

MOVING PICTURES



Matthew Modine, Melanie Griffith and Michael Keaton star in the psychological thriller "Pacific Heights," directed by John Schlesinger.

'Pacific Heights' seems reasonable, but it's not

Tired of excessive brutality in the current epidemic of gangster movies? For an exciting, edge-of-the-seat film experience try "Pacific Heights" (A-, R, 105 minutes). No hoodlums — just a modest amount of fighting proving that suggestion and imagination are more powerful than graphic gore.

A young couple (Matthew Modine and Melanie Griffith) buy and refurbish a beautiful old home in the San Francisco district after which the film is titled. Rental units, they believe, make this acquisition economically feasible.

Events proceed normally and successfully when they rent one unit to a pleasant Oriental couple. All very matter-of-fact — and that's the key to the impact of "Pacific Heights." It all seems so reasonable.

As in life, they're not so fortunate with their second tenant, a bizarre psychopath (Michael Keaton), whose destructive tendencies are not immediately apparent.

The calm exteriors of "Pacific Heights" — buildings and people — are seething underneath and a combination of ominous music and swooping camerawork reinforces the tension. The unraveling of things at the end works a little too easily and California tenant laws that allow Keaton to do what he does need stronger substantiation.

On a lighter and brighter note, for its 50th anniversary, "Fantasia" (A+, G) has been restored to its original glory including the soundtrack, featuring Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra. Music by Tchaikovsky, Dukas, Stravinsky, Beethoven, Ponchelli and Moussorgsky was integrated with Disney animation, the most famous of course being Mickey Mouse as "The Sorcerer's Apprentice." It's a fine experience for all.

BUT FOR the most part this fall, viewers must settle for gangster movies. "GoodFellas," "King of New York," and "I Come in Peace" are joined this week by more films about hoodlums.

"Marked for Death" (*, R) follows a retired DEA agent back to his old neighborhood for combat with Scrawface, the local drug dealer.

"Desperate Hours" (*, R) stars Mickey Rourke in a remake of the 1955 William Wyler film starring Humphrey Bogart and Fredric March. That film is available on video. Bogart plays a hardened criminal who holds a nice suburban family hostage as part of his getaway plan.

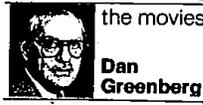
This "Desperate Hours" was directed and co-produced by Michael Cimino whose career has not flourished since he won two Oscars for "The Deer Hunter" in 1978.

Glorifying hoodlums and eliciting sympathy for them seems to be a prominent feature these days and "State of Grace" (B, R, 134 minutes) is no exception.

Frankie Flannery (Ed Harris) is the Irish mob leader in Hell's Kitchen, a tough section of Manhattan where abandoned buildings are being refurbished for Yuppie condos.

IT'S TOUGH on the old gang to see the neighborhood change, particularly for Frankie's psychopathic hitman and brother, Jackie, played with ferocious and manic glee by Gary Oldman.

Their sister, Kathleen (Robin Wright), has no use for their violence and brutality which she has tried to escape by moving uptown and getting a legitimate job. Her new world



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

is shaken, however, when her former lover, Terry Noonan (Sean Penn), returns to the old neighborhood.

Terry had disappeared unceremoniously some years earlier. While Kathleen is angry with him for leaving, she also is quite obviously pleased to see him again. Her brothers are unreserved in their job that Terry has returned.

To deal with the changes all around, particularly in the neighborhood, Frankie gets involved in business dealings with Italian mobsters and the seeds of destruction are inherent in their obvious ethnic rivalries. That Frankie and his gang are taking a backseat to Italians is a further major irritant.

The performances of the principals are excellent, particularly Gary Oldman as the manic hitman. This guy is truly nuts — and very dangerous — while Ed Harris' thin-lipped, tensely reined-in gang leader has an underplayed viciousness that is unnerving. It's always clear he will do whatever is necessary for the business. That's scary.

Despite those fine performances, good photography, editing and other production values, the bottom line remains questionable. Why are hoodlums the heroes of so many films these days and why is violence allowed the status of "State of Grace" teaches in its somewhat hokey conclusion.

STILL PLAYING:

"Air America" (B-, R, 105 minutes).

The insanity of war and the human sorrow of Southeast Asia in a tangled but interesting story about two CIA pilots in Laos.

"Backstreet Dreams" (*, R, 104 minutes).

Dedicated psychologist falls in love with hoodlum father of autistic patient.

"Darkman" (A-, PG-13, 116 minutes).

Kickboxer Jean-Claude Van Damme as RCMP Sergeant Burke goes undercover in a California prison.

"Delta Force II" (R).

Chuck Norris is back, this time to rescue captured DEA agents.

"Duck Tales: The Movie — Treasure of the Lost Lamp" (A-, G, 70 minutes).

Scooby McDuck from daytime TV in an entertaining and exciting animated feature that owes a great debt to Indiana Jones.

"Dreams" (PG).

Akira Kurosawa's latest epic film, "Flatliners" (B+, R, 111 minutes).

Moody, atmospheric, suspenseful story of five med students experimenting with death.

"Many About Love" (PG-13).

Gene Wilder as a New York cartoonist whose life and loves are the centerpiece of this comedy.

"Ghost" (A-, PG-13, 116 minutes).

