

MOVING PICTURES



Alan Rickman as the interrogator and Madeline Stowe 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, 90 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 Madeline Stowe as the prisoner.

A writer of children's books, she is suspected by the government of being 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 the trip. 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'll be guilty by the time you leave here," he replies with echoes of the Inquisition, "Darkness at Noon" and too much else in our world's history. Bharadwaj's intelligent writing and directing highlights this literate discussion of governmental terror everywhere in our sad world.

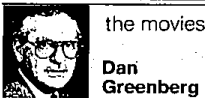
"CLOSET LAND" is not only politically significant, but theatrically exciting as well — a thoughtful, important film.

On the other side of the coin, one of the best things about "The Hard Way" (B, R, 105 minutes) is that it never 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 over-protected 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.

Through his connections, 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).

Ness, 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 colossal 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 ran out of 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 films.

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 a funny, entertaining film so go 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

Jack City" (B-, R, 13) is the story of CMB, a New York City drug gang led by Nino Brown (Wesley Snipes). The new "American Dream," at least in the inner city, has become this drug trade and this is the violent story of one such nightmare.

DIRECTOR MARIO Van Peebles also plays a detective assigned to the CMB case after their violent takeover of a large tenement building as their central office.

While "New Jack City" is not unique, it does hold your attention with fast-paced action, constant reminders of crack cocaine horrors and the government's ineffectiveness in dealing with the problem.

Ice "T," 2 Live Crew, Keith Sweat and others musical groups perform. Then, there's the rap by Queen Latifah, among others, so it's worth seeing if you like that kind of music as a backdrop to a violent story. Reviewed by Eric Phillips.

STILL PLAYING:

"Awakenings" (B, PG-13, 121 minutes) Robin Williams and Robert De Niro as doctor and catatonic patient coil to mull too many other films. The doctor's special care and sensitivity lead to temporary recovery but film lacks spark expected from these talented actors.

"Book of Love" (B, PG-13, 90 minutes) Nostalgic look at high school in the '50s and the problems of adolescence in those 'good old days.'

"Cadence" (C-, PG-13, 95 minutes) Unrealistic, clichéd story about unruly soldier (Charlie Sheen) in stockade.

"Dances With Wolves" (A, PG-13, 180 minutes) Kevin Costner's magnificent ode to brotherhood and loyalty on America's western frontier during and after the Civil War.

"The Doors" (C, R, 135 minutes) Oliver Stone's overly long, repetitious story of Jim Morrison and rock musical group, The Doors. Excessive attention to Morrison's drug, booze and sex problems are neither attractive nor entertaining. Dumb, as well, that it will serve as a cautionary lesson.

"Edward Scissorhands" (C, PG-13, 100 minutes) Unusual young man with scissors instead of hands shakes up the suburbs after moving in with the Avon lady and her family.

"Ghost" (A, PG-13, 105 minutes) Bunker's ghost (Patrick Swayze) hangs around after life to protect loved one (Brenda 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 returns after receiving a half dozen Oscar nominations. Despite good acting and fine technical values, the film is to be condemned for glorifying various and violent gangsters.

"The Godfather, Part III" (C-, R, 161 minutes) Disappointing repeat of formula established in Parts I and II albeit slick production in south watching

ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

Egoyan dooms television

By John Monaghan
special writer

Television has played a major role in Atom Egoyan's three feature films. In "Speaking Parts" (1989), his last and most acclaimed work, lovers experience the ultimate in safe sex, miles away from each other via video monitors.

His 1987 offering, "Family Viewing," takes the human love affair with video to an even further extreme. This unique, very black comedy, continuing this Monday and Tuesday at the Tele-Arts Theatre, gives us another look at Canada's most promising young filmmaker.

"Family Viewing" zooms in on a teenager named Van (Aidan Tierne) who is having considerable trouble relating to his uncommunicative father (David Hemblé).

"Everything I do feels like I could be doing it or not," Van confesses, "and it doesn't matter either way." That's normal. It's part of the age," the father says, his eyes never straying from the glow of the television.

THINGS GET worse when Van discovers that dad has taped over all the old family videos with homemade pornography. Van has little respect for his father's sexy girl-

friend, who constantly tries to seduce Van or get close to him.

Instead, he's more fascinated with his Armenian grandmother, tucked away in a cut-rate nursing home. He steals back some of the old tapes and runs them for grandma, feeling at least this television means something to her.

