

Botched cinematic cooking

Review by Ross West

Vigil

Don't ask me why, but I once got the ingredients together for a dish called Six Can Casserole. All the ingredients were more or less tasty by themselves, but combined and baked they turned to slop. In much the same way, the ingredients that make up *Vigil* are rich and promising, but in the mixing, cooking and serving process something went wrong, very wrong. *Vigil* is my choice to receive the Six Can Casserole Award for botched cinematic cooking.

Toss, an 11-year old girl, is growing up on a mucky New Zealand sheep station a hundred miles from nowhere. When her father dies the situation turns bleak, the child turns within, and nature turns ugly. Grandfather, a dreamer, hires a shepherd to help run the ranch. Mama, sick of the whole sod-busting routine, is in the kitchen baking up some resentment pie. Even with the death of her

husband she's unable to escape from what she sees as Sheepdip Hell. Meanwhile, the burly hired-man wantonly eyes her as if he's just read *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Since the adults won't fill Toss in on their mature entanglements, she retreats into a world of her own, one of ritual, superstition, and dreams. For Toss it's a very hard coming of age.

These ingredients mixed with a lot of stunningly beautiful New Zealand countryside could have made for hearty fare, but what director/co-writer Vincent Ward ended up with was the skimpiest of soups. The film moves at such a lethargic pace, is so fragmented, and confuses repetition with development to such a degree that the story's powerful elements are lost like a few scraps of meat floating in ten gallons of watery broth.

Halfway through *Vigil* I started fondly reminiscing about *My Life*

as a *Dog*, another film whose child-star goes through painful times. But where *Vigil* is all spooks and rushing wind, mud and blood and fear, *My Life as a Dog* is a bouyant celebration, funny, moving, and still tragic. *Vigil's* unremitting gloom grows very stale very fast.

The film's biggest drawback is its glacial pacing. Beyond this, the story is told through the girl's limited perceptions which cast most events in an annoyingly confused haze.

Advertisements for *Vigil* bill it as "a mystical testimony to the beauty and immutability of nature's laws and the cycle of life and death." Had the filmmakers taken on a less grandiose task, say, something along the humble lines of "girl deals with father's death," *Vigil* could have been a much more focused and powerful film. But instead, *Vigil* is the little soufflé that tried and tried, and fell.

now showing

A FOND FAREWELL...

The Man Who Would Be King: Steve Bove and crew close the doors of Cinema 7 this evening with a single screening of this modern-day parable by John Huston. See last week's *What's Happening* for more on Eugene's latest movie theater closing.

NEW TO TOWN

Death Row Game Show: Opens Friday at Movieland (342-4142).

Running Man: Arnold Schwarzenegger plays an ex-cop who is contestant in a deadly TV game, in the year 2019. Thriller. McDonald (344-4343).

Russkies: Adventure thriller. In Key West, some pre-teens happen upon a stranded soldier. The rub: he's Russian, they're anti-Soviet. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

CONTINUING/RETURNING

Baby Boom: Comedy. Manhattan business professional Diane Keaton suddenly inherits a toddler, which puts strains on her career and love life. Sam Shepard plays a small-town vet. Cinema World (342-6536).

The Big Easy: By-the-rules D.A. Ellen Barkin (*Buckaroo Banzai*) meets laid-back cop Dennis Quaid (*Inner Space*) on a murder case in New Orleans. Hot as in Cajun. Double feature with *No Way Out* at Springfield Fine Arts (747-2201).

Death Wish 4: The Crackdown: Charles Bronson again goes on the warpath, this time as an architect whose girlfriend's teen-age daughter is murdered. With Kay Lenz. Movieland (342-4142).

Dirty Dancing: Being compared to *Saturday Night Fever* and *Flashdance*, this musical/romance takes place in 1963 in upstate New York. Young Jennifer Grey falls for older man Patrick Swayze. Double feature with *Like Father, Like Son* at Movieland (342-4142).

Fatal Attraction: A one-night stand turns into a nightmare for a lawyer (Michael Douglas) and his family. Glenn Close plays the obsessed woman who pursues him. Thriller. Cinema World (342-6536).

Fatal Beauty: Whoopi Goldberg plays a tough undercover narcotics detective in L.A. An R-rated comedy with Sam Elliott. Movieland (342-4142).

Hello Again: Shelley Long plays a housewife who dies, then is brought back 20 years later by her psychic sister (Judith Ivey). Comedy. Cinema World (342-6536).

