

CINEMA

Review: Mask

Directed by Peter Bogdanovich; written by Anna Hamilton Phelan; with Cher, Sam Elliot, Eric Stoltz.

Rocky Dennis (Eric Stoltz) is a boy not quite normal. His mom Rusty (Cher) is what he describes as "modern"—divorced, single and a member of a rather tightly knit motorcycle gang. Rocky is perfectly at home with these friends he calls his family, and he still earns top grades in school. Rocky is also severely disfigured. He suffers from carniodiaphyseal, a disease which causes calcium to deposit in the skull at an abnormal rate. The result is an abnormally large skull that looks something like a freakish fright mask, something along the lines of a modern, teenage version of *The Elephant Man*.

But there are some major differences between *Mask* and *The Elephant Man*, and between Rocky Dennis and John Merrick. Although Rocky has a severely deformed face and skull, he is otherwise a normal teenage boy

with normal teenage interests. He goes to public school, collects baseball cards, hangs out with friends and plans his dream motorcycle trip across Europe. The story of John Merrick was that of an outsider shunned by society and turned into a sideshow attraction. Bogdanovich's tale is one of acceptance.

Rocky is an insider in the biker community, a friendly, protective group who doesn't think twice about Rocky's disfigurement—except when an outsider makes a less than flattering comment. But Rocky wins over the outside world as well, or at least those parts that count. At first faced with double takes and rude insults at school, he soon earns acceptance and respect from his peers and even eventually falls in love with a beautiful girl who is equally in love with him. Rocky is not the type of kid to let a few pounds of flesh and bone stand in the way of a fulfilling life, a life he treasures because he has been told since birth that his chances of survival are slim.

I really wanted to like *Mask* more than I did. The problem is that Bogdanovich tries to do too much at once. Rocky's relation-

ship with his mom is the focus of the picture, but Bogdanovich spends almost as much time on subplots and lesser themes—Rocky's activities at school, a jaunt to summer camp as a counselor for blind kids, Rusty's drug problems, Rusty's old boyfriend Gar (Sam Elliot), a father figure/hero for Rocky, and numerous other bits scrambling for attention. As a result the drama is spread too thin and the focus is far too diffused.

Mask is a sincere but unsatisfying film; there's enough material here for at least three different projects. Perhaps Bogdanovich felt obligated to keep it all in since he hasn't directed a film in four years. This isn't a great way to make up for lost time. The naturalistic, easy approach to the story, the subdued performances and fine use of music hint toward a fine picture somewhere in this overstuffed film. Bogdanovich was just never able to make up his mind on what he wanted to do—tell the story of a boy overcoming his handicap or tell the story of a truly "hip" community of bikers. He tries to tell both and they both suffer because of it.

—Sean Axmaker

NOW SHOWING

Amadeus: Received the Oscar for Best Picture. F. Murray Abraham won the Academy Award for Best Actor for his portrayal of Antonio Salieri, Mozart's insanely jealous and musically inferior competitor. Based on the play by Peter Shaffer and directed by Milos Forman, the film was shot partly on location in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Regardless of its historical accuracy, the film is an entertaining honoring of artistic genius, and makes the music of Mozart accessible to the masses. Mayflower (345-1022).

Baby—Secret of the Lost Legend: From Disney Studios, a cute little dinosaur is discovered in Africa. Springfield Quad (726-9073) and West 11th Tri Cinema (342-4142).

Beverly Hills Cop: Eddie Murphy is the jive-talking Detroit cop trying to solve a murder in Beverly Hills. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Breakfast Club: Parents, teenagers and folks who were once teens might enjoy this sensitive story about five teenagers from different social strata who come together for a day at Saturday detention and learn something about each other. Shows with *Sixteen Candles* at the Oakway 8342-5351).