Egoyan's sterile settings and slow, thoughtful shots take some getting used to. But he ultimately has more to say than someone like Jim Jarmusch. Where Jarmusch ("Stranger Than Paradise") says that MTV is making it impossible for viewers to

Please turn to Page 4

SCREEN SCENE

DETROIT FILM THEATRE, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 831-2730 for information. (\$5)

"Hercules and Gaius Julius Caesar" (England - 1990, 7 and 9:30 p.m. March 15-16, 4 and 7 p.m. March 17, Tom Stoppard brings his own 1966 play to the screen, highlighting two minor characters from Shakespeare's "Hamlet," who, according to Stoppard are "the most explicable people of all time." With Gary Oldman, Tim Roth and Richard Dreyfuss. (\$5/auditorium)

"Harden Rides the Range" (USA - 1939, 1 p.m. March 14-17, Entrepreneur Jed Buell (best known for his midwest western, "The Terror of Tinytown") produced a series of singing westerns starring popular black actor Herbert Jeffries. This one finds him teamed again with his horse Stardust and sidekicks The Four Tones. As a part of an ambitious series of independent film produced prima-

rily for black audiences. (\$2.50/recital hall)

DETROIT SCIENCE CENTER, 5050 John R. Detroit. Call 577-8400 for information. (\$5 museum admission includes ticket, \$2-44 children under 12)

"To the Limit" (USA - 1990, through April. The latest Omnimax spectacular intercuts amazing athletic feats with an analysis of how muscles and blood meet the challenge. Not intended for people with claustrophobia, the movie becomes a first-person "Fantastic Voyage" into the human body.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY, 13671 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-2330 for information. (free)

"Made for Each Other" (USA - 1939), 7 p.m. March 11, James Stewart and Carole Lombard experience the trauma of being newbies in this oft-seen drama, directed by John Cromwell.

LIVONIA MALL, Seven Mile and

Middlebelt roads, Livonia. Call 476-1166 for information. (free)

"Showan Junction" (USA - 1956, 10 a.m. March 12, Alan J. Pakula plays an Anglo-Indian girl torn between her loyalty for the British and the Indians. With Stewart Granger and Bill Travers and directed by George Cukor. Continuing a month-long tribute to Gardner.

MAPLE THEATRE, 4155 W. Maple, Birmingham. Call 855-9390 for information. (\$5, \$3.50 twilight)

"Mr. and Mrs. Bridge" (USA - 1990) Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward team up once again in this story of a Kansas City family over the course of 25 years. From director James Ivory and producer Ishmail Merchant, the team who brought us "A Room With a View," "Vincent and Theo" (USA - 1991), call

Please turn to Page 4

VIDEO VIEWING

By Dan Greenberg
special writer

Silent movie fans are in for considerable video cassette and laser disc attention this spring with a number of notable releases announced or already on the shelves.

Leading the list is "Don Juan" (1926, 113 minutes) with John Barrymore. While everyone recalls Warner Brothers' 1927 Vitaphone production of "The Jazz Singer" with Al Jolson as the beginning of the sound era, as a matter of fact, Barrymore's "Don Juan" introduced the Vitaphone sound process 14 months earlier. Although it didn't have dialogue, it did provide synchronized

sound effects and music.

This release by MGM/UA Home Video on Feb. 20 also included Buster Keaton's "The Cameraman" (1928, 70 minutes), "The Student Prince in Old Heidelberg" (1928, 107 minutes) with Ramon Novarro and Norma Shearer, and Greer Garbo's "A Woman of Affairs" (1928, 88 minutes). The last has a stereophonic score featuring the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

For laser disc fans of silent films, Republic Pictures Home Video offers four classics on April 25. Noted German and Hollywood director Fritz Lang's two-part legend of the Nibelung, "Siegfried" and "Kriemhilde's Revenge," are spec-

tacular examples of mid-'20s film techniques and includes a 70-foot, fire-breathing dragon operated by 17 technicians.

THE 1919 German study in psychological terror, "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" (87 minutes) maintains its power to this day and, even after its ends, viewers are left wondering who was telling the truth.

Fourth on this laser disc release is Sergei Eisenstein's landmark film, "The Battleship Potemkin" (1925, 64 minutes). Despite its generation as a Bolshevik propaganda film, it offers an overwhelming filmic and artistic

Please turn to Page 4

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