Hiding Out: Suspense/comedy. In Boston, Jon Cryer (*Pretty in Pink's* "Ducky") plays a stockbroker who poses as a high school student to shake off some hired thugs. PG-13. Movieland (342-4142) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Less Than Zero: Brett Easton Ellis's novel by the same name is the source of this movie about an Ivy Leaguer (Andrew McCarthy) who comes back home to Beverly Hills. With Jami Gertz (*The Lost Boys*) and Robert Downey, Jr. (*The Pick-Up Artist*). Movieland (342-4142) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Like Father, Like Son: Teen-age live wire (Kirk Cameron of TV's *Growing Pains*) and his straight-laced dad (Dudley Moore) accidentally trade brain parts connected to intelligence and personality, but not memory. Confusion reigns. Comedy. Double feature with *Dirty Dancing* at Movieland (342-4142).

The Lost Boys: A new twist in the annals of vampire stories, it combines rock and roll with terror. With Jami Gertz, Dianne Wiest and Edward Herrmann. Late-night feature at the Bijou (686-2458).

Made in Heaven: Timothy Hutton and Kelly McGillis play souls who meet in heaven. The problem: he's just died, she was just born. Fantasy/drama with Maureen Stapleton. Look for uncredited appearance by Debra Winger, Hutton's real-life wife, as a man. PG. Movieland (342-4142) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

A Man in Love: Set in Rome, Peter Coyote plays a self-absorbed American actor and Greta Scacchi (*Good Morning, Babylon*) a hot Italian actress who are consumed with passion for each other, during the making of a film about Italian poet Cesare Pavese. With Jamie Lee Curtis, directed by Diane Kurys (*Entre Nous*), tonight (11/12) is the last show at Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Matewan: Re-creates an ugly incident in the 1920's in coal country, at Matewan (pronounced mate-one), West Virginia. Striking coal miners clash with their bosses through immigrant and Black scabs. Chris Cooper plays a union organizer, John Sayles (*The Brother From Another Planet*) directs. Double feature with *Surrender* at Valley River Twin (686-8633).

No Way Out: Navy Lieutenant Kevin Costner goes from shipboard duty to involvement with the CIA. With Gene Hackman and some steamy scenes. Double feature with *The Big Easy* at Springfield Fine Arts (747-2201).

The Princess Bride: Rob Reiner (*Stand By Me*) directed this fantasy based on William Goldman's popular book. True love will out—and villains have punch lines. Cinema World (342-6536).

Robocop: Sci-fi thriller about a cyborg employed to clean up on Detroit lowlife. With Peter Weller, it's graphically violent, satirizes TV newscasts, and is more than comix brought to life. Late-night feature at the Bijou (686-2458).

Surrender: Artist Sally Fields falls for novelist Michael Caine. With Steve Guttenberg and Peter Boyle. Double feature with *Matewan* at Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Suspect: Cher (*Mask*, *Witches of Eastwick*) takes on another leading-lady role. Here she's a D.C. attorney representing a Vietnam vet in a murder case. Dennis Quaid (*The Big Easy*) plays a juror. Suspense. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Tampopo: Food, gangsters, sex and the movies are basic elements in this Japanese comedy that Gene Siskel gave 3½ stars. A tongue-in-cheek satire on the zen of, yes, noodles, directed by Juzo Itami. The Bijou (686-2458).

Vigil: "A poignant, humid, enigmatic drama," said the *Oregonian*. Gorgeously filmed story of a widow and her daughter dealing with a new man on the scene in a remote part of New Zealand. The Bijou (686-2458).

Thursday, November 12 is the last showing for: Can't Buy Me Love late-night at the Bijou. The Sicilian at Valley River Twin (686-8633). A Man in Love at Cinema 7 (687-0733). Movie bookings change quickly—call theater to verify listing.



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Sunday Bargain Matinee 4:30 pm \$3

"An extraordinary visual and psychological experience, a work of awesome beauty at once mystical and earthy, robust and eerie. It is screen poetry of the utmost rigor, achieving maximum effects from minimal means." -Kevin Thomas, L.A. Times

A powerful atmospheric drama set in a primeval New Zealand valley where four characters live and farm in an uneasy coexistence. The story unfolds through the eyes of the central character Toss, an 11 year old girl caught up in the tragedy of her father's death and in the arrival of a stranger.

A FILM BY VINCENT WARD

VIGIL
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