Mother always liked you best.")

Harrelson is forever goofing up with his boozing and gambling, and Snipes feels constrained to rescue him. When Harrelson is threatened by hoodlums over gambling debts, Snipes hands him \$15,000 in cash. Harrelson promptly loses it to an old lady

pickpocket in the subway.

The hoodlums threaten to kill his partner, and Harrelson desperately seeks a solution. Well, there's always the Money Train.

"Money Train" may find a market with lovers of the buddy action film, but it is deeply flawed. The dramatic interludes seem like lame excuses for spacing out the violence. The two stars bicker pointlessly, like actors ad-libbing in a drama class exercise.

Snipes reasserts his status as a

strong presence on the screen, but Harrelson seems to be reworking his standard portrayal of a screw-up. Blake is properly mean in a role that is essentially a caricature. Lopez adds much-needed freshness; she is a genuine find. As a director, Joseph Ruben knows how to build suspense, especially with a maniac who delights in immolating cashiers he robs. But he is unable to unravel the inconsistencies of the script, which is attributed to Doug Harrison and David Loughery.

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, 6200 Woodward, Detroit. Call (313) 833-2323 for information. (\$5; \$4 students)

"Festival of Animation '95," 7:30 p.m. Dec. 8-9; 1, 4, 7 p.m. Dec. 10. The DFT season ends with this annual compilation of contemporary animation, mostly from the United States. Among the highlights: "The Big Story," a newswoman parody featuring an animated Kirk Douglas; the Oscar-winning "Bob's Birthday," and an encore presentation of "The Wrong Trousers," an amazing half-hour comedy thriller that could have been directed by Alfred Hitchcock.

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)

"Mighty Aphrodite" (USA - 1995). Woody Allen written, directed and stars in this story of a father obsessed with discovering the identity of his adopted son's mother. The typically eclectic cast includes Helena Bonham Carter, F. Murray Abraham, Peter Walker, and Claire Bloom. "Corrington" (Britain - 1995). A true story set in the 1920s England about an unconventional relationship between a painter (Emma Thompson) and an older homosexual man (Stephen Rea) with whom she's fallen in

love. Playwright Christopher Hampton takes his first stab as director.

"Leaving Las Vegas" (USA - 1995). Just in time for the holidays, Nicolas Cage plays a suicidal alcoholic who finds his soulmate in an abused call girl (Elizabeth Shue).

"Persuasion" (Britain - 1995). Jane Austen's story of an independent young woman who gets a second chance at the love of her life comes to the screen in this intelligent, witty film. "Maple Theatre" 4155 W. Maple, Bloomfield. All titles play through at least next Thursday, unless noted otherwise. Call (810) 856-9090 for information. (\$6; \$2.95 twilight)

"The Crossing Guard" (USA - 1995). In this intense drama written and directed by Sean Penn,

an alcoholic jeweler (Jack Nicholson) and his estranged wife (Anjelica Huston) still suffer from the loss of their daughter in a car accident. What starts as a fascinating premise sinks under its own self-indulgence.

"American President" (USA - 1995). Michael Douglas plays the widowed Commander in Chief who tries to balance his job and a blossoming romance with an environmental lobbyist (Annette Bening). Another crowd-pleaser from director Rob Reiner.

"Corrington" (Britain - 1995). See Main Art Theatre listing above.

"Michigan Theatre" 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call (313) 658-8397. (\$5; \$4 students/seniors)

"Double Happiness" (Canada - 1995). Dec. 11-16 (call for show-

times). A young woman tries to juggle her romantic life with the wishes of her traditional Chinese parents in this comedy from first-time director Mira Shum.

"Citizen Kane" (USA - 1941). 9 p.m. Dec. 11. Still the greatest film ever made, Orson Welles' stunning directorial debut chronicles the life of a powerful newspaper publisher from the points of view of the people who knew him best.

"Canadian Bacon" (USA -

1994). 9 p.m. Dec. 12-13. Flim-born Michael Moore's first feature is also among the last film's completed by John Candy. Here the president (Alan Alda) figures that war with Canada is what the U.S. economy really needs.

"State Theatre" 2115 Woodward, Detroit. Call (313) 961-6450 for information. (\$1)

"The Doon" (USA - 1990). 9 p.m. Dec. 11.

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