

At the movies

'Hoosiers' scores as family film

Underdogs can triumph despite overwhelming odds, say the makers of "Hoosiers," an Orion film released last week in Eugene.

And this film triumphs, for the most part.

Review by
Jackie Barry

It is classic, heartwarming family entertainment about Norman Dale (played by Gene Hackman), a basketball coach

with a sordid past who is given another chance when a friend hires him to teach history and coach basketball at Hickory High School in Hickory, Ind.

Hoosiers are natives or inhabitants of Indiana.

The greatest successes in this film are its photographic quality and its well-constructed messages that redemption and realization of dreams are possibilities in life.

Meandering location footage of landscapes and rural 1950s-era settings sandwiched between high-energy footage of about a dozen basketball games

lead viewers at alternating paces through the story.

And Dale isn't the only one who gets a chance to make up for his past.

Shooter, the town drunk and basketball historian (played by Dennis Hopper), also achieves redemption by kicking alcohol addiction and gaining back not only his self-respect, but the respect of his son.

The basketball team, from a school with an enrollment of less than 200, also redeems itself from being stuck in a small-town mold by winning the state basketball championship.

Dale's drill sergeant approach to coaching alienates a few players and townspeople at first. He tells the team they're in his army from 3 to 5 p.m. every day and refuses to let the local busybodies watch practice. But he gradually gains the respect of some of the harder nuts to crack when he stands firm on his expertise, pulling players from the game when they don't follow his coaching strategies — and when the team begins to win.

Hackman gives a good performance as the friendly but ag-



Courtesy Photo
New coach Norman Dale (Gene Hackman) brings a drill-sergeant approach to basketball in "Hoosiers."

gressive newcomer in a town full of narrow-minded hillbillies.

Novices cast as the basketball team, the Huskers, also give good performances. Only one of the eight team members, David Neidorf as Shooter's son Everett, had any previous professional acting experience.

The individual performances of these players, as well as interactions between the players as a group and the players with

their coach create a solid foundation on which the rest of the film plays.

Director David Anspaugh and scriptwriter Angelo Pizzo had a hand in creating this strong foundation. When they were fraternity brothers at the University of Indiana, the pair decided to one day make a movie based on the the Milan

Turn to Hoosiers, Page 16

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This extraordinarily moving Academy Award-winning documentary is a film about American values in conflict. Set in San Francisco in the 1970s, it tells of the rise to power of Harvey Milk, the first openly gay person elected to office in the United States, and one of the gay rights movement's most charismatic and powerful activists. Both Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk were shot and killed by Dan White, fellow Supervisor and former policeman and fireman. The sensational murder case that followed rocked the nation.

Harry Mitchell (Roy Scheider) has it all: a multi-million dollar business, a number of high paying patents and a marriage of 25 years. On the eve of the nomination of his wife, Barbara (Ann Margaret), to City Council, however, Mitch is confronted by a trio of hooded blackmailers with videotaped evidence of his affair with young model Cinny (Kelly Preston).

Review by
Sean Axmaker

Their demands are simple: they want \$105,000 or the tape is given to his wife. Mitch admits the affair to his wife and then decides not to pay. The blackmailers are not amused and up the stakes — they murder Cinny with Mitch's gun and cover her blood-soaked body with Mitch's monogrammed jacket. Now they want \$105,000 a year or they release the evidence to the police.

Mitch can't go to the police now, but neither can he pay. Instead, he begins his own investigation and uncovers the

three men, whom he discovers to be two porn merchants and a pimp, and begins bargaining with them even as he sets them off against each other.

Based on an Elmore Leonard novel, "52 Pickup" is a gritty urban thriller with a cast of seedy characters and a set of clever twists. The leader of the blackmailers, Alan Raimy (John Glover) is the mastermind of the plot, quick to cross his partners and quicker to have a handy explanation. Glover plays him for all the manic intensity he's worth. Bordering on psychotic, he isn't above violent abuse or murder (yes, he had Cinny killed).

Mitch is his intellectual match, however, and plays on the distrust the three have for one another. Interestingly enough, Mitch's drive to beat the blackmailers isn't far from Glover's violent intensity, and his single-mindedness puts his own wife in danger.

Director John Frankenheimer, famous for his 60s features "The Manchurian Candidate" and the flamboyant "Seconds," keeps a stylish but even hand in "52 Pickup," letting the ac-

tion and the characters carry the story.

While he effectively captures the hard-boiled action and colorful characters of Leonard's milieu, he also emphasizes the terrorization of women (particularly women innocent of the scheme) by the brutal Raimy and his partner Bobby. Like most films of this genre, women function primarily as victims and men as threats or as saviors. Even Ann Margaret's Barbara loses any sense of individual identity by the end of the picture, becoming simply another woman for Raimy to threaten.

This is the major weakness of the film. Barbara is set up as a strong, interesting character in the first few minutes of the film but is all but forgotten as Mitch begins his private vendetta. Ann Margaret's performance makes her brief introduction even stronger but even she can't create strength from the spectator position to which she is relegated.

Despite this problem, "52 Pickup" is an engrossing thriller, not on the level of "To Live And Die In LA," but entertaining in its own right.

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