

MOVING PICTURES

'Madhouse:' One movie you really want to miss

One of the worst movies I have ever seen — "Madhouse" (Z, PG-13, 85 minutes) — is coming soon to a theater near you. Leave town before it's too late.

What loosely passes for a plot finds Mark (John Larroquette) and Jessie Bannister (Kirstie Alley) nudged with obnoxious house guests, relatives of one sort or another. They say you can pick your friends but you can't pick your relatives. Well, movies are friends, so don't pick this one.

The film suffers — as does the audience — from slow-paced, heavy-handed and infantile dialogue delivered in an obsessed, manic manner as if to suggest that the performers — to say nothing of the production staff — have crossed the thin line between humor and madness.

Even worse, they seem to be suggesting that there's something entertaining about the tragedy.

Comedy is based on the unexpected, on mistaken identity and exaggeration of the commonplace. "Madhouse" overdoes it to such an incredible extent that it is painful to watch. It's hard to believe that the hero and heroine, a hard-driving financial planner and a television news personality, could become such wimps as soon as they get home.

HALFWAY THROUGH the film Mark has a nightmare lifted rather obviously from "Night of the Living Dead." He was lucky, it was only a dream. For the audience, it was reality.

Another winner, "The Nightbreed" (R) (R), based on Clive Barker's book "Nightbreed" — starring David Cronenberg — wasn't screened this week. Why didn't they do us the same service with "Madhouse?"

On a brighter note, "Courage Mountain" (B+) (PG-13, 105 minutes) continues its enchanting hold on our emotions, as it has since it was first published 110 years ago.

Mature viewers — and everyone with access to a VCR — will remember Shirley Temple in the title role in 1937. Now, 53 years later, Juliette Caton brings a new freshness to the part.

This time the story opens at the beginning of World War I as 14-year-old Heidi prepares to leave the Swiss home of her grandfather (Jan Rubes) to travel to the northern Italian boarding school, Brookings, where she will study.

She's apprehensive about leaving her grandfather and her best friend, Peter (Charlie Sheen), but go she does. At the school the other girls are put off by Heidi's simplistic country mannerisms. The school's director, Jane Hillary (Leslie Caron), is another matter and Heidi does find some solace with her.

"THE WAR intrudes when the Italian Army takes over the school for a barracks. The girls are ordered to return home, not an easy task in wartime, but their travels are engaging and exciting.

Fourteen-year-old Caton, whose last role was as the sweet-faced angel who tempts Jesus with visions of earthly happiness to Scorsese's "The Last Temptation of Christ," brings to her role as Heidi a great deal of energy and a surprising sophistication for one so young.



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

In her travels from Italian boarding school to Swiss village, she matures with all the enchantment and joy one expects of "Heidi." The rest of the cast also performs well with the exception of Charlie Sheen. He looks and sounds like a Beverly Hills teen in a goat herder's outfit. Don't let that stop you and your family from enjoying this fine film. (Reviewed by Jason Brown)

Despite some splendid cinematography in a visual sonnet to Mexico, "Revenge" (D, R, 126 minutes) is a disappointing film. Images alone don't justify this poorly written effort.

A retired fighter pilot, Jay Cochran (Kevin Costner), visits his ultra-rich buddy, Tiburon (Anthony Quinn), in Mexico and falls in love with his friend's lovely wife, Mirya (Madeleine Stowe) — all this in five days.

The lovers hide out in a secluded cabin, but Tiburon's heavies find them, try to kill Cochran, burn the cabin, slash Mirya's face and deliver her to a house of ill repute where she is slowly poisoned. Cochran, of course, recovers and hunts for his lover.

Some fairly credible performances, including Sally Kirkland as a rock star, are wasted as "Revenge" begins to fall apart a third of the way through. There are unbelievable plot contrivances and moments of embarrassing, unintentional laughter at supposedly serious moments. The ending is particularly predictable and destroys any hope of salvaging the movie. The saddest part is that "Revenge" is delivered upon the unsuspecting movie goer. (Reviewed by Susan Finchem)

STILL PLAYING:
"All Dogs Go to Heaven" (B+) (G) 90 minutes.

Well-known voices back this animated story about Charlie the German Shepherd and his lily the Dachshund.

"Always" (B) (PG) 110 minutes.

Sometimes poignant, sometimes sappy story of airborne fire fighter who returns from death as a spirit.

