

SCREEN SCENE

'Delirious': Nothing sweet about this John Candy flick

PASS THE POPCORN



LEANNE ROGERS

Everyone knows that old saying that if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. But they also say hope springs eternal, which probably explains why people will buy pills guaranteed to make you lose weight while you sleep or grow hair on balding heads. For me, it's that glimmer of hope that keeps me expecting to laugh at John Candy movies. That and memories of Johnny LaRue, the Schemeng Bros. and Tommy Shanks, the Mayor of Melonville.

In all fairness, Candy has been good in some movies, like "Planes, Trains and Automobiles" or supporting parts in "JFK" and "Splash." I thought he was the funniest part of "Homo Alone," which I realize is faint praise. I can usually find a few funny bits from Candy in any movie, but the laughs are rare few

in the film "Delirious." The premise sounds like it could have some potential. Candy plays a soap opera writer who is in an accident and wakes up in his show's fictional hospital. He's hovered over by hospital staffers; there are always doctors and nurses in soaps, characters he created on the hospital staff. He thinks he has died, gone to hell and his punishment is being spending eternity on his own show.

Candy, who is mistaken for a mysterious millionaire entrepreneur, discovers he can control this soap opera come to life through plots written on his typewriter.

This is a device that Candy uses to further his infatuation with the malevolent heiress, played by Emma Samms. Although she is engaged to a spineless doctor, she develops an unexplained fascination with Candy.

The best laugh in the film takes place at a party at Samms' palatial family estate. Candy and Samms glide like Fred and Ginger into the garden, which looks like something from a MGM musi-

cal. Pausing in front of a fountain, the hitting music switches to "It's a Man's World."

The story hits a lot of soap opera's favorite themes — sibling rivalry, secret about parentage, plots over family fortunes and even intrigues over a secret formula that would eliminate weight gain from eating.

Marion Hemmingway is the earnest and clean-scrubbed heroine; you know Candy will fall for once he recovers from his infatuation with the feisty but nasty Samms. Raymond Burr is the patriarch of Samms' family.

Most of the problem with this film I'd place squarely with writer/director Tom Mankiewicz. Lifeless and uninspired efforts wearing either hat.

"Delirious" is available on cassette at your local video store. If you have a question or comment for LeAnne Rogers, send it to Street Scene, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. You also can leave a message by calling her at 953-2103.

The week in films briefly noted: "Aladdin" — Disney continues its new golden age with this colorful blend of gags and rollercoaster adventure. The genie in this oft-told story is a blueberry spirit who possesses the voice of Robin Williams. The villain here is Jafar, who has his sights set on becoming supreme ruler. Not as seamless as the two previous Disney outings, but a delight from start to finish. (At area theaters.)

"Bram Stoker's Dracula" — Francis Ford Coppola has gotten a-bad rap. Not since 1963 and his last run-in with horror in "Dementia 13" has the director shown such an eye for style. And for what it's worth, he does try to stay somewhat faithful to Stoker, using references to the book's diary entries, telegrams, and newspaper accounts whenever possible. Winona Ryder holds onto her English accent; Keanu Reeves doesn't, while Gary Oldman cleverly transforms from the rat-faced older Dracula to a sleek young European dandy in stovepipe hat and sunglasses. A must-see. (At area theaters.)

"The Distinguished Gentleman" — In this mooncopic update of "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," Eddie Murphy wins a senate seat by virtue of his name, which is the same as a recently

deceased veteran. He goes to D.C. for the cash, but has a change of heart when he meets a cancer-stricken constituent. Murphy sleepwalks through the wiseguy roles, which he's played a hundred times before. (At area theaters.)

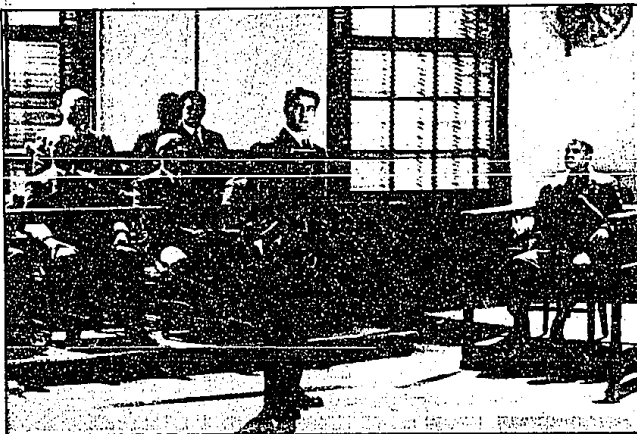
"A Few Good Men" — When murder takes place on a Cuban military base, young gun lawyer Tom Cruise goes up against Colonel Jack Nicholson to get at the truth. Director Rob Reiner has an amazing eye for entertainment, but he can't elevate the movie, which also features Demi Moore, Kevin Bacon and Kiefer Sutherland, beyond a "twentysomething" version of much better courtroom dramas. (At area theaters.)

"The Lover" — Jean-Jacques Annaud's very European love story, in English, offers the structure and satisfaction of a porno movie without the cheap lighting and camera work. The film is based on a respected 1984 novel by Marguerite Duras, yet it's amazingly hackneyed. A young English girl has a torrid affair with a Chinese man in 1929 Vietnam. Jane March and Tony Leung look fabulous as the lovers, but in the movie, where new nymphettes sizzle on screen every two years or so, they are just this year's models. Still, there are worse ways to

spend a winter evening than between the sheets in a steamy Saigon bachelor's room. (Exclusively at the Star John R. in Madison Heights.)

"Malcolm X" — Every bit as good as Spike Lee said it would be, this three-hour-plus documentary doesn't pull any punches in its depiction of the controversial civil rights leader. What makes the film so fascinating is Malcolm's ability to grow into at least three different men and those changes are beautifully portrayed by Denzel Washington, in the role of a lifetime. (At area theaters.)

"Toys" — Robin Williams plays the Peter Pan-ish son of a toy manufacturer in Barry Levinson's ("Rain Man") misfire attempt at whimsy. When dad dies, he leaves the company to his brother, a general who wants to launch a new breed of war toys. No ordinary G.I. Joes, these radio-controlled tanks, helicopters, and jets carry real explosives. Of course, it's up to Williams and friends to stop the midge military in its tracks. Despite some clever touches (especially in set design and costumes), this is an embarrassment from start to finish. (At area theaters.) — John Monaghan



Still showing: Tom Cruise and Kiefer Sutherland star in "A Few Good Men," the story of a Navy lawyer's quest to uncover the truth during a trial.

Hoffa from PREVIOUS PAGE

big business disputes. He does paint a ridiculous picture of young Bobby Kennedy, who looks no older than 17 when squaring off with the labor leader.

DeVito concludes the film by postulating exactly what happened on the afternoon when Hoffa was taken for a ride. Yet his explanation, like most of "Hoffa," is filled with cheap movie clichés and a predictable denouement.

The joys of picking out Detroit

landmarks used in filming may prove frustrating, since the only recognizable glimpses occur at a warehouse and some courtroom steps (actually the entrance to the Detroit Public Library's main branch). Local stage actor/director David Regal is highly visible in the latter scene and even has a line as an admiring reporter.

"Hoffa" is a pretty, if surprisingly dull, picture made by a director whose Hollywood clout in-

creases with each new movie. The talented DeVito should stay behind the camera and leave Warren Beatty and Barbra Streisand to screw their own movies up with on-screen strutting and primping.

If you have a comment, question or suggestion, write to John Monaghan, Street Scene, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150, or call him at 953-2047, mailbox number 1866, on a touch-tone phone.

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