

Movie review

Stripes

Bill Murray in his best comedy role yet

by Terry Dupuis

Raiders Of The Lost Ark was this year's biggest box office hit. Not far behind it was another escapist adventure fantasy, the long-awaited Superman sequel. The popularity of these movies was not too difficult to predict. But there were some movies this year which took everyone by surprise with their unexpected overwhelming success with the movie-going public.

Probably the makers of these films were even astonished at their enthusiastic reception.

Such a case was a movie called Stripes which came out this summer and went on to become the year's most successful comedy hit.

This army comedy stars Bill Murray, one of the comedians who first gained attention on the "Saturday Night Live" show. Murray went into the movies with a hit comedy called Meatballs. Then he was also seen to good advantage last year in a popular comedy called Caddyshack. He followed this up with a clinker called Where The Buffalo Roam.

Stripes has returned Bill Murray back to prominence. In fact it offers the comedian his best screen comedy role yet.

Once again he is playing a kind of dozey unsophisticated character who doesn't have his act together. Once again he is playing a character who is a real loser, constantly put down by himself and others. He is like a sort of Woody Allen without Allen's excessive neurosis.

Nevertheless, where Stripes differs from Bill Murray's previous roles is that it also gives him a rare opportunity to exercise his acting muscles.

The character he plays actually develops during the story, and he is a slightly more complex and redeemable person than previous Murray characters. Some critics have been surprised with his performance in Stripes, claiming that this is the first time the comedian has actually given a real performance on screen. Murray may be playing an offbeat

character in Stripes, but the plot covers some familiar territory.

It deals with a couple of kookie misfits who find themselves in the no-nonsense disciplined environment of an army training camp. This basic plot has been used in the past by Abbott and Costello in Buck Privates, and by Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis in At War With The Army. Last year it was used again by Goldie Hawn most effectively in Private Benjamin.

It is to Stripes' credit that it manages to make such used material seem fresh and often even original.

Stripes has some of the same irreverent humour which characterized meatballs and Animal House, but it is thankfully not as excessive. The end product is a more civilized comedy which I found to be quite entertaining and personally more appealing than those earlier comedies.

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