

Hoosiers

Review by Richard Wilen

Welcome to Hickory High, enrollment 64, home of the Hoosiers. It's the winter of 1951-52, and there's only one thing on everyone's mind in Hickory, Indiana: basketball. Nothing is more important to this small farming community than the fate of their team. But this year, friends, the team's in big trouble. Saddled with a new coach and missing its star player, the Hoosiers will be in for a long season.

Hickory has one other distinction: It's also the end of the road for Coach Norman Dale (Gene Hackman). Once a big-time college coach back East, Dale is taking his last shot, trying to redeem himself for a career gone sour. Against all odds Coach Dale brings his players together and dares to reach one more time for the thrill of victory.

Hoosiers is the story of Hickory High's cinderella season, following the team and Coach Dale on the comeback trail. It's a good-hearted tale of the underdog, one that works despite its fairly predictable formula.

Coach Dale is a strict disciplinarian with a penchant for the

fundamentals. Faced with meddling townsfolk, a team whose fifth man is the equipment manager, and his own volatile past, he has his work cut out for him. Things don't go so well at first to say the least. But not to worry, this team clearly has a date with destiny.

Along the way the Hickory hoopsters learn the value of teamwork, obedience, and faith. Dropping the first few games, Coach Dale tests the character of the team and its fans early in the season. At one point he even goes with only four players to prove a point. Things get so bad that the distraught townspeople hold an election to force his dismissal. But just when things look bad, in walks the reluctant star cager, Jimmy. "I'll play," he says, "but only if Coach stays."

Eventually his tough principled ways begin to win the respect of these upright farmers. And with the hot-shot Jimmy back on the team, the Hoosiers streak on to victory.

During the season Coach Dale proves that he has learned a lesson from his stormy past, developing a concern for people rather than

winning. This new-found concern leads him to undertake the rehabilitation of Shooter (Dennis Hopper), a one-time basketball star who has become the town drunk. Under Dale's forceful guidance Shooter strives to reach for a new respectability particularly in the eyes of his son, one of the players. In several moving scenes, Shooter is resurrected as the team's assistant coach, only to crumble under the pressure of the team's success.

Hackman is well cast as Coach Dale. His brusque manner and intense energy serve to make the character very life-like. Hopper gives one of his better performances in recent years. The film also features Barbara Hershey as a protective school teacher, but her role is largely window dressing, providing a mild romantic interest for Coach Dale.

Okay, so this is a very corny movie. But it works. Although there are a few too many shots of basketballs swishing through hoops, the film is well crafted by Director David Anspaugh. Despite the fact that you can predict the outcome, it's easy to get caught up in the fantasy and to root for the team. Certainly everyone did the night I went. While not a film for the terminally cynical, *Hoosiers* does offer good viewing for the whole family.

now showing

Angel Heart: A private eye's search for a missing singer leads to strange encounters in Louisiana and New York. Mickey Rourke and Robert DeNiro star in this 1950-ish drama. Cinema World (342-6536).

Black Widow: A woman feigns friendship with a suspected husband-killer in an effort to learn the truth. Stars Debra Winger and Theresa Russell (*Insignificance*). Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Crocodile Dundee: A celebrated Aussie adventurer, naive to city ways, is still spending time in the Big Apple. Oakway (342-5351).

From the Hip: Comedy. A young lawyer's unruly, but winning, tactics are challenged by a tough case and disapproving superiors. Stars Judd Nelson (*St. Elmo's Fire*). Shows with *Little Shop of Horrors* at Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Hoosiers: A "washed up" basketball coach tries for a comeback as head of a small high school team. Stars Gene Hackman and Barbara Hershey. Cinema World (342-6536).

Hunk: An unsatisfied human makes a devilish deal in return for a groovy body. Springfield Quad (726-9073) and West 11th (342-4142).

Lethal Weapon: Too tough L.A. cops crack down on an international drug ring. Stars hunk Mel Gibson and Danny Glover. McDonald (344-4343).

The Little Shop of Horrors: Rick Moranis (*Ghostbusters*) takes on Steve Martin in this wacky musical romance about a bloodthirsty flower. Shows with *From the Hip*. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Mannequin: Can a handsome young actor find true romance with a department store dummy? Andrew McCarthy finds out. West 11th (342-4142).

The Mystery of Picasso: A unique cinematic record of Picasso's creative process, with the master actually painting for the camera. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Nightmare on Elm St. 3—Dream Warriors: Third in the series! Scaremonger Freddie appears through a new array of special effects. Cinema World (342-6536).

Outrageous Fortune: A pair of women search for their two-timing lover, who has mysteriously disappeared. Bette Midler and Shelley Long star in this cross-country comedy. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Peggy Sue Got Married: A woman awakens in her past, and has a chance to alter her future life. Stars Kathleen Turner (*Jewel of the Nile*). Directed by Francis Coppola (*The Cotton Club*). Fine Arts (747-2201).

Platoon: A day-by-day G.I. perspective of the Vietnam war. Directed by Oliver Stone (*Salvador*), who received a Purple Heart in 1967. National (344-3431).

Radio Days: This remembrance of scenes past reveals the effect of early radio shows upon a child's unglamorous family. Directed and narrated by an off-camera Woody Allen. Cinema World (342-6536).

A Room with a View: A young Englishwoman, during her proper Victorian finishing, has to choose between her dignified fiancé and an unorthodox artist. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Some Kind of Wonderful: A young man with an eye toward the local queen teen is blind to closer affections. Written by John Hughes. Stars Eric Stoltz (*Mask*) and Lea Thompson (*Back to the Future*). Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Star Trek IV: More adventure for Kirk and crew. This episode brings them back to our present to help us do what we alone cannot—survive! West 11th (342-4142).

Top Gun: Tom Cruise trains to be a hot-shot fighter pilot when he's not relaxing with Kelly McGillis. Late show at the Bijou (686-2458).

True Stories: Odd and eccentric personalities in a fictional Texas town are the focus of the tales herein. A film by the Talking Heads' David Byrne. Bijou (686-2458).

—The Mystery of Michael Sussman

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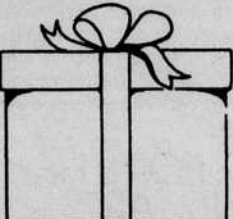
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