



At the movies

Film gives life to an old cliché

At first glance, the film appears to be just another take-off of the "Star Wars" line of space flicks. The outer-galactic creatures, both good and evil, are there. The futuristic space ships are there. The pretty girl is there, and the handsome, young rookie-astronaut is there, too.

All the essentials which made Lucas' series so successful are ever-so-dangerously present in the Lorimar/Universal production of "The Last Starfighter," directed by Nick Castle.

But with all its superficial resemblance, "Starfighter" surprisingly succeeds as a separate, even innovative, film in its own place. Some of this is due to a couple of new special effects and some should be credited to the movie's refreshing, down-home plot.

Though a little on the stale side at moments, the story is generally original and full of surprises. Alex Rogan, played by Lance Guest, is a soon-to-be high school graduate who has had more than he cares of living in "Nowhere," Nevada in a dumpy mobile-home park with his mother and little brother.

His girlfriend Maggie (Catherine Mary Steward of "Days of Our Lives") also dreams of leaving the park and going with Alex to college in the city but is more reluctant to leave the safety of home than she at first can admit.

With nothing better to do, the community's younger generation spends its time in the bed of a fast-driven pickup and in the hills making out. Alex, however, must spend his free hours with the park's plumbing problems. In what time is leftover, he manages to become an expert at one of the local video games.

This talent gathers the attention of not only the community but an alien wheeler-and-dealer named Centauri, marvelously played by Robert Preston of "Victor Victoria" and a couple dozen other films. As the creator of the game, Centauri tricks Alex into a drive around the block, or so it seems, to discuss his success and possible reward.

But soon Alex finds himself in another galaxy amid a handful of martian video-junkies who have been donned with the honor of Starfighter, also the game's title, because of their skill at what they thought was just a game.

It is the Starfighters' mission now to save the Rylos empire and the rest of the universe from the evil Ko-Dan forces. This is more adventure than the young toilet-fixer bargained for, and it is some time before he is convinced he must do his duty. And there the fun begins.

Noteworthy in "The Last Starfighter" are the computerized special effects seen in the maneuvering of the spaceships and in the battles that eventually take place between Alex and the Ko-Dan command ship, which he had repeatedly

eliminated on the video game back at the local hot dog stand.

The crafts are cleanly designed and jet around the galaxy just as flawlessly. Sometimes this perfection is too sanitized and not as realistic as the hand-operated mechanics of the "Star Wars" scenes.

One of the docking scenes where Centauri initially brings Alex to Rylos is masterfully done. Through computerized graphics the camera tracks the spaceship in complete sequence, from outside the base into the mouth of the landing hanger and through a long tunnel before the ship finally stops.

The film's producers also came up with an original, though nauseating, way to wipe out an entire fleet with the firing power of just one ship.

Centauri's DeLorean-like cruiser exhibits some of the versatile qualities of a 007 toy and provides some needed excitement at the "earthy" level.

Preston, too, is an added surprise bonus to the film. His fast-talking character covers all the bases as first captor then friend to Alex, who soon finds himself in debt to the not-so-humanlike Centauri.

As Alex, Guest's performance stands on its own feet. Never quite content or at ease in his surroundings, he still seems at-home in his character. Guest also plays a double-part in a couple of scenes, one as Alex and the other as his robot replacement, whose presence offers an amusing look at the perils of young love.

Dan O'Herlihy makes reptiles look charming in his role as "Grig," Alex's mentor and navigator through the last half of the film. A little on the soft-side at first, the "gung-ho iguana" finally forces Alex into using his ability with the help of his fatherly guidance.

As in Star Wars, this film also has a threatening ruler from the dark side, so to speak, in the form of Xur, who happens to be the evil son of Enduran, Lord of the Star League at Rylos. Played by Norman Snow, Xur's adolescent snottiness is eventually dealt with by the grotesque Ko-danese warriors.

Other performances that make "Starfighters" complete include that of Stewart, who plays Alex's girl "Mags," and Chris Hubert, the cast's youngest member as Alex's younger brother, who witnesses more than he realizes in one very comic scene.

All in all, "Starfighter" is a well-done movie. It receives its PG rating only from the scenes that include alien creatures and some rare violent moments.

"Starfighter" plays at the Springfield Quad and Cinema World.

By Julie Shippen

Kesey Continued from Page 1

budget were larger, Kesey said, "we wouldn't have had to borrow a van from the chicken company to transport our wrestling team to Pullman." The team was traveling in a van owned by Fircrest Foods to a meet at Washington State University when the accident occurred.

"More money will help

minor sports be able to afford safe travel opportunities," Kesey said.

"This also relates to Title IX (a federal regulation mandating equality in education) in that all sports should be treated equally," he said. "Members of the debate team or the wrestling team should be afforded equal protection with the football and

basketball teams.

"The NCAA buys TV ads to show what good guys they are," Kesey said. "That's money that would be better spent on safe travel for minor sport teams."

Kesey is suing the National Collegiate Athletic Association in an effort to free up money for travel by so-called minor sport teams.

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