

# Paso Robles: a fine place to tour



Jeff B. Cohen is Chuck, one of a gang of neighborhood kids who gets caught up in danger, in "The Goonies."

the movies  
**Dan Greenberg**

## Kids' treasure hunt is tiring to watch

Goonies are not cute little furry creatures that turn mean when fed late at night.

Goonies are not monsters that come up out of your toilet. Goonies are a bunch of noisy kids in Steven Spielberg's latest but not so greatest of the same named. If the kids weren't cluttering all at once, we probably would enjoy their cute repartee more and have a better grip on the proceedings.

Spielberg's stock-in-trade has always been clever or unusual plots, but this time he's produced a fairly trite variation on the kids-and-the-treasure-map-out-to-save-the-old-homestead.

The Goonies are neighborhood chums who have a tightly knit friendship. The crisis develops when their neighborhood is threatened by the local country club for an expanded golf course. Faced with disposal, they search for the area's long-remembered treasure, hidden years ago by the pirate, One-Eyed Ike.

THE VILLAINS of this piece, in addition to two incredibly ridiculous guys in raincoats with foreclosure papers, are the Fratelli Family, three bumbling gangsters: Mama (Anne Ramsey) and her two sons, Jake (Robert Davi) and Francis (Joe Pantoliano). Mama is an entertaining cross between Captain Hook and the Wicked Witch of the West, but her two boys bumble along with little grace or humor.

In many ways "The Goonies" turns out as "Indiana Jones" with kids. A number of images are reminiscent of the "Temple of Doom" — long portions of the movie involving seemingly endless treks through caves, a water slide much like the mine car ride in the "Temple of Doom," archeological discoveries, great treasure, and the obligatory traps set by ancient treasure-guardians now represented by skultered skeletons lying around.

The three major problems with "The Goonies" are the plot, the noise and the generally dark scenes which make it difficult to understand what's going on. Quite correctly, cave scenes are not brightly lit, but that doesn't mean the audience needs to be confused about what's happening. Low lighting and overly fast cutting are responsible.

Part of the problem relates to the noise level. The seven kids, the Goonies, all chatter at the same time. When they do shut up and talk one at a time, some clever dialogue appears, but too much gets lost in their prattle.

Ko Hoy Quan, who played Short Round in the "Temple of Doom," is the kid with all the gadgets who would be more appealing if the audience could see his Rube Goldberg inventions clearly.

ANOTHER POTENTIALLY clever sequence is blunted by lack of punch lines. Mrs. Walsh, Mary Ellen Trainor as mother to two of the Goonies, brings home a Hispanic maid to help her pack. The maid speaks no English so one of the Goonies translates. He inserts sado-masochistic statements with sexual overtones. Subtleties keep the audience informed but the sequence turns limp as the maid's reaction is limited to minor eye-rolling.

The romantic interest in the film is restrained. The adolescent smooching is refreshing these exploit days, but antagonistic competition of a boy with a convertible is unnecessary and trite.

Most of the kids are just there in a fairly undistinguished series of performances, although the fat kid, Chunk (Jeff Cohen), constantly on the lookout for food, is appealing except when he gets carried away and flails about in fear or hunger. He has the film's one significant human relationship with the grotesque third son of Mama Fratelli, Sloth (John Matuszak), who is usually kept chained to the basement wall by his brothers.

Indiana Jones fans will probably enjoy "The Goonies" but I'm getting tired of the same old caves. It's time for some fresh crumbling skeletons.



Martha Plimpton (left), Josh Brolin and Corey Feldman explore a cave during a hunt for hidden treasure.

It was but two years ago that I wrote a column about one of the least known yet significant wine regions of California, the Paso Robles-Templeton area, less than a half hour above San Luis Obispo in the center of the state. It was then comprehensive and up-to-date, reporting the presence of some 17 wineries of note.

I recently returned to the area, having learned there are now at least 27 wineries in operation. Indeed, even more await me two years hence when they are today only agreements between bankers and winemakers.

Paso Robles has much to recommend it as a wine-touring area. The wines are of high quality, the people on the whole Midwestern friendly, and it is not impacted by hordes of gawking tourists drinking their respective wares from winery to winery. It takes some searching to find many of the enterprises but the rewards are lovely and serve as an excellent jumping-off point for the Hearst Castle, the Coastal Highway and the Big Sur region to the north.

