

# "Renegades" is loud, violent and predictable

## FILMETER



ROBERT DIMATTEO

### In Movie Theaters

**RENEGADES (R)** Surveys of Hollywood screenwriters have shown that the average movie writer today is a white male between the ages of 25 and 35. Could this be why slam-bang buddy comedies continue to flood our screens?

The latest such outing reunites two of the "Young Guns" stars, Kiefer Sutherland and Lou Diamond Phillips. Just as the re-teaming is geared to strike the same kind of box-office gold that "Guns" did, so every element of this action flick is calculated. That means a lot of car chases, shoot-outs, four-letter-words and buddy banter.

Since it's essential that film buddies come from different walks of life (the better to fuel endless jokes about their differences), Phillips is made a Lakota Indian who is searching for his people's sacred lance. For reasons that are never clear, the lance has been plucked from its museum case by a group of armed robbers escaping a diamond heist. Enter Sutherland as an undercover cop who seems to be part of the armed robbery — though he's really shaking down a bad cop. After Phillips' medicine-man father saves the wounded Sutherland's life, Phillips and Sutherland head out in pursuit of the robbers, the lance and the corrupt policeman.

Aspects of this movie take one back to the old westerns, where the Indian is in possession of mystical knowledge that no white man could ever possess. Here Phillips is the repository of all sorts of wisdom. When he and Sutherland are on the trail of the sleek, pony-

tailed, BMW-driving baddies (how's that for yuppie consciousness?), for example, Phillips instinctively knows which way the guys have gone.

Phillips plays his role with the same slightly stiff, but winning, earnestness that he brought to "La Bamba" and "Young Guns." Sutherland, meanwhile, relies upon his cocky charm and volatility, while clutching his stomach a lot. You know, the wound.

Speaking of wounds, quite a few characters get shot full of holes in this extremely loud and violent affair. The film's only prominent female character (played by Jami Gertz) is no exception. It's an example of the movie's inherent hypocrisy that, after killing just about everyone in sight, Sutherland and Phillips are presented as nice boys in time for the film's happy ending. **GRADE: ★★**

Crusoe's "Friday" is a black warrior slated for sacrifice — a proud man whom Crusoe saves, and who refuses to be treated like one of the trader's slaves. Far more picturesque and atmospheric than dramatically forceful, the movie is a good showcase for Quinn's halting, blue-eyed vulnerability. **★★½**

**FAR NORTH (PG-13)** Nelson. This 1988 release is an example of how even the most talented people can sometimes fail. Written and directed by playwright Sam Shepard, it's a muted rural comedy-drama with a self-conscious literary bent.

Jessica Lange stars as a feisty, unwed and pregnant New Yorker who returns home to Minnesota after her father (played by Charles Durning) is injured in a buckboard accident. The movie shows her working up the courage to shoot the horse that caused the accident, and much is made of the

horse's representing the father's lost power and the daughter's growing self-assertiveness. Too much is made of this, though. Maybe Shepard should have turned over the directorial duties to someone else — despite some effective local color, the movie lacks perspective. **★★**

(Film grading: ★★★★★ — excellent, ★★★ — good, ★★ — fair, ★ — poor)

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### New Home Video

**CRUSOE (PG-13)** Virgin Vision. This reworking of the Crusoe story got almost no attention during its brief theatrical release. It's a curious little film — a screen poem in which most of the impact is visual. Directed by the fine cinematographer Caleb Deschanel ("The Black Stallion"), the movie works its magic quietly and non-verbally.

Aidan Quinn stars as a slave trader who survives a shipwreck, washing up on a seemingly deserted island. There he learns to fend for himself, while avoiding the cannibals who use the island for burials and sacrifices. This

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