"Back to the Future Part II" (B+) (PG) 90 minutes.

All your favorite time-travelers are in other dimensions once again.

"Born on the Fourth of July" (A) (R) 144 minutes.

Touching, graphically disturbing, poignant, frightening autobiography of Ron Kovic (Tom Cruise), a paraplegic Viet Vet.

"Crimes and Misdemeanors" (A+) (PG-13) 100 minutes.

Woody Allen at his best in this romantic comedy about family life with all its joy and sadness.

"Driving Miss Daisy" (A) (PG) 100 minutes.

Fine acting highlights personal drama of Jewish widow (Jessica Tandy) chauffeured by a black man (Morgan Freeman) set against southern changes from 1948-1973.

"Earmies: A Love Story" (R).

Men emotionally involved with second wife and mistress is distressed when his first wife — presumed dead in the Holocaust — turns up.

"Everybody Wins" (R) (R).

Debra Winger/Nick Nolte private detective story.

"Flashback" (B-) (R) 105 minutes.

Lightweight entertainment about 60s radical (Dennis Hopper) on his way to jail under guard of 80s yuppie FBI Agent (Kiefer Sutherland).

"Glory" (A) (R) 110 minutes.

The glory of the first black infantry regiment during the Civil War is captured in this outstanding film.

"Harlem Nights" (D) (R) 110 minutes.

Nice cars and nifty suits but all that come talent — Eddie Murphy, Richard Pryor, Red Foxx, Arsenio Hall and Dolly Parton — can't save this slow-paced 1930s Harlem gangster story.

"Heart Condition" (B-) (R) 95 minutes.

Racist detective (Bob Hoskins) receives heart transplant from black donor whose spirit turns up to help solve crime.

"Henry V" (unrated).

Kenneth Branagh's superb new adaptation of Shakespeare's play. The director stars in the title role.

"Internal Affairs" (B-) (R) 80 minutes.

Cop show never fulfills its initial promise.

"The Little Mermaid" (A) (G) 80 minutes.

Disney animation of Hans Christian Andersen tale of mermaid in love with human.

"Look Who's Talking" (C+) (PG-13) 97 minutes.

Contrived, poorly structured story of pregnant CPA (Kirstie Alley) and her search for a perfect father for her baby. Bruce Willis is the baby's voice.

"Loose Cannons" (C+) (R) 85 minutes.

Two whacko detectives, Gene Hackman and Dan Aykroyd, with a few screws loose, are occasionally funny.

"The Music Box" (C-) (R) 123 minutes.

A shadow of doubt flaws this statement about the terror and brutality of the Holocaust. Jessica Lange stars as attorney defending her father against war-crime charges.

"National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation" (B-) (PG-13) 90 minutes.

Christmas vacation for the Griswold family is okay for National Lampoon's fans.

"Roger and Me" (A) (R) 90 minutes.

Media manipulation on behalf of America's growing underclass.

"Ski Patrol" (P) (PG).

Two rivals square off to save a ski lodge.

"Stanley & Iris" (D) (PG-13) 105 minutes.

Slow and boring as Jane Fonda teaches Richard Dreyfuss to read. A bad idea.

"Steel Dawn" (B-) (PG) 110 minutes.

Talented cast, led by Shirley MacLaine's performance, falls apart in depicting problems of six Southern women.



Heidi (Juliette Caton) and her best friend Peter (Charlie Sheen) enjoy a moment of fun before she must leave her Swiss Alps home for a

boarding school in Italy in "Courage Mountain."

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BEST PICTURE

- ☐ Born on the Fourth of July
- ☐ Dead Poets Society
- ☐ Driving Miss Daisy
- ☐ Field of Dreams
- ☐ My Left Foot

BEST ACTRESS

- ☐ Isabelle Adjani (Camille Claudel)
- ☐ Pauline Collins (Shirley Valentine)
- ☐ Jessica Lange (Music Box)
- ☐ Michelle Pfeiffer (The Fabulous Baker Boys)
- ☐ Jessica Tandy (Driving Miss Daisy)

BEST ACTOR

- ☐ Kenneth Branagh (Henry V)
- ☐ Tom Cruise (Born on the Fourth of July)
- ☐ Daniel Day-Lewis (My Left Foot)
- ☐ Morgan Freeman (Driving Miss Daisy)
- ☐ Robin Williams (Dead Poets Society)

