



Sylvester Stallone is Nick, a New York cab driver, and Dolly Parton is country singer Jake, who wants to turn him into a country singer, too, in "Rhinestone."



the movies
Dan Greenberg

'Rhinestone' teams wacky comedy duo Parton and Stallone

Sylvester Stallone and Dolly Parton together in a film? Ridiculous, right? Wrong! "Rhinestone," co-starring that unlikely couple, is one of the funniest movies around, and whoever thought up the idea deserves a special award.

Dolly plays (what else?) a country singer, Jake Ferris, who is a big hit in front of a tough crowd at the Rhinestone, a country-western saloon in New York City.

The problem is that the Rhinestone's lecherous owner-manager Freddie Ugo, hilariously caricatured by Ron Leibman, holds a three-year contract on Dolly's services. His electronically controlled bachelor pad has everything except girls. Dolly wants her contract and Freddie wants Dolly.

The solution is a really big bet. The stakes: Dolly puts up a five-year contract extension with extracurricular time in Freddie's pad while Freddie agrees to surrender her contract and pay all expenses if she can "turn anybody into a country-western singer in two weeks."

THE SEARCH for a candidate is on, and guess what crazy Italian cab driver just happens to pull up? Nick Martinelli (Stallone) has just wrecked his cab and is looking for new opportunities.

Reluctantly Nick agrees to the two-week training period, which includes hilarious sequences in his home as well as here. Papa Martinelli (Steven Apostol) is a very Italian funeral director. Mother Martinelli (Penny Santoro) is thick with tomato sauce, crocans and maternal concern. These stereotypical portraits are warmly drawn, with none of the bitterness that often accompanies ethnic film characters.

Pec and Santoro's acting and Bob Clark's direction help us laugh with Mother and Father Martinelli, both so set in their ways.

Similarly, the Ferris family's down-home ways in Tennessee, where Dolly takes city for his two-week transformation, are warm and pleasant, with no malice and lots of laughs. Her father, Noah (Richard Farnsworth), is pleasant, low-keyed and never loses the understanding twinkle in his eye.

Dolly's ex-fiance and singing partner Barnett Cole (Tim Thompson) can do no right, but he keeps on trying.

With such an excellent supporting cast, who needs good leads? But "Rhinestone" has them. Dolly is Dolly and what more can be said? Attractive, warm, personable, a big smile that communicates the fun she's having — all that and a terrific voice with a great deal of power.

The film's one technical fault is that Stallone cannot sing, and Parton's voice overwhelms him in their duets. But the whole idea is so funny and everything else is so well done that it doesn't matter.

ALTHOUGH STALLONE will never make it at the Met or the Grand Old Opry, he sure can act, as he demonstrates in "Rhinestone." Long accused as incapable of anything more than the Brando mumble, Stallone emerges here as a proficient actor.

True, the character, a New York cabbie, lends itself to the slurred mumble and Stallone uses that technique, but his wide range of facial expressions and body movements add great dimension to a loser from the city about to become a hero in the country.

The unlikely but very funny story of Nick the Cabbie and Jake the Singer was written by Phil Alden Robinson, who co-authored "Rhinestone's" screenplay with Sylvester Stallone. The only complaint is that they wrote so many funny lines audience laughter obliterated numerous jokes. All screenwriters should have such problems!



Ron Leibman is Jake's boss, Freddie Ugo, who makes a bet with Dolly that she can't make a singer out of the cabbie in two weeks time.

San Luis Obispo has good wines

Mention the name San Luis Obispo to the typical tourist or California native for that matter and the most probable association will be the Madonna Inn.

Certainly that grand, opulent, eclectic hotel represents something that is very real in the central California region: a curious mixture of southern California types and garishness and a middle American dream of elegance, charm and originality.

But there is much more than can and should be associated with this region. For our purposes it is a rapidly growing (both in esteem and volume) wine region, one of complex microclimates and diversified vintages.

There is the cool region south of the capital city, the Edna Valley, supplier to much of California for chardonnay and pinot noir grapes. There is also, farther north, a land of some of the finest zinfandel wines to be made in California, and it has been since the beginning of the century.

GREAT VARIANCE in wineries ranges between the select Edna Valley Vineyard and the rapidly growing and nationally distributed Estrella River Winery to the prestigious Mastanovich Winery and old-time establishments like Las Tablas Winery, Pessenti Winery and York Mountain Winery.

In between these extremes are some middle-ground places, most of them very new and some of them now producing wines of estimable distinction.