Care Bears: Animated cartoon. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Choose Me: Alan Rudolph's hip, slick, surreal, neon-comedy about a handsome guy who claims to have done everything (he has) and who drifts into the lives of several beautiful women. Keith Carradine, Lesley Ann Warren, Rae Dawn Chong plus Genevieve Bujold as a sex therapist on a radio talk show. Shows with *Variety* at Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Fantasia: A new Dolby re-recorded soundtrack on Walt Disney's 1940 tone poem. Cinema World (342-6536).

King David: Richard Gere is the lusty King David from the *Book of Samuel* who fights the enemies of God and amasses a slew of wives until, at last, the beautiful Bathsheba (Alice Krige, *Chariots of Fire*) is his own. Cinema World (342-6536).

The Last Dragon: Karate-comedy. Aimed at the PG-13 crowd. A love story-comedy about a guy who wants to be like Bruce Lee. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Mask: In her first lead role, Cher plays a fast-tracking single mother of a diseased and disfigured teenage son (Eric Stoltz). Because they both live outside the boundaries of polite society (his disfigured face, her biker friends), theirs is a mutually dependent relationship full of courage, pain and fun. Directed by Peter Bogdanovich (*The Last Picture Show*, *They All Laughed*). National (344-3431).

Police Academy II: McDonald (344-4343).

Porky's Revenge: Third in a series of raunchy teen sex comedies. Cinema World (342-6536).

Return of the Jedi: Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Sixteen Candles: Parents forget their daughter's birthday and she goes to one of the rowdiest teen parties in cinema. Shows with *Breakfast Club* at Oakway (342-5351).

The Slugger's Wife: A Neil Simon comedy. A professional baseball player (Michael O'Keefe, *The Great Santini*) whose career is inspired by his beautiful wife (Rebecca De Mornay, *Risky Business*) goes into a batting slump when she leaves to pursue her singing career. Directed by Hal Ashby (*Coming Home*, *Being There*). Cinema World (342-6536).

Starman: Jeff Bridges is SO CUTE AND FUNNY as the "Lover from Another Planet" who materializes in the form of the dead husband of Karen Allen. Everyone likes this film. Good family fare. Shows with *2010* at the Fine Arts (747-2201).

2010: More in the nature of *Star Trek* than *2001*, a well-done comic book film story. While Russia and the U.S. prepare to fight a war over a crisis in Honduras, a Russian craft with a Russian-American crew sets out to explore the circles of Jupiter. Directed by Peter Hyams. Shows with *Starman*. Fine Arts (747-2201).

Variety: A woman writer who works at a porno theater becomes interested in one of the theater patrons, begins to follow him around, and slips into a world of fantasy. Sandy McLeod plays the writer. Directed by New York avant garde filmmaker Bette Gordon. Shows with *Choose Me* at Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Witness: An American detective-love story from the Australian master of subliminal tension, Peter Weir (*Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *The Last Wave*, *Gallipoli*, *The Year of Living Dangerously*). Cultures clash as a 20th century police department meets 17th century agrarian-religious culture. Lukas Haas (*Testament*) is a young Amish boy who witnesses a murder. Investigating detective Harrison Ford (*Raiders*, *In-*

diana Jones, *Star Wars*) discovers that police colleagues are involved in the murder, and hides out with the boy and his mother (Kelly McGillis, *Reuben, Reuben*) in Pennsylvania Amish Country, while a plan is devised. Cinema World (342-6536).

—S.R.

Fantasia

Re-released with a re-recorded Dolby soundtrack, *Fantasia* is really the culmination of the work done by Walt Disney and his animators on the "Silly Symphonies," a series of films (begun in 1929 with *Skeleton Dance*) which drew the visual action from music and rhythm. The film flopped when first released in 1940, and didn't make money until the 60's and psychedelamania. Salvador Dali worked on the film, but his material was cut and lies buried in Burbank somewhere. The musical compositions include: Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring," Beethoven's "The Pastoral Symphony," Ponchielli's "Dance of the Hours," The "Sorcerer's Apprentice" by Paul Dukas, Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker Suite," and more.

—S.R.

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