

# Sneak previews: A roundup of recent movie releases

By JIM ARNDORFER

*The Daily Northwestern, Northwestern U.*

Ah, Spring. The snow is melting, the trees are greening, and people don't want to think deep thoughts anymore. They want to smile again.

And Hollywood knows this. The upcoming crop of movies is aimed at the audience's funnybone. Whether or not they'll hit their mark is another matter. But hey, at least they give it a shot.

## Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot

Leading off this cavalcade of comedy is "Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot," starring Sylvester Stallone and Estelle Getty. Sly plays a Los Angeles police sergeant whose mother, portrayed by Getty, witnesses a murder. Uppity old woman? Sly in a comedy role? All heck promises to break loose in this latest contribution to that most intellectual of all film genres, the action-comedy.



A pistol-packing Estelle Getty in "Stop!"

**Blame it on the Bellboy** — For those of you who like your laughs continental, two upcoming comedies follow the adventures of stupid Americans in Europe. Dudley Moore and Bronson Pinchot star in "Blame it on the Bellboy," where three guests in a Venice hotel — a mafia hitman, a clumsy real estate agent and a small town mayor looking for some carnal fun in the sun — find themselves stuck in a case of mixed-up identity.

**My Cousin Vinny** — Ralph Macchio and Stan Rothenstein play happy-go-lucky college kids who are nailed with a murder charge in "My Cousin Vinny." They don't particularly cater to murder suspects in backwoods Georgia,

and the arrival of their lawyer — cousin Vinny, played by Joe Pesci — doesn't much help matters. The film also features the gigantic talent of Fred Gwynne as the tough country judge Herman Munster playing a huck? It has to be seen to be believed.

**Medicine Man** — Romance and laughter are two big movie themes, and "Medicine Man" promises some of both. Dr. Robert Campbell (Sean Connery) is a biochemist working toward a medical breakthrough in the South American rain forest, at least until he loses the formula. Things get a little heavy when Dr. Rae Crane (Lorraine Bracco) shows up to investigate the delays in research. At first the two doctors loathe each other, but since this is the movies, by the end they fall in love. Good enough, but who'd believe that aging Connery could keep up with the beautiful Bracco?

## White Men Can't Jump

Since bonafide pool halls don't exist anymore, hustlers were forced to find some where else to ply their devious trade. In "White Men Can't Jump," they head for — you guessed it — basketball courts. A movie about pick-up basketball — hustlers sounds off-beat enough to work possibly, and the team of Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson might turn this movie into a slam dunk.

**Article 99** — Steve Martin's statement that comedy isn't pretty might be true, but from Charlie Chaplin on down it's had a social conscience. "Article 99" follows that course, as doctors and nurses battle bureaucracy and red tape to keep people alive,



Taking it to the hoops to hustle.

but manage to crack jokes along the way. Actor Ray Liotta actually stood in during an open-heart surgery to research his part. Maybe it'll be realistic enough to get a president who cares about national health care elected into the White House.

## Once Upon a Crime

In the second of the multi-national releases, Monte Carlo's intrepid Inspector Bonnard (Giancarlo Giannini) investigates the murder of a dachshund. Suspects include James Belushi as the definitive Ugly American, Richard Lewis as an unemployed actor and John Candy as a compulsive gambler. Cybill Shepherd and Sean Young also investigated.

**Back in the USSR** — The title is already archaic, but "Back in the USSR," a look at Moscow's criminal underworld, should be worth seeing if only for the American motion picture debut of Russian actress Natalya Negoda. Negoda, who starred in the controversial Soviet film "Little Vera," made her original American debut in the pages of Playboy magazine.

**Basic Instinct** — Michael Douglas and Sharon Stone star in this psychological thriller. Douglas plays a cop with a past — an original character if I've ever heard of one — who tries to catch a brutal lesbian serial killer in the streets of San Francisco. I'm not sure how basic a scenario that is, but my instincts are telling me this might be pretty good.

**Straight Talk** — This is more straight-ahead romantic comedy, starring the unlikely team of Dolly Parton and James Woods. Parton is a woman who forsakes Hicksville and becomes a DJ for a radio call-in program in Sweet Home Chicago. Reporter Jack Russell (Woods) investigates her in more ways than one.



A mix of doggone murder suspects.

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## Douglas, Griffith fail to shine

By AARON DOBBS

*The Daily Bruin, U. of California, Los Angeles*

It has all the pieces for a great movie — two talented Hollywood stars, a great supporting cast, an accomplished writer-director and a story from a novel that spent three months on the New York Times Best Seller list. Yet for some reason, none of the elements of "Shining Through" fit together.

The story is told as a flashback. Linda Voss (Melanie Griffith) plays a secretary from Queens who becomes a spy in Berlin during World War II. She recounts her experiences during a BBC interview many years later.

As the tale progresses, the audience not only sees Linda in action, but receives periodical narration from her. She falls in love with Ed Leland (Michael Douglas) — a high-ranking American agent who can't speak German, incidentally. After America's top spy is found dead in Berlin, Linda convinces Leland to let her go, as she conveniently speaks German.

When Linda stays in Germany beyond the original two-week limit, she ends up undercover deeper than she ever anticipated.

The first half of "Shining Through" is fantastic. The foundations for the story are laid out and set the stage for Linda's time in Berlin to be very exciting. But that point marks where the film begins to falter.

In simple terms, the story falls apart. Linda's actions don't make any sense whatsoever. In fact, the movie unintentionally turns into a comedy, as events are so implausible. Scenes



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## Douglas and Griffith can't carry "Shining."

are far-fetched, plot points are randomly inserted into the dialogue, and the annoying narration runs throughout the whole thing.

Writer/director David Seltzer is to blame for most of the problems, but the casting also leaves something to be desired. Douglas is adequate in his role, but he is barely featured in the movie. His character never stretches beyond a stereotypical cold Army colonel who, before he met Linda, cared more about his country than another person.

But Griffith is the worst miscast. Her airy quality carried her through "Paradise" and "Working Girl," but Linda's part needs someone strong, and Griffith looks as if she's about to break down.