

MOVING PICTURES

'Major League': Improbable plot but sure winner

The spring season gets under way this week with five new releases — two major, two minor and one in-between film.

Don't rush out to see the lesser ones unless something like "Cyborg" (*) is your special dish. It's an R-rated futuristic thriller with lots of special effects. But what can you say about a film whose protagonist and antagonist are named after equipment and techniques associated with electric guitars?



the movies Dan Greenberg

Grading the movies

A+	Top marks — sure to please
A	Close behind — excellent
A-	Still in running for top honors
B+	Pretty good stuff, not perfect
B	Good
B-	Good but notable deficiencies
C+	Just a cut above average
C	Mediocre
C-	Not so hot and slipping fast
D+	The very best of the poor stuff
D	Poor
D-	It doesn't get much worse
F	Truly awful
Z	Reserved for the colossally bad
	No advanced screening

Gilson Rickenbacker, leader of the Silencers and Fender Tremolo, the chief Flesh Pirate, those are your main men. Pity the poor people caught in that world gone mad.

"I, Madman" (*) has a young actress working in an antique book store and imagining that the bad guys in the books are coming to life. Maybe they are.

"Dead Calm" (*) (R) hovers between major and minor, an Italian thriller starring Sam Neill ("A Cry in the Dark") as an Australian naval officer, John Ingram, out yachting with his wife, Rae (Nicole Kidman), when they run across some pretty scary stuff aboard a becalmed schooner.

"Dream Team" (B+) PG-13, 105 minutes) is so close to great, it's a shame they don't recall it and revise the first quarter-hour where problems exist.

Those early, and dubious, plot elements set up this story of four mental patients Billy Caulfield (Michael Keaton), Henry Sikorsky (Christopher Lloyd), Jack McDermott (Peter Boyle) and Albert Inuzumi (Stephen Furst) leaving the hospital on a field trip to Yankee Stadium with Dr. Weitzman (Dennis Bovell).

First of all, these four patients were far too disturbed to be allowed out with only a doctor and no other supervision — at least one orderly, please.

Then, correct me if I'm wrong, but a trip from New Jersey (where the mental institution was located) to Yankee Stadium probably would be routed up the West Side Drive rather than Eighth Avenue or 10th Avenue — which is what it looked like they were driving on. But the action in

the last 80 minutes of the film depends upon driving on a surreal road with no orderlies, just Dr. Weitzman.

There were minor continuity errors as well — the dayroom clock read 10:30 a.m. when the Yankees and Orioles started their ballgame. Also, this opening segment was uncomfortable as the four rambled around in their psychoses. Those guys were too far around the bend for comedy. All that changes, however, once they hit the road for Yankee Stadium.

Our four heroes encounter their former lives in various ways and places — a slick ad agency, an evangelical revival, a restaurant, several apartments, jail cells and a hospital

By Anne Sharp staff writer

SCREEN SCENE

AFTERNOON FILM THEATRE, Detroit Institute of Arts, 5205 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 832-2730.

"The Penalty" (1920), April 11-16. Bizarre Lon Chaney chiller about a double amputee who becomes an underworld kingpin.

DETROIT FILM THEATRE, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit. Call 832-2730 for information.

"Little Dorrit" (1987), 7 p.m. April 14-15, 2 and 7 p.m. April 16. Part One of Christine Edwards' six-hour adaptation of the Charles Dickens novel. "Part Two" will be shown next weekend. A \$10 admission gets you into both events.

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY, Strong Auditorium, Ypsilanti. Call 487-3045 for information. (All seats.)

"Alien Nation" (1988), 8 and 10 p.m. April 11-13, 8, 10 p.m. and midnight April 14. Futuristic thriller about extraterrestrial immigrants in Los Angeles, starring Mary McCormack and James Caan.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY, 16301 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-2330 for information. (Free)

"Oliver" (1983), 7 p.m. April 10. Mark Lester plays the lovable Victorian orphan who wanders into this musical version of Dickens' "Oliver Twist."

MICHIGAN THEATRE, 16301 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. For information, call 669-8397. (\$4 regular and \$3.25 students and senior citizens)

"Voices of Sarafina" (1988), 8 p.m. April 10, 8:30 p.m. April 11, 7:15 p.m. April 12-13, 7 p.m. April 14. Nigel Nole's stirring documentary about black South African youths, starring in the anti-apartheid Broadway musical "Sarafina!"

"Chinatown" (1974), 7 p.m. April 11. The greatest detective film ever made. Roman Polanski's tale of unsavory dealings to 1930s L.A. features Jack Nicholson, Faye Dunaway and John Huston.

"Jimi Live" (1978), 9 p.m. April 12-13. Concert film featuring legendary acid rock guitarist Jimi Hendrix.

"Humming on Empty" (1988), 8:45 p.m. April 15, 7 p.m. April 16. River Phoenix scored an Oscar nomination for his role as the child of left-wing terrorists on the lam in this Sidney Lumet film.

"Tomb Raider" (1988), 11:45 p.m. April 15. Mutant superhero Melvin Junko takes on an evil multinational corporation in this sequel to the psychological cult hit, "Toxic Avenger."

"The Accidental Tourist" (1988), 5 p.m. April 16. Lawrence Kasdan's entertaining, faithful adaptation of Anne Tyler's novel features Big Bill Hurt as a travel writer and Oscar winner Glenn Davis as



Billy Caulfield (Michael Keaton) is restrained by Henry Sikorsky (Christopher Lloyd) and Jack McDermott (Peter Boyle) during an altercation with a police sergeant (Bud Sullivan) in "The Dream Machine."

plus the sidewalks of New York.

