

# CINEMA

## Prizzi's Honor

Directed by John Huston; screenplay by Richard Condon and Janet Roach; based on the novel by Richard Condon; with Jack Nicholson, Kathleen Turner, William Hickey, Anjelica Huston.

Simply put, *Prizzi's Honor* is weird. Very weird in fact. It begins as a rather good natured, lower-than-low key romantic comedy but takes some very subtle turns under the cheery surface and winds up a cynical, nasty little character study.

Jack Nicholson stars as mob hitman Charley Partanna, a thickly-accented Brooklyn resident who is sworn into the Prizzi clan through a blood oath to Don Corrado Prizzi (William Hickey). Charley is a true blue "family" man but one day he spots a beautiful woman in a lavender dress attending a family wedding and before he can get to know her she disappears, possibly for good, for no one knows who she is. But, low and behold, she calls that night—from California—to apologize and they make a lunch date for the next day (he flies over to make it) and he asks her to marry him.

But it isn't quite that simple. You see, Irene Walker (Kathleen Turner) is also a hit person and she just may be involved in a major scam that bilked the family out of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Charley is in a dilemma; "Do I ice her? Do I marry her? Which one of these?"

We're not even halfway through the picture, but it gets even more complicated after this. Charley's ex-fiance Maerose Prizzi (Anjelica Huston) begins some subtle scheming, deals are made behind some backs and the audience soon begins to sense that something is brewing. What they expect is a good natured battle of wits, some clever plot twists and a humorous course of events. What Huston delivers is far more black, cynical and mean spirited than anyone has a right to expect.

I have to give Huston grudging respect for his approach. Not just unusual, his approach is almost unique, a crazy blend of deadpan seriousness and wildly imaginative characters. The pace is so leisurely and cool that it takes almost half an hour to get into it; the camera work is handsome and simple. Huston uses long takes with few movements and some remarkably effective slow zooms which serve to isolate the characters from their environment for

a few moments.

The characters are in sharp contrast to this style. The cast plays everything with deadpan straightness but they are anything but conventional types. Nicholson's Charley has a face that looks as if he's always shot up with novocaine and eyes that are almost, but not quite, blank. His cultural inhibitions and methodical slowness are in sharp contrast to the bubbly, energetic Irene, played with animation by Turner. The funniest of the characters is Hickey's Don Prizzi, a whiny, childlike patriarch whose wheezes and mutterings punctuate a sing-song voice that belies his pragmatic, businesslike orientation and love of money that transcends everything but honor.

With all of this meticulous attention to style and character to create a mood, the ending comes as an abrupt, alienating shock. When I first saw it I was downright angry at Huston for setting me up, and though I find some validity to his approach in retrospect, I still feel the ending comes close to being plain evil. *Prizzi's Honor* simply is nothing like you've ever seen, but that can be both good and bad. If you invest in the picture, you just might get burned.

—Sean Axmaker

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## NOW SHOWING

**Beverly Hills Cop:** Eddie Murphy is a Detroit cop who comes to Beverly Hills to solve the murder of his best friend. Directed by Martin Brest (*Going in Style*). Shows with *Desperately Seeking Susan* at Mayflower (345-1022).

**Brewster's Millions:** Richard Pryor is a baseball player who is bequeathed \$30 million on the condition that he spend it all in 30 days. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

**Cocoon:** Old people become young again through contact with benevolent aliens. Stars Maureen Stapleton (*Reds*), Hume Cronyn (*World According to Garp*), Don Ameche and Jessica Tandy. Directed by Ron Howard (*Splash*). (We remember Ron as Ope from TV's *Andy Griffith Show* and *Happy Days*.) National (344-3431).

**D.A.R.Y.L.:** Adventure. A young boy who is part computer has amnesia and drifts into the arms of a foster family. He can't remember what happened and the government is after him. West 11th Tri (342-4142).

**Desperately Seeking Susan:** A good girl-bad girl social satire that offers rock star Madonna as the Manhattan queen of sleaze whose glitter, street-wise lifestyle is coveted by a bored, virginal New Jersey housewife (Rosanna Arquette) who is married to a hot tub king. Someone aptly described this film as a "New Wave Alice in Wonderland." Susan Seidelman directed (her first film was *Smitherens*). Aidan Quinn (*Reckless*) plays the handsome projectionist Dez. Not a heavy message film, just a lot of fun. Shows with *Beverly Hills Cop*, Mayflower (345-1022).

**Fletch:** Comedy. Chevy Chase is a newspaper reporter who assumes many and varied disguises to get the story. Cinema World (342-6536).

