

The Hit

Directed by Stephen Frears; screenplay by Peter Prince; with John Hurt, Tim Roth, Terence Stamp, Laura del Sol.

Stephen Frears' *The Hit* is a gem of a tale, a gritty, wry humored story of a particular case of gangland justice. Terence Stamp is Willie Parker, a mob minion who tells all in court and is serenaded out by the gang he fingered, who croon a sinister version of "We'll Meet Again." The threat is made good ten years later, when Willie is abducted by four young hoods who break into his Spanish villa, kill his bodyguard and deliver him into the hands of Braddock (John Hurt), a silent, enigmatic professional hit-man whose craggy features and always-present dark glasses make him something of an inhuman killing machine.

Accompanying Braddock is an apprentice, Myron (Tim Roth), a young punkish kid out to prove himself. Willie sees his only chance is to create frictions between his two captors, and his chances increase when the three-some are joined by a fourth, a young Spanish woman named Maggie (Laura del Sol) who is also taken hostage. Myron takes a fancy to Maggie and becomes protective, an emotion Braddock realizes has no place in a professional criminal. To aggravate things further, Willie feigns a calm accep-

tance and spouts existential thoughts such as, "You'll die, too, sooner or later."

The tensions build as the trip progresses, with the feisty Maggie putting up much more of a fight than Braddock figured and the Spanish authorities a few steps behind them and gaining. Myron exhibits his weaknesses and his basic incompetence as they near the French border, and Braddock finds himself a little shaken. Only Willie keeps his cool, but even that is to change when Braddock proves his true cold bloodedness.

The Hit is like a complicated, deadly game. Director Frears shows a sure hand as he leads the audience through the unexpected twists of the plot and developments of the characters. The visual style remains handsome and consistently interesting; shots are impeccably framed and the slowly moving camera keeps the scenes moving through the tight, tense pace of the film. The grim surface of the story is punctuated by a very dry, very British underplayed sense of humor, led by Stamp and his existential wit.

Hurt is outstanding as the calculating Braddock, a figure as cold and hard as marble. Always at ease and ready to take control of a situation, he is in sharp contrast to the excitable Myron, played well by Tim Roth. One of the best scenes in the film is a confrontation between these two men; Myron pulls a gun on Braddock to protect Maggie, and



Terence Stamp is Willie Parker in *The Hit*.

Hurt's rock-hard features freeze into an even harder, more calculating surface.

The Hit is gritty, violent and fascinating. Frears' tight pacing and colorful visual style keeps the film always intriguing, and the clever script keeps the audience guessing. Complete with the gamut of fine performances and Eric Clapton's fabulous title music, *The Hit* is a complex cryptogram of a film that brings new life to the crime film.

—Sean Axmaker

NOW SHOWING

Back to the Future: Sneak preview this Saturday. Shows with *Brewster's Millions*. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

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. With Saturday sneak preview, *Back to the Future*. 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 Ople 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).

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).

Gotcha: A young American goes to Paris and falls in love with a girl who is supposed to be European but turns out to be American. Stolen secrets get misplaced and the poor innocent guy as trouble he doesn't deserve. Linda Fiorentino (*Vision Quest*) co-stars with Anthony Edwards (*Revenge of the Nerds*). With *Police Academy 2* at Oakway (342-5351).

The Hit: A tense and funny thriller that pits two hit-men against a Zen philosopher and a Spanish hostage. Stars Terence Stamp and John Hurt. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Ladyhawke: 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: Science-fiction ghouls on the loose. Directed by Tobe Hooper (*Polltergeist*). Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Pale Rider: Clint Eastwood rides again. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

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. With *Secret Admirer*. 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 *Gotcha*. 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, makes new friends, and gets in trouble with an evil king (Nicol Williamson). Lots of music, but no songs this time around. 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 Hawke* at Fine Arts (747-2201).

St. Elmo's Fire: Dramatic comedy. Too old to keep playing teenagers, Emilio Estevez (*Repo Man*, *The Breakfast Club*), Ally Sheedy (*Wargames*), Andrew McCarthy (*Heaven Help Us*) and friends turn into college grads. Cinema World (342-6536).

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

Sunday in the Country: Emotional conflicts within a wealthy early-century French family. Bertrand Tavernier won Best Director award for this work at Cannes in 1984. Bijou (686-2458).

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. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

—Sharon Rose/Michael Sussman

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