

'Fourth War' flick is scooped by history

Entertainment Outlook

FILMETER



ROBERT DIMATTEO

In Movie Theaters

THE FOURTH WAR (R) This small-scale thriller about a vendetta between American and Soviet border patrol commanders is set at the Czech-West German boundary in 1988 — before the Berlin Wall toppled and the Cold War came to an end. So, like the recent "Hunt for Red October" the movie has been scooped by history. Still, a certain timeliness remains in this study of two Cold War warriors who have outlived their usefulness. Without an official skirmish to engage them, they have to manufacture a private war with each other.

Directed by veteran John Frankenheimer, the movie features the flinty pairing of Roy Scheider and Jurgen Prochnow as rival colonels. Both actors have the properly weathered, tough-guy look for this male-oriented thriller. They also have the right melancholy manner for what is at bottom a portrait of two military dinosaurs. In the emblematic scene, the two men are reduced to throwing snowballs at each other across a border checkpoint.

This is a thoughtful action flick, though a logy one. Frankenheimer continues to be a director in decline, a shadow of the vital craftsman who gave us "The Manchurian Candidate," "Seven Days in May," "Birdman of Alcatraz" and "The Iceman Cometh." Here, he gives us a minor movie that will eventually pass the time agreeably enough on HBO or on home video. But it's just not strong or distinctive enough to warrant a special trip to the movie theater. **GRADE: ★★**

LOVE AT LARGE (R) Poor Alan Rudolph. Few contemporary American filmmakers have more conceptual talent and daring, and less common sense — less ability to translate a full-blown romantic vision into a living, breathing movie. This protege of Robert Altman shares that great director's nose-thumbing attitude toward Hollywood commercialism, but he lacks Altman's movie-making skills. Except for the largely successful "Choose Me," the result has been a succession of cinematic hothouse flowers that wither before our eyes.

The idea behind the latest Rudolph effort is promising. What if seemingly normal people lived secret lives? Styled as a film noir romance that is also a parody of film noir, the movie stars Tom Berenger as a private investigator and a two-timing lover. Along the way, Berenger finds all manner of amorous duplicity — and more oddball behavior than one movie can handle.

Like Altman, Rudolph likes strangely eclectic casts. Yet this one never jells. Berenger seems to be playing a dumb doof of a dick. Maybe his performance would work at the level of a Carol Burnett sketch, but it can't carry a film. Meanwhile, Anne Archer (the wife in "Fatal Attraction") is stuck playing a caricature of a femme fatale. Some of the other talents who turn up include Ruby Dee, Kate Capshaw, Neil Young and Eliza

beth Perkins. None is at his or her best in this gorgeously designed but murky put-on. **GRADE: ★½**

New Home Video

MIRACLE MILE (R) HBO. When it was released last year, Steve DeJarnatt's low-budget thriller about the last 70 minutes before nuclear catastrophe in Los Angeles divided critics. Some thought it a real sleeper; others slept through it. It's actually half terrific/half amateurish — and definite-

shop on Wilshire Boulevard; the voice on the other end says that nuclear missiles have been launched from a North Dakota silo.

Is the voice that of a crank or a new Cassandra? Certainly the timing is terrible: Edwards is in the middle of falling in love with a waitress/aspiring artist (Mare Winningham), and now he and the kooks have to worry about how to save themselves from destruction.

Alas, the movie self-destructs. It's hard to know how to take certain



ROY SCHEIDER and Jurgen Prochnow play border control commanders locked in a deadly struggle in John Frankenheimer's "The Fourth War."

ly worth checking out on video.

The film offers a fresh blend of elements: romance, cockeyed humor and nightmare. L.A. is made to seem both foreign and strangely beautiful — a mix of swaying palm trees, gleaming skyscrapers and whirling giant hamburger signs. Anthony Edwards stars as a road musician who answers a ringing pay phone outside a coffee

scenes: Are we to laugh or bite our nails? The tone is unstable, and the film never achieves the urgency it needs. Still, it's an interesting addition to that sub-genre — the end-of-the-world apocalyptic thriller. **GRADE: ★★½**

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

New Kids sold most albums in 1989

ROCK ON



ETHLIE ANN VARE

OK, we've rewarded the most respected records of 1989 with Grammys, and the most popular records with American Music Awards. Now it's time for the National Association of Recording Merchandisers to recognize the most purchased records of 1989.

By actual sales figures for the past calendar year, the best-selling album of 1989 was "Hangin' Tough" by New Kids on the Block. (Editorial aside: ugh.) The same LP won as best-selling album by a group and best-selling album by a new artist. (Ugh. Ugh.)

Bobby Brown's "Don't Be Cruel" was the best-selling album by a male artist; Paula Abdul's "Forever Your Girl," the best seller by a female. Tone Loc won for best-selling single of the year with "Wild Thing."

The next phase in musical technology is arriving with Warner Brothers' upcoming release of Mozart's "The Magic Flute" on CD-ROM. The whole musical education package only costs \$66 — but you need a Macintosh computer with Apple CD-ROM drive to actually play it. We realize Mozart isn't rock 'n' roll. But Warner promises pop music releases on CD-ROM shortly.