A selective day's tour can illustrate this nicely.

The Caparone Winery, run almost alone by Dave Caparone, is in a remarkably isolated region of low elevation and lovely terrain north of Paso Robles. Caparone is growing and producing excellent issues of merlot and cabernet sauvignon and is one of two area winemakers trying his hand at nebbiolo.

The '81 merlot is a superbly warm, lush, full wine, one worth the drive to find. Its companion cabernet sauvignon, while pleasant, is not as distinctive.

Southeast of San Miguel, the Bergstroms produce chardonnay, zinfandel, cabernet sauvignon and some petite ash at their Ranchita Oaks Winery. Unlike most of the small producers in this area, they are open without appointment on weekends for informal tours and tastings.

JUST EAST of Paso Robles is the exciting enterprise of the Martin Brothers. Its attractive label carries such issues as chardonnay, sauvignon blanc, chenin blanc and zinfandel and it will soon release California's first nebbiolo.

Sampled recently, the nebbiolo was an immensely approachable wine, full of good earthy flavor. It is not, to me, reminiscent of Italian issues of this grape, many of them being austere and overly made. A real find!

I also was very pleased with the Martin Brothers '81 zinfandel, full of lovely fruit, and with a complex, yet clean '82 sauvignon blanc. The '82

Monday, June 26, 1984 GLE

(C)50



Wine
Richard Watson

chenin blanc is extremely dry with hints of fruit.

To the west of Highway 101 on Willow Creek Road, a region that is home to many great and varied wines of the area — Mastanovich Winery. Pat Mastanovich makes some of the finest zinfandels south of Ridge and is now branching into the making of some whites as well.

Good as his issues are, one wonders about the \$30 price tag for a special issue of zinfandel he now has.

AROUND PASO Robles there are the two modest estates of the area, Estrella and HML. HML has been on hard times for a while and is now under new ownership. What the impact of that will be can only be answered in time, but HML has stood long for high-quality wines at very fair prices.

The Estrella out at Estrella are an ambitious group, providing sound wines, some superior, and marketing them all. (Had Stanley Hoffman had the Estrella marketing expertise he would still be treating wines rather than patients today.)

To the south of San Luis, in a dra-

maically cool and rugged region of Tehachas Mountain, Estrella, Edna Valley produces large amounts of burgundy grapes for its own use as well as its customers. Chateau and other wineries in the area.

The wines are made in a manner not unlike Chateau's, though the intensity may not be there as yet, but the French-speaking winery in its production and description of quality Chateau, below Chateau, is now expanding its varieties and is no longer associated only with chardonnay.

There are others, most hard to find and not yet ready to accommodate visitors. Perhaps most promising of all is Lawrence, one of the most promoted and self-aggrandized wineries in the state, a huge facility hidden in the hills and almost totally unmarked by sign or advertisement of any kind. The reward for finding a winery, a friendly glass of wine, was clearly not a fair payoff in this case.

Back to the Madonna for alcohol, chardonnay, delightful hospitality and one of the strangest places to wake up in you'll ever have. Well worth the fun of it all.

what's at the movies

GHOSTBUSTERS (PG) Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis as parapsychology research students trying to rid New York of menacing ghosts.

GREMLINS (PG) Technically well-done story of exotic pet whose offspring turn mean. Hoyt Axton, Zach Galligan and Phoebe Cates in a Spielberg film too goes for the under-12 set.

INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM (PG) Harrison Ford is back in another Spielberg epic adventure echoing "Raiders." Probably violent enough for an R rating.

THE NATURAL (PG) A big disappointment as Robert Redford, Robert Duvall, Glenn Close and others meander through a confusing, cliché-ridden baseball story.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICA (R) Sergio Leone's epic portrait of Prohibition and Depression America starring Robert De Niro, James Woods, Burt Young and a cast of thousands in a vivid gangland story.

THE POPE OF GREENWICH VILLAGE (R) Two small-town crooks become involved in more trouble than they could imagine. Stars Mickey Rourke and Eric Roberts.

RHINESTONE (PG) Hilarious laughter as Dolly Parton teaches Sylves-

ter Stallone country singing. Fine supporting cast.

ROMANCING THE STONE (PG) Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner continue to have fun in this romantic comedy complete with terrific bad guys and the world's greatest hidden treasure.

STAR TREK III: THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK (PG) Leonard Nimoy directs Willis Shuster, Kelley and James Doohan in the continuing adventures of the Starship Enterprise.

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