

now showing

NEW TO TOWN

The Assault: Beginning at the end of World War II, and finishing at an anti-nuke demonstration, this film traces the life of a man with a tragic childhood. Made in the Netherlands. Opens Friday at the Bijou (686-2458).

The Chipmunk Adventure: Alvin and friends plus The Chipettes sail around the world. Animated. Starts Friday at Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Ernest Goes To Camp: Jim Varney has his hands full as counselor at a rowdy summer camp. Comedy by John Cherry. Starts Friday at Springfield Quad (726-9073) and Cinema World (342-6536).

The Gate: Demons wait behind a gate to take back what once was theirs. With gremlin-like creatures and special effects, it's rated PG-13 and opens Friday at Springfield Quad (726-9073) and West 11th (342-4142).

Rumpelstiltskin: A new, live-action version of the fairy tale, in which an ugly dwarf takes a child in exchange for spinning straw into gold. Opens Friday at West 11th (342-4142).

CONTINUING

Beverly Hills Cop II: As off-beat cop Axel Foley, Eddie Murphy laughs again. Brigitte Nielsen plays villainess. Springfield Quad (726-9073) and West 11th (342-4142).

Children of a Lesser God: Marlee Matlin won the 1986 Academy Award for best actress in her role as a strong, defiant deaf woman. William Hurt (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*) plays her teacher and lover. Double feature with *Room With a View*. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Evil Dead II: Dead by Dawn: Sam Raimi's sequel to his cult classic. With comical F/X, and absurd gimmicks, it's a spoof on the horror movie genre that has its own share of screams. Cinema World (342-6536).

Gardens of Stone drama by Francis Coppola has Anjelica Huston, D.B. Sweeney, and Marv Stuart Masterson in a story set at Arlington Cemetery during the Vietnam War. Double feature with *Hanoi Hilton* at Cinema World (342-6536).

Hanoi Hilton is based on true grit stories of American fliers who were P.O.W.'s in Nam. With Michael Moriarty, it's a double feature with *Gardens of Stone* at Cinema World (342-6536).

Hot Pursuit: Comedy. A young suitor goes through multiple labors to catch up with his kidnapped date. John Cusack, Robert Loggia, Wendy Gazelle work it out. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Ishtar: Warren Beatty and Dustin Hoffman appear in their first film roles in five years. As an unsuccessful comic duo lounge act, the two are joined by Isabelle Adjani. Music by Paul Williams. Springfield Quad (726-9073) and West 11th (342-4142).

Lethal Weapon action picture with Mel Gibson and Danny Glover is at Springfield Fine Arts (747-2201).

Lily Tomlin: Documentary in form, this film centers around the Broadway show *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe*. Including early footage from Tomlin's career, Ernestine, Edith Ann, Agnus Angst, and Lupe put in special appearances. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Platoon: Best picture and director of 1986, according to the Oscar-namers. A no-holds barred view of life as a foot soldier, during the Vietnam War, starring Charlie Sheen, Tom Berenger, and Willem Dafoe. Writer-director Oliver Stone was there. Cinema World (342-6536).

Project X: Matthew Broderick (*Ferris Bueller's Day Off*) plays an air farce pilot with a chimpanzee as partner in a top-secret project. West 11th (342-4142).

Raising Arizona: Nicolas Cage and Holly Hunter play a childless cop and robber who kidnap the fifth quintuplet of a wealthy family. It's all in fun, with jokes, chases and crazy characters. National (344-3431).

Room With a View: Lushly filmed in Florence, Italy. A young British woman with a proper upbringing is tempted by a less conventional lifestyle. Maggie Smith plays her governess. Winner of three Oscars, it's part of a double feature with *Children of a Lesser God* at Valley River Twin (686-8633).

The Secret of My Success: Michael J. Fox is Brantley Foster, who uses his charm to get ahead in a large corporation, only to have it backfire on him in comic ways. Helen Slater plays a female executive. McDonald (344-4343).

Tin Men: Richard Dreyfuss and Danny DeVito battle each other in this comedy by Barry Levinson (*Diner*). Set in Baltimore in the early '60s, it also stars Barbara Hershey—and a fleet of vintage Cadillacs. Late-night feature at the Bijou (686-2458).

