

"Cold feet" is a really oddball western movie

FILMETER



ROBERT DiMATTEO

In Movie Theaters

COLD FEET (R) This oddball comedy, written by novelists Tom McGuane and Jim Harrison, reworks the myths of the American West in the randiest and most unbridled of terms. It's the tale of three ne'er-do-wells (played by Keith Carradine, Tom Waits, and Sally Kirkland) who smuggle emeralds into the United States from Mexico, putting the stones in the foot of a horse. When Carradine runs off with the emeralds, Waits and Kirkland head after him. Kirkland's interest is twofold: She wants the jewels, but she also wants Carradine, who embodies her image of the perfect — that is, most appealingly "dishonest" — cowboy husband.



SALLY KIRKLAND (right), an Oscar nominee in 1987, stars in "Cold Feet," an offbeat Western also featuring Tom Waits (left) and Keith Carradine.

Sprinkled with off-the-wall (and often off-color) dialogue, "Cold Feet" is best appreciated for its sneaky, idiosyncratic sense of humor. Playing a gruff hit man, singer Tom Waits is surprisingly rousing, turning his displays of murderous rage into jazz-like riffs. Rip Torn appears to good effect, too, portraying a local lawman who poses as a preacher to marry Carradine and Kellerman — so that he can arrest them.

The two leads are less satisfying. Carradine seems more morose than usual, and Sally Kirkland (an Oscar nominee for "Anna") plays her bimbo role with what might be described as an excess of Method-acting flair. Wearing skintight spandex dresses, Kirkland cavorts like a veritable jig-

gle machine. Directed by Robert Dornhelm (who helmed that other low-budget oddity, "Echo Park"), the movie never quite comes together. There's something insubstantial about it; it seems like a weirdo doodle. But some of it has a tickling, rangy appeal. ★★½

MAJOR LEAGUE (R) One of the surprise hits of the spring season, this baseball movie is an enjoyable sports comedy, less forced than many such commercial efforts.

Like so many sports films, this one, written and directed by David Ward, centers on an underdog team that ultimately triumphs. This time the underdogs are the Cleveland Indians — a collection of aging players and all-around goofs brought together by the new owner (Margaret Whitton). She hopes they'll lose every game so she can move the team. To her chagrin, they end up winning like crazy.

Except for the glorious Whitton, this is a male-dominated film. Corbin Bernsen actually mocks his tanned playboy image, Charlie Sheen is lively as a surly ex-con with a partially shaved head, and Wesley Snipes mugs up a storm. Only Tom Berenger

dingo one night while she and her husband (Sam Neill) were on vacation in the outback. This bizarre explanation failed to convince people, especially since Lindy struck many as cold and abrupt, and since she seemed to be exploiting the case through interviews with the press. Eventually, Lindy was put on trial for murder, an event that the movie chronicles.

Streep's hard-edged performance as Lindy is one of her very best, and the movie has some well-placed jabs at the sensationalistic tendencies of the press. But it has its frustrating side. It sort of shows us what happened to the baby: Early in the film, an elliptically presented version of the event suggests that Lindy's story is true. This means there's very little chance for ambiguity or suspense to build as we sit through the remaining hour and a half. But see it for Streep. ★★

DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS (PG) Orion. This revamping of the 1964 comedy "Bedtime Story" got lost in the shuffle of other 1988 Christmas releases, though it offers some very elegant, indeed sumptuous, silliness. As a crass American confidence man who dupes people by seeming a dupe himself, Steve Martin continues to prove that he is the most gracefully inventive physical comedian in movies. Playing a slick-haired Continental con, Michael Caine is no slouch, either. ★★

DEAD POETS SOCIETY (PG) This portrait of a '50s poetry teacher's attempt to instill passion in his students strikes many of the expected chords of inspirational pedagogy, but it's undeniably effective. Playing a prep-school teacher whose message is "carpe diem" (seize the day), Robin Williams gives a performance that holds the movie together, and, in the end, even transcends it.

A resolutely un sentimental performer, Williams dries out any education-movie clichés that have crept into Tom Schulman's script. (And they are there.) Meanwhile, Peter Weir has directed with a lyrical flair reminis-

cent of his work on "Witness" and "Gallipoli." The picture eventually takes a turn toward tragedy, as this most compassionate teacher's message is misapplied by one of his students. So bring a hankie. GRADE: ★★

ed short, "Tummy Trouble." The short continues the pell-mell fun of the cartoon that opened "Who Framed Roger Rabbit." GRADE: ★★½

New Home Video

TORCH SONG TRILOGY (R) RCA/Columbia. Harvey Fierstein's Tony Award-winning play was a rich portrait of a New York drag queen — a mixture of Broadway shrewd and off-Broadway bold with terrific one-liners and moving monologues.

The movie version is more pared-down, and it suffers the way most plays do on the screen. The camera moves in too close on some key performers, and the material grows talky.

In the lead, Fierstein takes getting used to. The big, clownish actor has a raspy voice that is sometimes painful to listen to: You want to rush him to a throat doctor. But he grows on you. Viewers may be surprised to realize how endearing he and the movie have become. Anne Bancroft co-stars as Fierstein's well-meaning busybody of a mother, a role originated on stage (and played to perfection) by "Golden Girl" Estelle Getty. GRADE: ★★½

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

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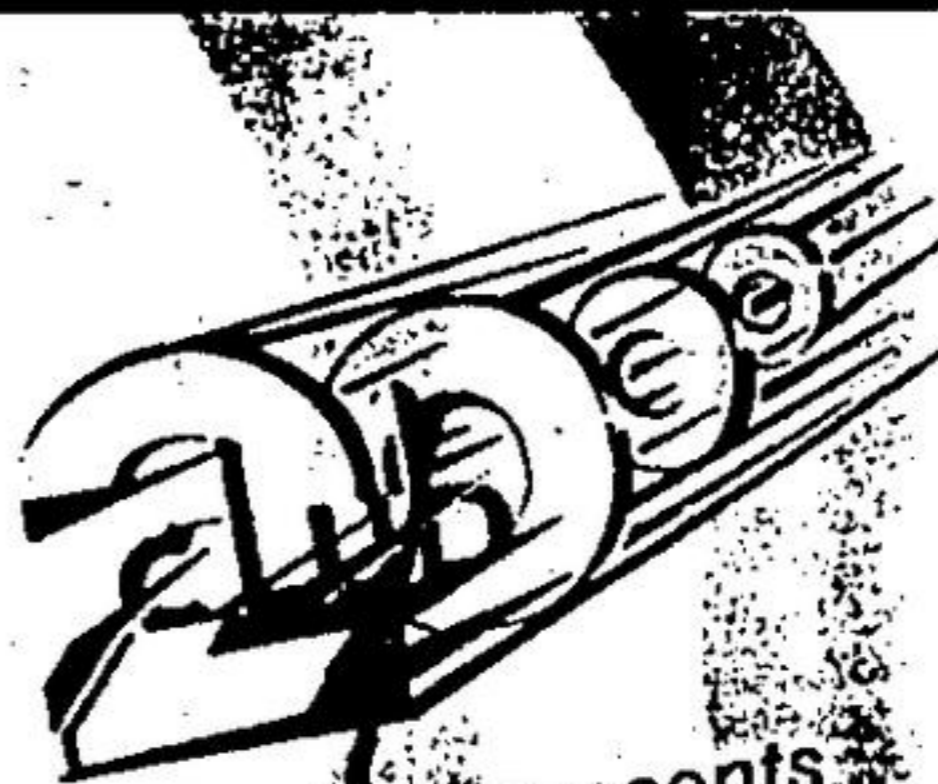
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