

# Weekender Entertainment



## The Journey of Natty Gann

# Disney Studios out of dark age

**THE JOURNEY OF NATTY GANN** Natty Gann is not only an excellent movie but particularly an excellent Walt Disney movie. Because it's so good, you have to mark it as one step further for Disney out of its movie dark ages.

After all, when the Disney studios make a good film these days you can look for the term 'comeback' in whatever is written about it. That's because in the years since Walt Disney died in 1966, his organization has floundered by making the types of movies that Walt Disney would have made instead of good films attuned to the changing times.

Thus, by the time things recently turned around with such well-crafted, somewhat contemporary films as *Splash*, *Never Cry Wolf* and *Country*, Disney's once proud film division had been reduced to a shadow of the unit that produced such films as *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and *Snow White*.

But, aside from its plot, *Natty Gann* is far removed from bad times. It stands as a traditional, sentimental and honest adventure that is quite compelling.

It's the story of Natty Gann (perkily played by newcomer Meredith Salenger), a girl in depression-era Chicago whose father (Ray Wise) leaves her in Chicago when he travels across the U.S. to take a job in a lumber camp in Washington state.

Natty eventually decides to follow him and as she rides the rails across the U.S.A. she is both a victim and an observer of the deep scars that the depression has inflicted on America.

She faces such brutality as the 'bulls', train police who roust rail riders and 'mainstreeters' who are locals who roust the unemployed and impoverished inhabitants of shanty towns. And she is a witness to the despair caused by poverty and unemployment on such a scale that a job any job, is something to be treasured.

She also faces the emotional obstacles caused by her association with a cynical drifter (played by John Cusak from *The Sure Thing*) who falls in love with her and encourages her to abandon her search.

Disney films have often taken raps for being sugar coated, so it's ironic that one of the best qualities of this movie, aside from a collection of good performances, is its unflinching honesty in depicting the brutality and despair of the depression.

As directed by Jeremy Kagan (*The Sting II* and *The Chosen*) from a script by Jeanne Rosenberg (a co-author of the script for *The Black Stallion*) Natty is a heroine who goes through so much that she earns our respect. And though this movie is often highly melodramatic, it's so surely assembled that it's hugely melodramatic, it's so surely assembled that it's hugely melodramatic ending works. The movie earns it. **MARKVILLE (PG)**

**MARKVILLE**  
**AFTER HOURS:** This eccentric comedy is easily one of the year's best films. It's about an uptown New York computer programmer (Griffin Dunne) who travels to one of the Big Apple's seedier sections one night and then finds that he can't get home. Quirky performances from a cast that includes

Terri Garr, Rosanna Arquette and Cheech and Chong, and the feverish direction of Martin (King of Comedy, *Taxi Driver*) Scorsese mark this hilarious catalogue of just about every nightmare about urban life. **(AA)**

**COMMANDO:** Arnold Schwarzenegger plays a retired member of military strikeforce who is coerced into one last mission when his daughter is kidnapped. Efficiently assembled and simple-minded entertainment with a quirky sense of humor. **(AA)** Brutal Violence, Coarse Language.

**SILVER BULLET:** A toothless adaptation of a Stephen King novel about a small American town besieged by a werewolf and a disabled boy (Corey Haim) who tries to kill the beast. More funny than fearsome thanks to some misplaced humor and unconvincing special effects. A similar but better film is the current *Fright Night*. **(R)** Coarse Language, Horror.

**THORNHILL SQUARE**  
**AGNES OF GOD:** A haunting look at the clash between faith and reason that results when an ethereal nun at a Quebec convent is found to be pregnant and then accused of murder when her child is found strangled. The three key players - Meg Tilly, Anne Bancroft and Jane Fonda - are excellent. **(AA)**

**JAGGED EDGE:** A convoluted thriller about an idealistic lawyer (Glenn Close) defending a publisher (Jeff Bridges) accused of murder. Close's character comes off as wildly inconsistent. Shock ending. **(R)**

**SWEET DREAMS:** A film biography of country singer Patsy Cline starring Jessica Lange as Cline. **(AA)** Coarse Language.

**RATINGS**  
Excellent  
Good  
Fair  
Poor



A courageous young girl (Meredith Salenger), a young drifter (John Cusak) and an untamed wolf find themselves cast together by circumstances in *The Journey of Natty Gann*, a story of a young girl's travels across America in the 1930s. The Walt Disney film is currently playing at Markville.