**Full Moon in Paris:** Director Eric Rohmer (*Pauline at the Beach*) examines the carnal confusion of Louise (Pascale Ogier), her casual affairs, frustrated loves and one-night stands. Rohmer's film has been well-praised by the critics, and is the fourth in a series called "Comedies and Proverbs." Cinema 7 (687-0733).

**Goonies:** Steven Spielberg produced this exciting adventure for young adults about a group of kids searching for treasure who must outwit the bandits and bank robbers to reach the climactic happy ending. Shot in Astoria, OR. Directed by Ric Donner (*Omen*, *Superman*). Shows at the McDonald (344-4343).

**Just One of the Guys:** Comedy. A girl (Joyce Hysler) who feels she's being treated as a second-class student, disguises herself as a boy, falls in love with her best male buddy (making complications for him) and volleys teenage one-liners with her little brother throughout the film. Young teens seem to laugh at this movie directed by Lisa Gottlieb. Shows with *Police Academy II* at the Oakway (342-5351).

**Ladyhawk:** Medieval Romance. Rutger Hauer (the evil replicant in *Blade Runner*) is the dashing swordsman Navarre who suffers from the unrequited love of the fair Isabeau (Michelle Pfeiffer, *Scarface*). John Wood (*Wargames*) is her rejected jealous lover who bestows a curse which transforms Isabeau to a hawk by day and Navarre to a wolf by night. Directed by Richard Donner (*The Omen*, *Superman*). Shows with *Rustler's Rhapsody* at Fine Arts (747-2201).

**Lifeforce:** Said to be science-fiction horror. Check with someone before you go. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

**Paris Texas:** Nobody does "On the Road America" like West German director Wim Wenders. (*Recall Kings of the Road* and *Alice in the Cities*.) In this story, a displaced man (who is presumed dead) returns home after a mysterious four-year disappearance to find his wife gone and his brother and sister-in-law parenting his child. Harry Dean Stanton (the sleazy car-repo guy in *Repo Man*) gives a brilliant performance as the lost father trying to reclaim his identity. Hunter Carson plays the irresistible child; with Nastassja Kinski as the wife, Dean Stockwell as the sensitive

brother and Aurore Clement as the sister-in-law. (This film won the top award at Cannes in 1984). Written by Wenders, Sam Shepard and Kit Carson. Bijou (686-2458).

**Perfect:** Based on a *Rolling Stone* article (*Looking for Mr. Goodbody*) the film features John Travolta as a reporter investigating health clubs. Travolta falls in love with the Club director (Jamie Lee Curtis) and exciting things reportedly happen. Real-life *Rolling Stone* magazine publisher and editor Jann Wenner plays a fictional editor in the film. Directed by James Bridges. Cinema World (342-6536).

**Police Academy 2: Their First Assignment.** Cop comedy. A punk gang terrorizes the precinct, and inept rookies foul the rescue attempt. Shows with *Just One of the Guys* at Oakway (342-5351).

**Prizzi's Honor:** Mobster hit man Jack Nicholson marries a beautiful woman (Kathleen Turner, *Romancing the Stone*) who turns out to be a bona fide hit woman herself. Should be intense. John Huston directs. Cinema World (342-6536).

**Rambo—First Blood Part II:** If you liked *Code of Silence*, you'll love *Rambo*. This film picks up where *First Blood* left off—that is, with Sylvester Stallone in prison for shooting apart a whole town. The government hires Rambo to go to Vietnam and get proof of POW's. West 11th (342-4142) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

**Return to Oz:** Dorothy goes back. This film is said to be truer to the L. Frank Baum story than the original *Wizard of Oz*. Springfield Quad (726-9073) and West 11th (342-4142).

**Rustler's Rhapsody:** Directed by Hugh Wilson (*Police Academy*, TV's *WKRP in Cincinnati*). A western spoof reported to be somewhat in the genre of *Blazing Saddles*. Stars Andy Griffith and Tom Berenger (*The Big Chill*). Shows with *Lady Hawk* at Fine Arts (747-2201).

**Secret Admirer:** Teen flick. An anonymous love-letter throws a group of people into confusion and self-deception. Cinema World (342-6536).

**A View to Kill:** James Bond (Roger Moore) engages in mortal battle with a psychotic industrialist (Christopher Walken, *Brainstorm*) and Villainess Grace Jones to save Silicon Valley from being captured, blown-up and GASP! tumbled into the ocean. Springfield Quad (726-9073) and Valley River Twin (686-8633).

—S.R.

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