Life is a funny proposition and these unlikely four, supposedly incompetent mental cases, rise to the challenge of the big city. In the course of a very funny film, they make considerable progress toward mental health and raise the issue of who really is crazy — those inside or outside the hospital walls?

"Major League" (A) (R) is top entertainment and totally unbelievable — or is it? Think about Steve Fisher, the Michigan basketball team and Rumeal Robinson's overtime free throws and suddenly this crazy, impossible, happy movie sums up the American love affair with sports.

Re-chambered Rachel Phelps (Margaret Whitton) inherits the Cleveland Indians. Contractually bound to keep them in Cleveland — unless attention falls below 800,000 — she plans a losing season. If the team finishes last, she'll be able to move the franchise to Miami.

To achieve this dastardly objective, she hires minor league manager Lou Brown (James Gammon) and a team of has-beens and never-will-be's.

But it's last (and only) chance for this crowd is lead by weak-kneed catcher Jake Taylor (Tom Berenger), prima donna third baseman Roger Dorn (Corbin Bernsen) and ex-pitcher Rickie Vaughn (Charlie Sheen), who spoil Whitton's scheme.

An accomplished cast, good music and fine photography, all complement Oscar-winner David Ward's ("The Sting") screenplay. Ward directs his own script with a sharp sense of comedy. He wisely includes romantic sub-plots, personalizes the fans and neatly summarizes an entire 162-game season with handful of exciting moments.

"Major League" makes many comic observations on the American sports scene. In particular, Indians sportscenter Harry Doyle (Bob O'Keefe), the former Milwaukee Brewer's announcer and Wesley Selges (Willie May Hayes), the guy who wasn't even invited to the loser's spring training yet he became a star. It's the American dream all wrapped up in one terrific movie.

SULL PLAYING: "The Accidental Tourist" (C+)

ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

with in "Dorrit." His own father was, for a time, forced into debtor's prison. As was common in Victorian London, his family went to live with the father in his cell being otherwise homeless.

Like Dickens, the lovely, virtuous Amy Dorrit (Sarah Pickering) resides with her debtor father (Alec Guinness) in prison — only she was born there and after 20 years, it's starting to look like a permanent arrangement.

Fate brings her into contact with the kindly businessman, Arthur Clennam (Derek Jacobi), who sets out to battle the deadly bureaucracy of the Combeval Office to get Mr. Dorrit released.

An unexpected inheritance for Amy, and a bad break for Arthur, make for major complications.

Edwards' "Dorrit" turns up a clever narrative device. She tells the story twice, from two complementary points of view. Part one, "Nobody's Fault," relates the tale from Arthur's viewpoint. Part Two, "Little Dorrit's Story," gives Amy's version of things.

THE ROYAL Shakespeare Company's famous "Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby," a Dickensian tale that beats out this "Dorrit" by three hours, was presented on stage in full every night. Theatergoers could either watch it in one one-hour shot or in two segments on successive nights.

The Detroit Film Theatre offers moviegoers similar flexibility with "Dorrit." Part One will be screened April 14-16 and Part Two April 21-23. Viewers can see the entire film over two weekends.

If, however, they would prefer back-to-back viewings, they can see the whole thing on Sunday, April 30, starting at 2:30 p.m.

Good pickin' 33 entries go for gold

Another Cincy — Cindy Littleman of Southfield — will also get to enjoy the movies with her AMC guests passes she's won as the fourth-place winner.

Not to be overlooked, the other 29 people who must have had an inside scoop on who was going to win what, will receive movie passes for two. They include: Miriam Dincer of Birmingham, Kathryn Warren of Livonia, Beatrice Vincour of West Bloomfield, Mary Chudney of Farmington Hills, Kim Torrance of Mt. Clemens, Judy Dutka of Detroit, H. Gidner of Warren, S. Pardo of Garden City, Tashar Amin of Novi, Alan Sparth of Clawson, George Tate of Farmington Hills, Jeff Pearson of Detroit, M. Feltz Sr. of Detroit, Jennie Hudgins of Royal Oak and Debbie Fulgham of Livonia.

Also, Jane Stacy of West Bloomfield, Yolanda Shepherd of Flint, Lonnie Flower of Detroit, Raymond Jason of Detroit, Martha Bullock of Detroit, Matt Blazyn of Westland, Robert Sherman of Troy, Sandy Stolo of St. Clair Shores, Marian Haumen of Roseville, Susan Merier of Detroit, Debbie Shearer of Carleton, Susan Navarro of St. Clair Shores, Rany LaVasseur of Royal Oak and Wendy Reiss of West Bloomfield.

George Carlin gives the boys the key to a time-traveling, A-plus history project.

"The Burbs" (D) (PG) 95 minutes. Tom Hanks in slow-paced, absurd satire of horror films.

"Chances Are" (*) (PG). Cybil Shepherd, Robert Downey Jr. and Ryan O'Neal in a romantic comedy about two lives mixed together.

"Cousins" (A-) (PG-13) 115 minutes. Charming romantic comedy about life, love and marriage.

"All's Fair" (*) (PG-13). George Segal and Sally Kellerman in male/female "combat" on a corporate weekend.

"Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure" (B-) (PG-13).

"The Adventures of Baron Munchausen" (A) (PG, 126 minutes. Marvelous fantasy, super special effects and great performances by all-star cast.

"The Accidental Tourist" (C+).

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