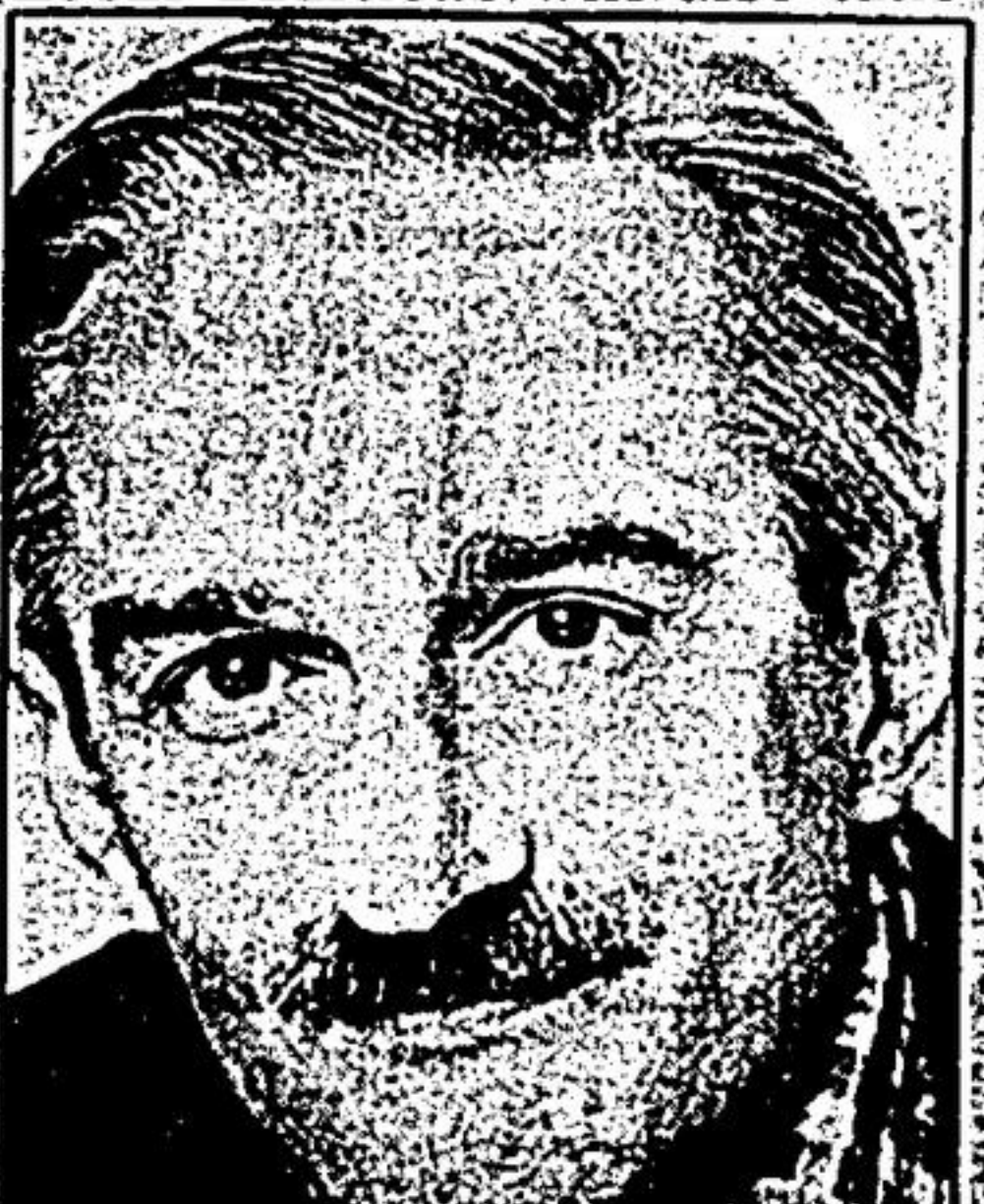
## Theatre 48's first show

# Glump coming to Markham

By DON ATANASOFF  
News Editor

Although the premiere is still more than two months away, work has begun in earnest for Theatre 48's first production, *The Valiant Tailor*.

Already professional equity auditions have been held in Toronto for several lead parts in the play. Local auditions will also take



JOHN KOZAK

place Tuesday, Oct. 29 and Wednesday, Oct. 30 from 7 to 11 p.m. at the new Unionville High School. Anyone seeking an appointment should call John Kozak at 294-5960.

The play is the musical version of the children's fable *Seven With One Blow*, and is the story of a tailor who kills seven flies with one swat.

The tailor's fame spreads far and wide, and the King of the land, looking for someone to capture the dreadful Glump, who is threatening to devour Princess Pickalilly, enlists the services of the tailor.

The tailor becomes more famous. The Glump gulps down more food than a garbator. And the Princess and the King have an amusing time trying to deal with the pair.

Mr. Kozak said the play was written for a general audience and is billed as family entertainment.

"We're interested in bring out the teenagers as well as the adults with their five or six-year olds," said Mr. Kozak. "We're not limit-

ing ourselves to general age groups."

The play was written by Noreen Young with music by Wyn Canty. It is produced by Theatre 48 Productions, John Kozak producer and is directed by R.D. Reid.

Also taking part in the production are: Gerry Diver, musical director; Lorraine Green, choreography; Maria Cerone, costume designer; Liz Larter, publicity; Barry Heaton, production manager; Ian Oliver, technical director; Martin Smith, lighting and design; and Eric Bartnes, sound.

Mr. Kozak said the play will preview at the Markham Theatre for Performing Arts on Thursday, Dec. 19 and Friday, Dec. 20, and will offer reduced ticket prices for those nights only. Opening night has been set for Saturday, Dec. 31 at 7:30 p.m.

After the Sunday performance, the play will take a one-day hiatus, then return for a Tuesday, Dec. 24 to Sunday, Jan. 12 run, except for Mondays which are dark. Ticket prices have been set at

\$10 for adults and \$8 for children except for the preview performances where seats will be \$8 and \$6, respectively. All evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m. with Saturday and Sunday matinees throughout the play's run at 2 p.m.

In other matters, Mr. Kozak said there has been a slight misconception on what Theatre 48 is all about. Noting that there was a turnout of approximately 60 people for the organization's first meeting, he thought he'd set the record straight.

"We had mother's out with their children seeing if they could sign them up," Mr. Kozak said. "Unfortunately, our plays will be done by professional actors. We may use local children from time to time depending on the script, but they'll have to audition."

Mr. Kozak also said that Theatre 48 will be offering an acting school some time in the spring. He also added that Theatre 48 is still looking for someone with storage space to help out and allow the company to store sets, props, etc.