

Entertainment

Movie Review

Dances With Wolves doesn't live up to expectations

By DIAHANN NADEAU
Herald Special

Kevin Costner directs, produces, and stars in the three-hour epic, *Dances With Wolves*. Set during the Civil War, *Wolves* portrays the death of the American frontier, and the passing of a way of life - that of the North American native, in this case the Sioux.

Heroic, stunningly photographed, nicely acted, *Dances With Wolves* is worth the three-hour sit. However, this reviewer isn't sure that it's worth the 12 Oscar nominations it has received. And if it wins any of the major awards, it will not be justice served. *Wolves* is good, but it's not great. (By the time this review appears, the Oscars will have been awarded. I make no predictions).

Costner plays J.J. Dunbar, a Yankee lieutenant who begins the film by trying to kill himself. He winds up a hero instead, and choosing his own post, opts to head out to the very front of the frontier, somewhere out in Nebraska-South Dakota territory. He arrives to find a demented officer in charge (Canada's own Maury Chaykin, in a brief but memorable role), and is taken by a foolish lout to

Fork Sedgewick, a tiny outpost in the middle of nowhere. One realizes that for these two white men (Robert Pastorelli, Eldin of Murphy Brown, plays the driver) the frontier has not been liberating, but has forced them into madness by the very vastness and isolation of the area.

It has the opposite effect on Dunbar. He loves it, settles in happily, finds a pet wolf, and eventually meets the Sioux. Gradually he gets to know them, and the more he sees, the more he loses himself in their harmonious culture. He ends up falling in love with one of their tribe, a white woman (Mary McDonnell), and marrying her. Soon he loses all idea of being a white man.

The story ends unhappily, as the Union soldiers move further west (the Civil War was fought for control of the west, not for the liberation of slaves), and the cultural genocide that occurred begins to happen. The only way Costner could have had a happy ending would have been to rewrite history.

The film moves rather slowly until the intermission, then it begins to pick up as Dunbar becomes more entangled with the

Sioux. The movie could have been shortened by a good fifteen minutes or more by some judicious editing, but Costner had been self-indulgent enough as a first-time director to cut himself a little too much slack.

There is an epic feel to *Dances*, but it seems to lack a heart. There are some exhilarating moments, scenes where the audience feels for a few minutes the reality of the period, the beauty and the tragedy (the buffalo scene is especially elevating), the way the west was, and it's about time that someone gave the native point of view. Yet the movie really doesn't say anything new, or anything deep. It's pretty much all on the surface.

There are some good performances here, including Costner's, and Graham Greene, a Canadian native who plays Kicking Bird, has a nomination for best supporting actor. I would again be surprised if anyone actually won, because I have seen better, and Costner has been better in other movies. I think he's just a little too earnest here. Don't miss *Dances With Wolves*, but don't expect quite as much as you should.

Perfect Harmony to debut in April on Canadian television

By BOB SPENCE
Thomson News Service

Perfect Harmony, an interesting family drama, makes its Canadian TV debut in early April on Family Channel.

The drama - set at a segregated South Carolina boys' school in 1969 - vividly captures the emotions of a white youth torn two ways. He can bow to peer pressure and treat blacks as a subspecies, or retain his friendship with an orphaned black teenager who works at the all-white, private school.

Perfect Harmony, despite too many stereotyped characters, is an excellent vehicle for parents who want their children to understand how much it can hurt individuals if others treat them as lesser beings or mere "animals" who can't be part of their peer group.

The drama airs April 6 at 9 p.m. (ET and MT).

Perfect Harmony was produced by Sea Breeze Productions, in association with The Disney Channel.



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Another drama about segregation also airs in early April.

Separate But Equal, which opens in 1949 South Carolina, is a two-part miniseries that dramatizes the events leading up to the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision to desegregate American schools.

Sidney Poitier, in his first dramatic TV performance since 1956, portrays Thurgood Marshall, chief counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Marshall leads the campaign to end school segregation.

Burt Lancaster plays John W. Davis, a former presidential candidate, who argues the case supporting school segregation in South Carolina.

Tommy Hollis portrays Harry Briggs, a service station attendant who risks everything for his son's education.

The blacks in Clarendon County fighting for equality come under intense pressure: children are terrorized, homes attacked.

The miniseries depicts the drama - and some of the human pathos - leading up to the landmark human rights decision.

In Canada, *Separate But Equal* airs April 7 and 8 on CTV, at 9 p.m. (ET) both nights.

When a movie is based on a best-selling novel, the producers usually use the same title that graced the cover of the novel. The producers of an upcoming romantic drama, however, have gone one step further - putting both the author's name and the name of the novel in the movie's title.

Danielle Steel's *Changes* airs April 1 on CTV.

Cheryl Ladd portrays a top TV correspondent who has to decide between a life in Los Angeles with the man she has fallen in love with or accepting the coveted post of co-host on *The Morning Show* in New York.

The two-hour movie airs at 9 p.m. (ET).

A one-hour special on children's rights airs April 11 on YTV.

Through music, videos and informal discussion, *Rights On* explores the promises world leaders made at the first World Summit For Children last September.