NAME _____

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BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

- ☐ Danny Aiello (Do the Right Thing)
- ☐ Dan Aykroyd (Driving Miss Daisy)
- ☐ Marlon Brando (A Dry White Season)
- ☐ Martin Landau (Crimes and Misdemeanors)
- ☐ Denzel Washington (Glory)

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

- ☐ Brenda Fricker (My Left Foot)
- ☐ Anjelica Huston (Enemies, A Love Story)
- ☐ Lena Olin (Enemies, A Love Story)
- ☐ Julia Roberts (Steel Dawn)
- ☐ Dianne Wiest (Parenthood)

BEST DIRECTOR

- ☐ Oliver Stone (Born on the Fourth of July)
- ☐ Woody Allen (Crimes and Misdemeanors)
- ☐ Peter Weir (Dead Poets Society)
- ☐ Kenneth Branagh (Henry V)
- ☐ Jim Sheridan (My Left Foot)

VIDEO VIEWING

By Dan Greenberg
special writer

Despite the Supreme Court's 1973 Rye vs. Wade decision, abortion continues to be a major and oft-times divisive issue on the American scene.

"Pro-choice" and "pro-life" seem like simple opposites — either women have the right to determine the fate of their bodies or society has an obligation to protect every life. Simple, right? Make your choice.

Well, it's not that easy but a 1989, Emmy-winning, made-for-TV film, "Roe vs. Wade" (Color, unrated, 95 minutes), puts the issues in perspective. It's a well-produced, entertaining, if not gripping film. No matter what your opinion on abortion, "Roe vs. Wade" is a cogent discussion of the issues.

The film was nominated for six Emmy Awards and won two — outstanding drama special and Holly Hunter as outstanding lead actress in a special.

Ellen Campbell (Holly Hunter) is a "woman-on-the-road" in the older, Depression sense of the term — a lost person, someone with nothing in life but a rucksack and the will to live. Even that is marginal.

She is a carnival Barker/bartender/waitress character in early '70s Texas. Her young daughter, Cheryl, is being raised by Ellen's mother in New Mexico. Ellen's relationship with her mother is at best antagonistic and, in fact, in one touching scene

she says to her mother: "You treat Cheryl better than me," to which her mother responds, "She's a better child than you ever were."

ELLEN SPENDS quite a bit of time with her father. The relationship is simple, straightforward and even tender at times.

Ellen — whose character represents the real-life Jane Roe, Norma McCorvey — finds herself pregnant again and no way to support a child. Nor does she wish to bear a child and give it up for adoption or face the filth and terror of back-alley abortion.

Since Texas law forbade abortion at that time, Ellen's doctor suggests she see two attorneys, Sarah Weddington and Linda Coffee, women who are interested in challenging the restrictive Texas anti-abortion law.

One of these women, Sarah Weddington (Amy Madigan), becomes a key player in the drama which took several years until its conclusion in the Supreme Court's landmark 1973 decision. It was a decision which upheld Ellen Campbell's contention that "a woman should be able to make up her own mind."

Of course, it didn't help her or Norma McCorvey who had long since given birth and been forced to place the baby for adoption. But her strength of character in taking a stand did help countless other women control their own destinies.

Norma McCorvey spent time on the set of "Roe vs. Wade" and noted

"I want people to know that 'Jane Roe' is not just an alias, but a real person who cares and feels things very deeply."

MADIGAN and Hunter are excellent in their characterizations of two very different Southern women, a drifter and a young married attorney just beginning her practice. One of the problems here, of course, is that of maintaining dialects throughout a feature-length film. Both Madigan and Hunter do an excellent job with dialects as well as with characterization in general.

Their performance do, however, overwhelm everyone else and the production clearly is a feminist, pro-choice vehicle that makes no bones about its political and philosophical position.

As well, the film is episodic in structure to a fault as it cross-cuts from Sarah to Ellen to the defendant, Texas Assistant Attorney General, Jay Floyd.

But in that fault also lies a major strength, the humanization of abstract legal and governmental policy issues via the personal lives of those struggling with these questions.

Although not rated "Roe vs. Wade" is rather mild as things go these days and probably would be PG-13 if it had been submitted to the MPAA Rating Council. It's an excellent presentation of a major topic, abortion, one which continues to perplex and pester our society.