Here, then, is a group of newer wineries to visit in the area. All are in the local phone book. Most do not encourage surprise visitors but respond well to appointments set a day or two in advance.

STARTING SOMEWHAT dimly, Creston Manor (of the lovely label and peculiar wine) is set off in bleak hill country some half an hour to the south and east of Paso Robles. The drive is dull, the wines indifferent, both wholly avoidable.

Most southerly of those here recommended of the new wineries is Castoro Cellars. This modest, back-room operation produces only cabernet sauvignon of some distinction. The wines are actually produced elsewhere and then finished and stored there in their small lots.

The bonded premises are essentially a screened-in back porch. Talk about boutique!

Somewhat above Templeton is El Paso de Robles, a real live commercial venture, boasting a full tasting room and all the attendant gimmicks. A fairly full line of decent wines are produced, the conversation pleasant and the prices affordable here.

While there, scoot over to Pat Mastantonio's new tasting facility on the highway: better wines, more gimmicks and a general sense of prosperity not readily found in the area. It is much easier to find than his actual winery and considerably cleaner as well.

SET AMONG the rolling hills west of Paso Robles, in a basement operation (contrasted to back porch), is Tobias Vineyards. This winery produces only zinfandel (from the highly respected Dusi Vineyard) and petite sirah. Both are muscle wines, offering power over finesse, bombast over style. If you like to chew your wines, drink Tobias.

The jewel of the region, and the true justification for this regional column, is Gary Eberle's winery east of town on highway 46. A lovely new structure allows visitors to coast themselves about as will, to be followed by a visit to an ample, tasteful room where char-

wine  
**Richard Watson**

donnay and cabernet can be sampled.

We are indeed fortunate locally to now be able to purchase these decently priced wines here, and both are strongly recommended. Additionally, visitors to the tasting room may purchase an excellent muscat canelli and a cabernet sauvignon blanc, both available only there.

Eberle is from the clan that governs Estrella River down the road, a quarter-of-a-million-case-a-year operation now. Running the winery, he thinks he now can concentrate on the two wines he does best and assure quality production.

At Estrella, a most visitable place in itself, one can also find the home of two new labels, both produced by the same person under a rather complicated financial arrangement. Already in production is Adelaide Cellars, producer of cabernet and chardonnay. And in the next isle is a Swiss-owned operation that will produce high quality sparkling wines, due in some two years.

LONG ON THE yeast, these already show great promise. The exact name is pending. And do not let regional maps

fool you. This winery is not west of Paso Robles as they indicate. In time they will, however, be there in their own facility.

And there is Arclero, reviewed in an earlier column, potentially the largest winery in the region, due to open this summer. Finally, of the new wineries, there is another of promise northwest of town called Twin Hills Ranch. Makers of excellent roses (zinfandel) and a fine 1984 chenin blanc, as well as a few others, this independently financed operation is but one of its owner's several agricultural interests.

There are others, of course, in the area to visit. HMR (now Hidden Mountain Ranch) always impresses. York Mountain is showing progress and Martin Brothers (available locally) continues to be one of the truly fine producers from any of California's many wine-growing regions.

And, for sleeping and relaxation in the area, return to San Luis Obispo to the Madonna Inn, perhaps the most distinctive motel in the United States. It alone is nearly worth the trip. True Southern California Kultur!

## what's at the movies

**AMADEUS (PG).** Winner of eight Academy Awards. Superb rendition of Mozart's life with Tom Hulce and F. Murray Abraham. Directed by Milos Forman.

**DESPERATELY SEEKING SUSAN (PG-13).** Hoboken housewife changes identities with a free spirit. No wonder they make New Jersey jokes.

**MASK (PG-13).** Cher in true story of biker lady with genetically deformed child. Mandolin moments intermixed with uplifting performances by Eric Stoltz and Laura Dern.

**POLICE ACADEMY II (PG-13).** More of the same hijinks with those men in blue.

**A PRIVATE FUNCTION (R).** British comedy about small Yorkshire town preparing for wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Lt. Philip Mountbatten.

**MOVIE RATING GUIDE**  
G General audiences. All ages admitted.

PG Parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for preteens.

PG-13 Parents are strongly cautioned to give special guidance for attendance of children under 13.

13. Some material may be inappropriate for young children.

R Restricted. Under 18 requires accompanying parent or guardian.

X No one under 18 admitted.

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