To illustrate what CD-ROM is capable of, here's what your Mozart disc provides: 220 minutes of audio, including the 143-minute actual performance plus alternate, rare recordings of the opera, narration and notation by experts, and definitions of musical terms; computer graphic screens featuring the story line, commentary, German text and English translation; sidebar screens offering listening suggestions; graphics; tests ... and if you have a MIDI interface, a program whereby you can play along with the orchestra.

Soon, CD-ROM (for Read Only Memory) and CD-I (for Interactive) will provide a synthesis of entertainment and enlightenment that is going

to somehow combine Bad English with the Encyclopedia Britannica and make it accessible to all. We can't wait.

• It was purely chance, but Fine Young Cannibals and the Kentucky Headhunters found themselves sitting side by side on the album chart the other week.

• Winger vocalist Kip Winger donated a band T-shirt to a celebrity charity auction and received a polite a thank-you note from the sponsors. Unfortunately, it was addressed to Debra Winger.

• Critic's picks: Best Rock 'n' Roll Song of the Decade So Far is "Bird-



Paula Abdul

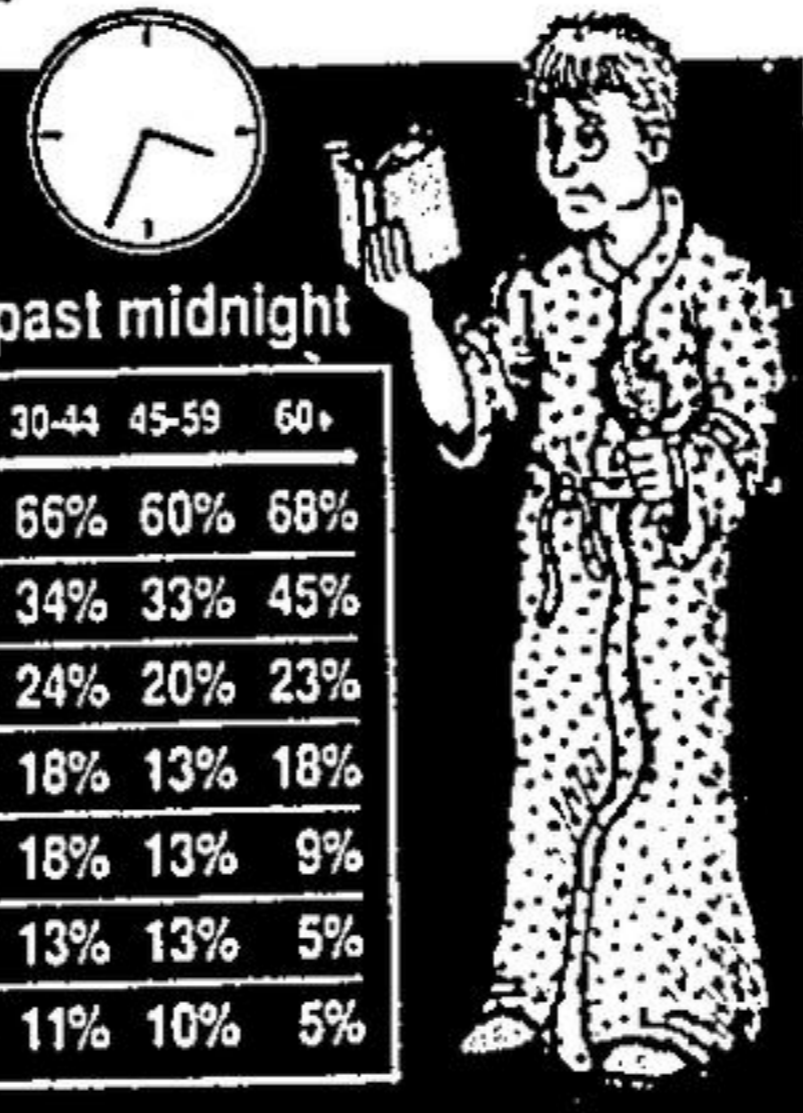
house in Your Soul," a delightful off-the-wall little ditty by a band named They Might Be Giants (which was also a delightful, off-the-wall little movie). TMGB, for short, is the duo of guitarist John Flansburg and accordionist John Linnell. John and John are from Brooklyn, and they are an acquired taste worth acquiring.

• Worst Rock 'n' Roll Movie of the Decade So Far is "Cry-Baby," a truly awful exercise in camp minimalism — as opposed to camp excess, which might have been fun. It stars a wooden Johnny Depp and an even more wooden Amy Locane. (Guest appearance by a more-wooden-still Traci Lords.) The sound track's OK — wait for the CD-I and make up your own screenplay!

Staying up late

Activities of adults who stay up past midnight

	Total	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Watched television	62%	59%	66%	60%	68%
Read	32%	27%	34%	33%	45%
Ate a snack	22%	24%	24%	20%	23%
Listened to a radio	19%	25%	18%	13%	18%
Did housework	14%	10%	18%	13%	9%
Did job-related work	14%	12%	13%	13%	5%
Made phone call	11%	14%	11%	10%	5%



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