Ishtar

Review by
Lois Wadsworth

Elaine May directs Dustin Hoffman and Warren Beatty in the daffy adventures of a pair of bad songwriters no longer willing to live lives of quiet desperation.

Lyle Rogers (Warren Beatty) and Chuck Clarke (Dustin Hoffman) write banal, awful songs. "Saturday morning, the sound of a lawnmower touches my heart..." and "Telling the truth is a bad idea" are a couple of the worst. They can't sing, and their stage routine is flaccid, embarrassing. As their agent (Jack Weston) tell them, "Frankly, you're old, you're white, and you don't have any gimmicks." That's certainly true, but it isn't the whole picture. Driven by passion, these two inept fools write lyrics which come, uncensored, straight from their mundane unconsciousness. This long-running joke provides *Ishtar* with a slender thread of delight from beginning to end.

Lyle and Chuck relentlessly pursue their muse, but she is always just out of reach. Their women leave them. Brokenhearted, they decide to take the show on the road. "On the road" is the operative phrase here, since this show was touted as a road picture in the grand tradition of the Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Dorothy Lamour flicks of the 40s and 50s. But this ain't *The Road to Ishtar* despite the Mar-rakest and Moroccan desert setting.

Lyle and Chuck arrive in a North African emirate that is hair-trigger ripe for revolution. As Shirra Assel (Isabel Adjani), a Shiite guerilla leader explains it to the hapless Americans, the Emir's palace has a roof of gold, but the people have never seen a refrigerator. The other side is

tied down by a CIA agent (Charles Grodin) who hires Chuck for \$150 a week, saying, "It's not much, but you can't really put a price on Democracy."

The plot is over complicated, and silly to boot, but the picture is not without its funny moments. The heroes find themselves in the Sahara on a blind camel walking circles and out of water. Vultures looking for dinner land near the recumbent Chuck while Lyle crawls across the sand toward him, shooing them away with, "No, no, no—not dead, just resting!" Hoffman speaking gibberish to a group of tribesmen who are buying arms from a fly-by-night outfit operating out of a land rover is a very funny variant on a classic comedy routine.

Writer-director Elaine May has been noted for her crisp, neurotic one-liners since college days when she and Mike Nichols teamed up. They perfected their improvisational comedy routines on television and took Broadway by storm with *An Evening With Mike Nichols and Elaine May* in the early 60s. She wrote the screenplay for *Heaven Can Wait* for Beatty, and directed *Heart-break Kid* and *Mikey and Nicky*. Her prodigious talents are documented in numerous scripts she's worked on, including *Tootsie*. So, why cast blue-eyed, curly-haired, fair-skinned Isabelle Adjani as a North African woman warrior? Why have Hoffman tell Beatty to "act like an Arab" or Beatty comment that he'd like to see Adjani in "girl clothes"? A writer of May's stature doesn't have to rely on racism or sexism to get a laugh.

Since *Ishtar* cost about \$40 million to make, it needs to rake in \$100 million to be considered a hit—big bucks, even by today's standards—but there seems to be an audience out there for it. They laughed at all the right spots the night I saw it. They laughed at all the dumb stuff, too.

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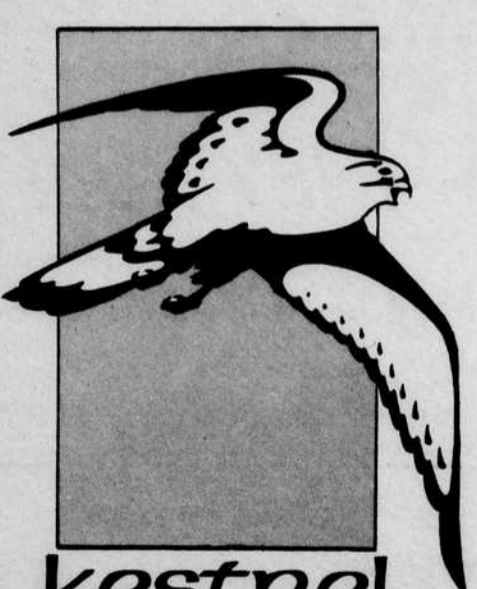
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