

Weekender Entertainment



Movie Scene

F/X: Intrigues by special effects

By IAN BAILEY

F/X: This thriller title is a bit of jargon that refers to the special effects that permeate many current movies. The gimmick in F/X is that special effects are taken beyond fantasy to become a weapon in reality.

This movie's intriguing quality isn't its plot, which seems predictable in light of the filmmaker's intention to make a thriller in a special effects milieu, but the way its main character uses a collection of special effects gimmicks to play with the reality his enemies perceive.

The main character is a special effects wiz named Rollie Tyler (played by Australian actor Bryan Brown) whose work on such films as *I Dismember Mama*, *Song of the Succubus*, and *Rock-A-Die-Baby* so impresses some shady federal agents (Cliff DeYoung and Mason Adams) that they hire him to stage the assassination of a mob figure (Jerry Orbach) they're protecting.

The idea is to make the criminal's colleagues believe he's dead, so the feds can focus their energies on squeezing him for information. Rollie obliges them by using his skills in make-up and pyrotechnics to stage the killing. But when the feds try, in turn, to kill him and the police start to look for him, he begins to wonder if his illusion hasn't turned into reality.

So what is a special effects man to do when he's been pursued by the authorities? Why, just use special effects to fight back. The result is the most amusing thing in F/X—Rollie's use of the tricks of his trade to keep his foes on edge. With make-up, mannequins and a number of assorted gadgets (at times he seems more like a James Bond than a movie technician) Rollie sets out to confuse his enemies and by extension us in a drama that ranges throughout New York.

As a film about the making of films, F/X fails to use the contradiction between reality and fantasy with the same verve and energy as such similar movies as *The Stuntman* or even the awful but compelling *Body Double*. It's best characteristic then is that it's fast and engaging and the beneficiary of Brown's amusing portrayal of Rollie.

F/X plays as a joke the obvious fact that anyone who made a living by staging ghoulish death would have to be just a bit crazy and Brown plays the role with just a touch of petulant madness. F/X's hero gets his jollies from the moments of shock and horror that his illusions produce in the people who experience them without knowing they're not real. The movie takes a similar pleasure. (PG)*** THORNHILL SQUARE

THORNHILL SQUARE:
MURPHY'S ROMANCE: A subdued comedic drama that's as soft, sweet and unfulfilling as a mouthful of marshmallows. The fact that it's watchable comes from the serviceable performances of stars Sally Field as a plucky divorcee, Lance Kerwin as her shiftless husband and, especially James Garner (who has been nominated for a Best Actor Oscar) as a smalltown eccentric who falls in love with Field. The problem is that the filmmakers

have smoothed out the rough edges on all the characters. At least the world-weary, easygoing Garner adds a welcome touch of cynicism to this gooey brew. (AA)

OUT OF AFRICA: Robert Redford plays Denys Finch Hatton, a British hunter in Kenya in 1914, who fell in love with Karen Blixen (Meryl Streep), a Danish woman who managed a coffee plantation for 20 years and later wrote about Africa under the pseudonym of Isak Dinesen. This majestic epic from director Sydney (Tootsie) Pollack moves slowly at times but it's an intriguing drama where length means depth instead of tedium. (PG)****

MARKVILLE

THE JEWEL OF THE NILE: A flat and tedious sequel to the perky 1984 adventure *Romancing the Stone* that has little going for it except the charisma of stars Kathleen Turner and Michael Douglas. (PG:Swearing)**

101 DALMATIANS: A re-release of Walt Disney's 1961 animated film about two dalmatians who try to save their pups from certain death. Weekend afternoon matinees only. (F)

DOWN AND OUT IN BEVERLY HILLS: Richard Dreyfuss and Bette Midler play an affluent couple in Beverly Hills whose lives are changed when they take in a bum (Nick Nolte) who tries to drown himself in their swimming pool. (AA: Course Language)



Rollie Tyler (Bryan Brown) pretends to shoot Lipton (Cliff De Young) before taking some shots at Rosebud in the Orion Pictures release F/X. F/X is currently playing at the Thornhill Cinema.

Producer fits pieces together in MLTs *The Dining Room*

By BARRY ROBINSON

In any theatre production the actors on stage naturally receive all the attention.

But few in the audience give a passing thought to all the unseen backstage work that has gone on and is going on during any given performance.

As producer of *The Dining*

Room, I have had to co-ordinate the talent and effort of more than 30 Markham Little Theatre members, over half of the membership.

Roughly six weeks prior to opening night volunteers are chosen to head up the various departments; design, construction, properties, publicity, front of

house, etc. I must work out a budget and each department works within its allocation. Problems do tend to crop up, however, and there is generally something unforeseen to keep the producer on his toes.

In the last production, *On Golden Pond*, the unaccounted for was the \$60 per gallon fire retar-

dant paint which had to be painted on every unfinished surface of that large, complicated set. Every flat, every brace, even the entire underside of the staircase had to be fire retarded! Imagine how tactful the producer had to be to induce the painting crew to paint what would never be seen — and get them to believe they were enjoying it too!

As producer, I keep in touch with department heads and hold regular meetings for the production crew. Here each department reports and is kept up to date with how the production is going — the construction crew needs more bodies, the props people are looking for a "whatnot", the set dressers need an oriental carpet — who has one? Who knows someone who has one? Would they loan it? Would they rent it? Who is going to ask them?

So many details to worked out and co-ordinated. The producer must encourage and enthuse, prod and badger, soothe and mediate and do such a good job that when the curtain closes and the lights go up on another thoroughly entertained audience, the producer and his crew can rightly take their share of the applause with the actors.

Tickets for Markham Little Theatre's production of *The Dining Room* are available from the Markham Theatre's box office — 479-0201. The play runs nightly at 8 p.m., Feb. 26 to 28 and March 1.



Barry Robinson and his backstage crew are the backbone of the upcoming Markham Little Theatre's production of *The Dining Room*. Here,

Mr. Robinson meets with his crew in one of the regular planning meets prior to the production.