

# Robin Williams fuels raunchy 'Cadillac Man'

## FILMETER



ROBERT DIMATTEO

**CADILLAC MAN (R)** Doing stand-up, Robin Williams seems to have the world's quickest mind: Characters come and go through his consciousness with the speed of thought. Yet Williams can stay in one character, too — especially if that fellow has an agile, self-mocking intelligence. One thinks of the little-seen "The Survivors," of "Good Morning, Vietnam" and even last year's "Dead Poets Society."

In "Cadillac Man," Williams gets another sharp character role. He plays Joey, a scrappy New York City car salesman saddled with a wealth of problems, but not a wealth of money.

There's an estranged ex-wife (Pamela Reed), a rebellious teen-age daughter who disappears for days at a time, girlfriends whose names he can't keep straight, and a hard-nosed boss who expects him to sell cars like they were candy bars.

One day, Larry (Tim Robbins), the jealous lover of the showroom's secretary ("True Love's" luscious Anna-

bella Sciorra), goes off the deep end and takes the other salesman hostage. Joey must then use his wily salesmanship to help resolve the potentially explosive situation.

Joey's method is to confuse Larry, who's a little thickheaded, and more than a little hotheaded. Scripted by Ken Friedman ("Heart Like a Wheel"), the movie blooms as Joey tries to stay one step ahead of both Larry and the gun-happy police assembled outside.

Along the way, the picture has thematic ties to Bob Zemeckis' jaundiced slapstick "Used Cars," and to Barry Levinson's fast-talking "Tin Men." And there's an echo of that very different-toned New York hostage drama "Dog Day Afternoon." Not as good as any of the preceding, "Cadillac Man" is nevertheless a commercial

comedy with some bite to it. The supporting cast — scrambling salesmen, nagging wives and noisy girlfriends — cavorts like one of Preston Sturges' crackpot ensembles. And Williams and Robbins bounce off each other amusingly.

Director Roger Donaldson ("Smash Palace," "Cocktail") has never done anything like this before: The movie is alternately easygoing and coarsely energetic, loud and subtle. Eventually the coarseness takes over, as in a repetitious gag about the money-grubbing waitress. The sentimental wrap-up seems designed for those who still

need to leave a theater beaming through a happy ending. Still, the movie has a good cast, some laughs and a certifiably flaky vision. **GRADE: ★★★**

**THE MAHABHARATA** (not rated) At a length of nine hours, Peter Brook's acclaimed dramatization of India's national epic was too forbidding an undertaking for this victim of the short attention span. Besides, some of us have always run hot and cold on Brook: Dazzling theatrical gems like "The Beggar's Opera," "Marat Sade" and "Midsummer Night's Dream" vie in the memory


with paste diamonds like "The Cherry Orchard" and "Tragedie de Carmen" and at least one major zircon — the film "Meetings with Remarkable Men."

So there wasn't much reason to hurry to the director's multiracial, multilingual interpretation of the Hindu masterpiece — a work known for its grim moralism, where most of the characters bear tongue-twister names like Yudhishtira and Dhritarashtra.

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

One day, Larry (Tim Robbins), the jealous lover of the showroom's secretary ("True Love's" luscious Anna-


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