The special features The Dream Warriors performing a rap song about children's rights, and such young Canadians as Sarah Polley (*Road to Avonlea*) and Jerry O'Connell (*My Secret Identity*), who will help explain what the summit's definition of children's rights really means.

Rights On airs at 8 p.m. (ET and PT) on April 11.

Mississauga Choral Society presents final concert

A presentation of works by three masters will highlight voice and orchestra when the Mississauga Choral Society presents its final concert of the 1990-91 season. "Four by Three" is the title of this last performance and the MCS will proudly perform four works by three of the world's greatest composers.

Choral enthusiasts won't want to miss Mozart's Regina Coeli and Ave Verum Corpus, Bach's cantata Ich Habe Genug and Haydn's Nelson Mass to be performed on Saturday, April 27, 1991, 8:00 p.m. at St. Dominic's

Church, 625 Atwater Road, Mississauga. (Note: This concert replaces the "Welcome Springtime" performance which was scheduled for April 28, 1991).

Newcomers Jane Leibel (Soprano) and David Arnot (Tenor) will join MCS audience favourites Marcia Swanston (Mezzo Soprano) and Bruce Schaefer (Baritone) in various solo roles and once again the MCS is accompanied by members of the Toronto Symphony with Leslie Knowles as Concert Master.

Tickets are on sale now and can be reserved by calling 278-7059. Prices are \$15 for adults and \$12 for students and seniors.

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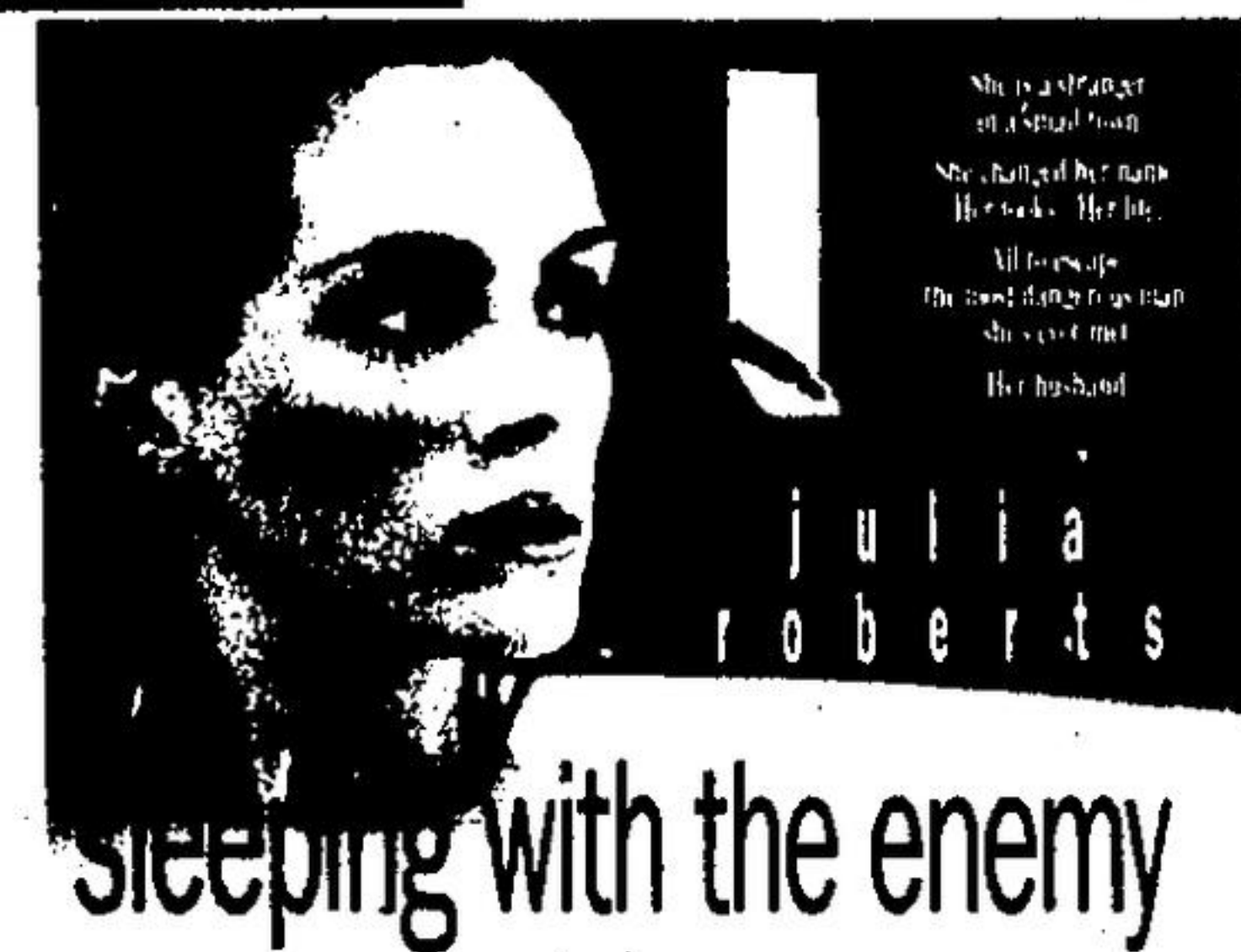
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