

Robin Hood a disappointment

★★
Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves plays at the Gateway Mall. Rated PG-13.
 ••• don't bother ••• wait to rent
 ••• worth the time ••••• a must see



Big budget. Big stars. Big fight scenes. Big disappointment. Kevin Costner goes from the American West, where he belongs, to the English countryside, where he has absolutely no business being, in *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*.

This is not a joyous, magical romp through a time long ago. Instead, it is a bunch of contemporary actors playing dress-up and trying to pull off various accents. The laziest of these actors is Costner.

The story begins with Robin coming home from the crusades in the Middle East to find that his father has been killed and his land has been taken over by the evil Sheriff of Nottingham (Alan Rickman). Robin's status as Prince means nothing now and the sheriff has branded him an outlaw with a big price on his head. Robin brings with him Azeem (Morgan Freeman), a Moorish man who has sworn to stay with Robin until he can save Robin's life, to repay him for set-

ting him free in Jerusalem.

The rest of the film has Robin and his merry men stealing from the rich, killing people and making a lot of triumphant cheers while doing it. But these are hardly merry men. They are oafish, vile and for the most part, contemptible. It's an overly violent picture filled with decapitations, people being burned alive and countless folks with arrows shot through them.

The only thing that keeps this movie from an R rating is that the violence has little gore.

Costner had better enjoy his numerous Oscars from last year's *Dances With Wolves*, because he can't ride those coattails forever. In this movie he is lazy, deliberate and completely unbelievable in his role. When he's not sounding like an Indiana farmer, he's slipping into a laughably bad English accent. He's not the only one concerned with this film who doesn't know what to do.

The directing is muddled and not well-handled for the most part. This is supposed to be a sprawling epic, but many of the scenes are filmed so tight that there is no perspective and the eyes can't follow the action. The tone is completely undefined. There are many jokes, some of which are funny, but there's so much death and dreary happenings that very little emotion is

spent watching this movie.

Particularly bad is a trashy and disturbing scene where the Sheriff of Nottingham makes quips while raping Maid Marion (Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio). The real depressing thing is that I was surrounded by young children while this was going on. And the scene was getting laughs.

The film does have some good qualities, but not redeeming ones. The acting from Rickman and Freeman is, for the most part, engaging and appealing. But just when a scene starts to be enjoyable, Costner steps in and ruins it.

The look of the film is fine when it's not dimly lit and over-run with close-ups. The final fight scene, while wholly unrealistic, is exciting and sleekly done.

This should have been a happy, robust, and exciting movie. Instead, it's depressing, lazily acted and underwritten. The action is only good when certain actors decide to make it that way. But it doesn't seem that director Kevin Reynolds insisted that the actors do that, because there's absolutely no consistency. Errol Flynn may have looked more silly than Kevin Costner in his green tights, but he was tons more fun.

By Lucas J. Gutman
 Emerald Contributor

Unlike most films, *City Slickers* has heart

★★★ 1/2
City Slickers Playing at Cinema World. Rated PG-13.
 ••• don't bother ••• wait to rent
 ••• worth the time ••••• a must see



Thelma & Louise is an important movie because it gives insight into what it's like to be an independent woman who

feels trapped in a man's world. *City Slickers* is a funnier movie about how confusing it can be to be a man in a world where his persona is determined at birth.

But *City Slickers* doesn't play nearly as seriously as that sounds. Billy Crystal plays a man who sells radio time to advertisers. He is approaching 40 and realizes that he desperately needs to give his life meaning when he bombs as a speaker in his child's class on career day.

Crystal's friends are Bruno Kirby, who plays an adventurer who will try anything that sounds like it can activate his testosterone into a frenzy, and Daniel Stern, who is a meek man married to an overbearing and malicious woman. Kirby and Stern talk Crystal into going on a cattle drive in New Mexico.

They go on the journey thinking they're in for a great time, where they will all feel like John Wayne afterwards. But the truth is a little different. The trail boss is an old-fashioned type who wants to simply move the cattle and is grudgingly leading these city folk. Jack Palance plays this role with great relish. It's the best thing he's done in years.

All of this makes *City Slickers* sound like an adventure or a drama, but it is, at heart, a comedy. And that's what separates this film from most others: It has a heart. The three stars are great together and the lines given to them by *Parenthood* writers Babaloo Mandel and Lowell Ganz are always funny and insightful. Everything said in the movie rings true.

Before the trip's over, the men will be completely rejuvenated with a new sense of belonging. Crystal delivers a calf, they all learn how to ride and rope and do things they never had to do in the city. But most of all, they learn that they like being men.

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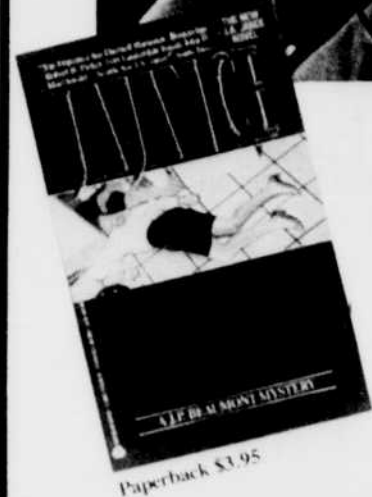
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