

Weekender Entertainment



Weekender Movie Scene

Remo Williams: Tries to imitate Bond

By IAN BAILEY
REMO WILLIAMS: THE ADVENTURE BEGINS: His name rhymes with Rambo and sounds like Commando — two recent hero movies — but Remo, the hero of this film, is actually more closely related to British supersleuth James Bond. Or at least James Bond in training.

As played by Fred Ward (who was featured in such films as Escape from Alcatraz and The Right Stuff), Remo is introduced as a New York cop named Makin whose murder is staged by a secret government agency that gives him a new identity — Remo Williams — and hires him as its key operative.

The training angle arises when Remo is paired with an aged Korean operative named Chiun (Joel Grey from Cabaret in convincing make-up). Chiun teaches Remo a bizarre form of martial arts that enables him to do such things as dodge bullets and walk on wet cement without leaving a mark.

Ward and Grey as Remo and Chiun are the two best things in a fair thriller that just never takes off with the style of the James Bond movies it sometimes seems to imitate. Ward is an engaging hero who sweats through his heroic feats and seems as amazed as us when he pulls them off (especially a staggering fight sequence on the Statue of Liberty). And much of the film's charm comes from the deftly-scripted byplay between the eccentric duo of Remo and Chiun.

But Remo Williams: The Adventure Begins, which was directed by Guy Hamilton, the director of four Bond films, including Goldfinger, is clogged with exposition.

The film (probably the first in a new series) works from a weird

situation and it spends too much time setting up. So when Remo is ready to test his new skills against villain, all the Christopher Wood script, the writer of two Bond epics, can muster is a bland industrialist (Charles Coiffi) who is defrauding the U.S. government. This case seems more like a job for a Senate committee than a man who can dodge bullets. It's all neither menacing or interesting.

But the film does introduce an entertaining team in Remo and Chiun. With their characters now established, the inevitable Remo II or Remo Williams: The Adventure Continues should be much better. (AA) Showing at Thornhill Square.

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 widely inconsistent. Shock ending. (R) **

MARKVILLE
COMMANDO: Arnold Schwarzenegger plays a retired member of a 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. With Rae Dawn Chong. (AA: Brutal Violence, Coarse Language) ***

STREET-PART II: A horror film (R).

PLENTY: Meryl Streep offers a detailed and striking depiction of Susan Traherne, a woman who serves as a member of the resistance in France during World War II. She fails to come to grips with peacetime when her life seems

dull against the dangerous days of war. Charles Dance (from the Jewel in the Crown) plays her long suffering husband. A sad but compelling film adapted from the popular play by David Hare. With John Gielgud, Sting and Sam Neill. (AA) ***

Arthur Penn, the director of Bonnie and Clyde, starring Gene Hackman and Matt Dillon. (AA)

RATINGS

- **** Excellent
- *** Good
- ** Fair
- * Poor



Fred Ward and Joel Grey (right) portray Remo and Chiun, respectively, in Remo Williams: The Adventure Begins. The movie, currently playing at Thornhill Square, is in the same vein as the James Bond movies.

Cast impressive for MLT's new play

The old school house in Cedar Grove is a hive of activity this week, as the cast of Markham Little Theatre's latest production intensify rehearsals and combat the jitters in preparation for opening night.

On Golden Pond opens this Thursday for a curtailed three-night run at the new Markham Theatre. It's Ernest Thompson's richly comic look at family relationships that inspired the popular film of the same name.

In the demanding leading roles of Norman and Ethel Thayer are Charles Richardson and Elizabeth Wyatt.

Playing the crusty old octogenarian who rails against the indignities of old age with rapier wit, marks a comeback for Mr. Richardson, absent from MLT's stage for some years.

His last starring role was the whimsical Elwood P. Dowd in the 1979 production of Harvey. His delightful performance is still talked about among local theatre patrons — and he once stole the show in the small part of the telephone repairman in Barefoot in the Park.

A senior executive with State Farm Insurance, Mr. Richardson is an antique buff and a col-

lector of early Canadian clocks.

Mrs. Wyatt plays his cheery and resilient wife who, with 48 years of experience, behind her, knows just how to handle her "old poop" as she calls him!

Ethel is something of a role reversal for Mrs. Wyatt.

"It's lovely to play a thoroughly nice woman after all those witches and weirdos I've done in the past," she says.



CHARLES RICHARDSON Plays Norman Thayer

Of the 'weird' parts her favorites are Sylvia in The Women and Lady Rumpers in Habeas Corpus.

The director of the award winning Waiting for the Parade, recently revived for a special one-night performance at the new theatre, she is currently preparing to direct David French's play Jitters to be presented in February. She is a columnist for Yorkview Magazine.

The pivotal role of the Thayers' daughter Chelsea, who is on shaky terms with her father, is played by Michele Browne. The product manager of a giftware firm and a keen tennis player, Michele recently moved audiences with her warm and sensitive portrayal of Catherine in Waiting for the Parade.

Charlie the mailman, a slightly dim but lovable character, was virtually written out of the film. He gets full comic value in the play from John Storey, a longtime MLT audience favorite who was recently appointed deputy assistant minister of the human resources division of the Ontario Civil Service Commission.

Bill Jay has appeared in every production since he joined

MLT just over a year ago. This time out he plays the aptly named Bill Ray — Chelsea's new boy friend.

His brash and cheeky son Billy, is played by Mark Beatty, a Grade 9 student at Unionville High School.

Director Lillian Sievanen feels her cast has captured the essence of their characters. She frowns on comparisons with the film's great stars.

"I loved the movie, but I love

the play even more," she says. "Don't forget the play came first. The film was tailored to fit the actors; the play I think is funnier and has more bite."

On Golden Pond runs from Thursday Nov. 21 to Saturday Nov. 23 at Markham Theatre for Performing Arts. Curtain time is 8:30 p.m. For tickets, call the theatre box office at 479-0201. All major credit cards are accepted.



MICHELE BROWNE Has daughter's part



ELIZABETH WYATT Is 'nice' Ethel