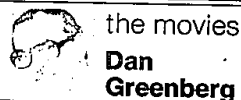




Michael Douglas is adventurer Jack Colton and Kathleen Turner is romance novelist Joan Wilder, who share wild adventures in "The Jewel of the Nile."



'Jewel of the Nile' returns twosome for more excitement

There is a pretty thin line between satiric romance and ridiculous tomfoolery, but producer-star Michael Douglas and director Lewis Teague have drawn it nicely in "Jewel of the Nile" (PG). The film is romantic, adventurous, entertaining and may even prove to be one of those rare sequels that outdoes the original. If you remember "Romancing the Stone," then the scene is set. World-renowned romantic novelist Joan Wilder (Kathleen Turner) and adventurer Jack Colton (Michael Douglas) have spent the past six months cruising the Mediterranean aboard the Angelina. For Jack and Joan, life is one big Mediterranean adventure. Joan, missing her New York study, however, is having problems with her latest novel. Jack wants to sail for Greece. They bicker.

LATER THAT day they go to a cocktail party where Joan meets the mysterious desert sheik, Omar (Spiros Focis), who's rather like Khaddaf with charm. What more do you need to see things rolling all over the Middle East? And roll they do, as Omar engages Joan to write the story of his sweep to power. For Joan, this is an opportunity to break her writer's block and do some "important" journalism. For Jack, it's just a silly interruption of their cruise. He really wants to sail for Greece. They quarrel but part amicably. Just as Jack is about to board his boat, the Angelina, he's greeted by Ralph (Danny DeVito), who has spent the last six months in a Colombian jail. Boy, is he ticked off. He wants revenge and attacks Jack, who is saved by a wild knife thrower just as the Angelina explodes.

Got all that? Good, because that's just the beginning. The wild knife thrower is one of a band of Sufis (the Flying Karamazov Brothers) who want Jack's help to save Joan from danger she doesn't yet know she's in. Jack's help is also needed to recover the Jewel of the Nile. That interests greedy Ralph, who wants his share.

LITTLE DOES Ralph know that the Jewel of the Nile is the Holy Man, Al Jihara (Avner Eisenberg), whose presence and approval give any government credibility. Naturally, Omar wants the jewel. The complications are endless and great fun in every respect. Each preposterous situation leads to another more outlandish and funnier than the last. But each has just the right touch of believability.

The film's secret lies in its lighthearted attitude. Since the plot is totally incredible, they decided to play it for laughs. Jack and Joan's adventures are as absurd as her romance novels. Underplaying actions and reactions, while adding occasional tense moments when Omar threatens, makes it work.

The principals strike just the right note, with Michael Douglas' eye-rolling and deadpan disgust conveying the weariness of a middle-aged husband trying to cope with his flighty-flakey wife. Kathleen Turner balances in perfection the shy, recluse romance writer emerging as a world-class blonde.

All three supporting roles — Ralph, Omar and the Holy Man — are terrific. DeVito's sardonic wisecracking counterpoints Eisenberg's relaxed Holy Man. In the background is big, bad, blustery Omar looking and playing it like a larger-than-life Omar Sharif. Eisenberg is a very funny man who probably was thinking how a tailor would play Woody Allen in this role.

The film has no great philosophy nor any particular message. Just enjoy.



Danny DeVito is back again as a would-be master criminal in the sequel to "Romancing the Stone."

upcoming things to do

• **'THE NUTCRACKER'**
Northern Ballet Theater will present the holiday classic "The Nutcracker" at 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 21, and 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 22, at Plymouth-Salem High School Auditorium in Plymouth. The symphony, with conductor Francesco Di Biasi, will accompany the dancers of Northern Ballet Theater under the artistic direction of Michelle Wolfe. All seats are reserved. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under 12 years of age and \$5 for senior citizens. Tickets are available at Livonia

City Hall, 33000 Civic Center Drive, Livonia; Northern Ballet Theatre, 331 N. Main, Plymouth; and Village Sweets 'n' Treats, 124 N. Center, Northville. For more information, call 455-7970.

• **AT HIGHKICKERS**
Jerry Lee Lewis will perform Sunday, Dec. 22, at the Highkicker Saloon in Pontiac. The rock star was originally scheduled to appear Sunday, Dec. 1. Other performers slated to entertain in the series of WC21-hosted concerts at the saloon include Steve Wariner/John-

ny Lee, Jan. 12; Tammy Wynette, Feb. 23, and John Anderson/the Whites, March 23. Tickets are available by calling 334-5550.

• **UGLY 'BALLERINAS'**
Billed as the world's ugliest and funniest "ballerinas" are the dancers of Balleta Trocadero de Monte Carlo, the

all-male ballet company satirizing classical ballet and modern dance innovations. The troupe will play its seventh engagement Saturday, Dec. 22, through Tuesday, Dec. 31, at the Music Hall Center in Detroit. Tickets at \$18-\$14 may be purchased by calling the Music Hall box office at 963-7600. Tickets also are available at all Hudson's and Ticket World outlets.

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