

MOVING PICTURES



Alan Rickman as the interrogator and Madeleine Stowe as the prisoner in Radha Bharadwaj's "Closet Land."

'Closet Land' comments on world's state of affairs

For a number of reasons "Closet Land" (A, R, 99 minutes) is a significant motion picture achievement. First off, it is the writing and directing debut of a young lady, Radha Bharadwaj, from Madras, India.

Second, and even more surprising, seldom are gripping films made with only two characters spending most of the screen time in one room. But that's "Closet Land" with Alan Rickman as the interrogator and Madeleine Stowe as the prisoner.

A wife of the guru's books, she is suspected by the guru's students to be a subversive, revolutionary. What government? Any government, for as the film's end-title notes, over half the world's governments today use torture while questioning their own citizens. Quite a timely film given the evidence emerging from Kuwait.

She's being interrogated to discover her underground connections. While that doesn't sound like enough material for a feature film, the performances alone are worth a look. Rickman's pyrotechnics as he plays on Stowe's emotions, building fear through terror rather than physical force, is quite remarkable.

Stowe is equally accomplished as the bewildered prisoner who develops great inner spiritual strength as the interrogator attempts to extort a confession.

"I'm innocent," she says.

"You're guilty by the time you leave here," she replies with each of the invasion. "Don't you know?" and too much else in our world's history. Bharadwaj's intelligent writing and directing highlights this iterate discussion of governmental terror everywhere in our sad world.

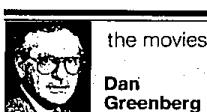
"CLOSET LAND" is not only politically significant but theatrically exciting as well — a thoughtful, important film.

On the other side of the coin, one of the best things in "The Hard Way" (R, R, 105 minutes) is that it makes takes itself seriously. In fact, its biggest problem may be its excess in poking fun at the movies and movie people, to say nothing of the buddy-cop films.

Michael J. Fox projects just the right aura as Nick Lang, the overprotected movie star living in luxury with great success in Indiana Jones-style adventure films. But Nick desperately wants to break out of that stereotype and try a new one as a hardboiled police detective.

To his great chagrin, Nick gets permission to pose as partner to the rough and tough New York Police Lieutenant John Moss (James Woods) who is hot on the trail of a psychotic, serial killer (Stephen Lang).

Moss, of course, wants nothing to do with this overprotected actor who



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

can't survive without legions of servants. But, connections are connections and Nick Lang rides with Lt. Moss.

There's all the usual car chases and interesting "street" people to interrogate with a baseball bat, as is the lieutenant's style. Of course that's only when he's not driving on the sidewalk because he can run off lanes to cut on the street.

WHILE WOODS is excellent as the tough, near-psychotic cop, he doesn't do as well with the comedy routines so important to the buddy-film fans.

This is true, despite some truly funny material. It may be the direction and editing are a little too loose, and the gag wears thin after a while, particularly in the final sequence with the psychotic killer which drags as it turns from clever satire to overly broad farce.

But it's still funny, entertaining film to see. "The Hard Way."

CMB sounds like a big corporation. CMB looks like a big corporation — \$1 million a week gross, electronic security, cellular phones, computers, holographic IDs, the works. It is big business, but it's bad business, crack cocaine.

That's CMB's business and "New

South" is a good movie.

The opening repeat of formula established in Parts I and II albeit slick production is worth watching.

THE NEVERENDING STORY II: THE NEXT CHAPTER (R, PG-13, 100 minutes)

Michael J. Fox's "The Hard Way" is a good movie.

It's a