Banker's ghost (Patrick Swayze) hangs around after life to protect loved one (Demi Moore). Spiritualist (Whoopi Goldberg) helps him and this romantic/comedy/thriller.

"GoodFellas" (B+, R, 145 minutes).

Martin Scorsese's intense, compelling saga of three mobsters. Fine

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ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

Coens score with 'Crossing'

By John Monaghan
special writer

"Miller's Crossing" is a killing field, a quiet place in the country where gangsters take guys to rub them out. Tom Reagan has the task of escorting a kicking, pleading, screaming young bookie across the autumn-colored leaves.

The scene serves as the focal point of "Miller's Crossing," the latest film from Joel and Ethan Coen. It's also one of many suspenseful moments in a film that pays tribute to the gangster genre while going off in some unpredictable directions of its own.

Set in New Orleans in 1929, "Miller's Crossing" depicts a brief gang war between the Irish and Italian underworld. Leo, played by Albert Finney, finds his power wrested by one of the men he offers protection to, a psychotic Al Capone-like Italian.

At the center of the conflict is Reagan (Gabriel Byrne), Leo's right-hand man, who takes a job with the other side when he and Leo fight over a woman. He's smart enough to manipulate all the angles, but gets beat up about a dozen times in the process.

SIMPLY PUT, "Miller's Crossing" plays exclusively at the Maple Theatre, is the most accomplished film so far from the talented filmmaking team of Joel and Ethan Coen. The brothers previously shared the producing, writing and directing credits on "Blood Simple" and "Raising Arizona."

Finney, who shares a power struggle with the Coens call them perfectionists and sticklers for detail. There is little room for improvisation in their well-pre-



Leo (Albert Finney) is the boss and Tom (Gabriel Byrne) is his trusted adviser in Joel and Ethan Coen's "Miller's Crossing."

pared scripts. They have the enviable right of final cut on all their films.

And their efforts show on the screen.

The world they create is one of dark cherry wood interiors, rain-soaked streets and the clip-clip of horses still sharing the road with automobiles. It's a time of change, where the handsome, intelligent older man is slowly being replaced by a violent new breed of thug.

In one amazing scene, set to a dramatic rendition of "Danny Boy," Leo

risers from bed to greet a pair of hit men wielding machine guns. He quietly finds his slippers and grabs his gun from the night stand.

"He's an artist with a Tommy Gun," according to his boys.

THE COENS have an amazing knack for matching knockout visuals with cleverly written dialogue. At first, the words seem stilted, overly self-conscious. Soon, the viewer, who may be put off by the overall bleak-

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SCREEN SCENE

DETROIT FILM SOCIETY, 5201 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 833-4048 for information. (\$25 membership, \$4 individual admission).

"Psycho" (USA — 1961) and "The Road to Morocco" (USA — 1942) share another of the monthly series of unrelated double bills on Oct. 12-13, starting at 7 p.m. The first is Hitchcock's famous thriller about murders at the spooky Bates Motel.

"Morocco" teams Bing Crosby and Bob Hope in one of their funniest "road" pictures. With Dorothy Lamour and lots of memorable music, including "Moonlight Becomes You."

DETROIT FILM THEATRE, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 833-2323 for information.

"Life and Nothing But" (France — 1983), 7 and 9:45 p.m. Oct. 12-13 and 19-20 and 1, 4, and 7 p.m. Oct. 14 and 21. The latest from Bertrand Tavernier ("Round Midnight"), about life near French battlefields just after World War I.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY, 13671 Michigan, Dearborn, 942-2330. (Free)

"Memoirs of a Movie Palace" (USA — 1978), 7 p.m. Oct. 8. A documentary look at the past and posi-

ble future of the nation's movie palaces, made when Detroit's Fox Theatre was still on the endangered list.

LIVONIA MALL, Seven Mile at Middlebelt, Livonia. Call 476-1166 for information. (Free)

"Good News" (USA — 1947), 10 a.m. Oct. 9. The classic college musical makes it to the screen with lots of color, but little else. "Varsity Drag" and "The French Lesson" highlight the lively scene. June Allyson and Peter Lawford star.

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<p>Tuesday, October 9, 7:30 p.m.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Speaker:</p>	<p>IMPACT ON THE FAMILY</p> <p><i>Charles Waddla, Ed.D., Residential Therapist, Maplegrove</i></p>
<p>Tuesday, October 16, 7:30 p.m.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Speaker:</p>	<p>ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND TEENS Impact on the Adolescent, Indicators, Progression</p> <p><i>Mary Kay Meler, M.A., Program Coordinator, Maplegrove Youth Treatment Center, Recovering Young People</i></p>
<p>Tuesday, October 23, 7:30 p.m.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Speaker:</p>	<p>INTERVENTION — A Way to Enable the Chemically Dependent Person to Accept Help</p> <p><i>Renée Gerger, M.S.W., Intervention Specialist, Henry Ford Hospital/Maplegrove</i></p> <p>Recovering people who have been intervened upon through this method</p>
<p>Tuesday, October 30, 7:30 p.m.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Moderator: Panel:</p>	<p>A COMMUNITY RESPONSE What we are doing/what needs to be done</p> <p><i>Judge Stephen C. Cooper, 46th District Judge</i></p> <p>Will include community leaders, treatment professionals and school substance abuse coordinators</p>

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