



MICHAEL PARIS

Sean Young and Nicholas Cage

★ *Firebirds*.

*Litchfield, Oaks Six East, Plaza*

Sean Young needed a job. Nicholas Cage needed a hit. Tommy Lee Jones needed anything. But surely no one else needed *Firebirds*. The real sequel to *Top Gun* is *Days of Thunder*. But until then we have this ersatz war movie, with Cage — of all people — in the Tom Cruise role.

He's demonstrated an interesting taste in scripts, having ap-

peared in *Birdy* and *Raising Arizona*. What attracted him to this project is difficult to fathom. His character is the patriotic Jake Preston, a hotshot Army pilot Cage plays with heavy-lidded dullness.

After a skirmish in Central America, Jake debriefs the Joint Chiefs of Staff, impresses them with his fervor and is selected to train on the high-tech Apache helicopter. The military is preparing for an assault on the drug cartels and pilots of the Apaches will be crucial to its success.

First Jake must gain the approval of Brad Little (Tommy Lee Jones), a tough Army trainer who fights off middle age by clamping down on the new flyers. Jake also wouldn't mind the approval of Billie (Sean Young), his former girlfriend who left Jake when she wanted to fly helicopters and he wanted her to fly into the kitchen, barefoot and pregnant.

Of course, world events have made it difficult for Hollywood to produce a by-the-numbers war movie. Clint Eastwood ended his last military flick with the in-

vasion of Grenada, a poor excuse for stirring valor. *Firebirds* settles for an evil mercenary soldier as its rallying point.

The bad guy is hired to protect the leaders of the drug cartel. He manages to kill Jake's buddy during the skirmish that opens the film. Now Jake wants revenge, but the mercenary is ferociously skilled in air-to-air combat. Fortunately, Brad has confidence in Jake. Before the big battle, he tells

Jake that he knows the kid can be a "red-blooded American hero" who will do a "full-tilt boogie for freedom and justice."

The Army lent the producers of *Firebirds* full access to the nifty Apache helicopter in the hopes of achieving *Top Gun*-like boosts in new soldiers. Any recruiting of officers planning to work late hours to deal with the crush should feel free to sleep in.

BY MICHAEL GILTZ

**Center** (372-5347) *Back to the Future III, Mountains of the Moon, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*

**Cinema N Drafthouse** (376-6843) *Crazy People* (starts Fri)

**Litchfield** (336-0408) *Bird on a Wire, Cadillac Man, Driving Miss Daisy, Firebirds, My Left Foot, Q & A, Tales from the Dark Side, Wild Orchid*

**Oaks Four West** (331-8118) *Too Beautiful for You* (opens Fri), *Bird on a Wire, The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover, The Hunt For Red October*

**Oaks Six East** (331-8818) *Total Recall* (opens Fri), *Back to the Future III, Cadillac Man, Firebirds, The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (midnight Fri, Sat)

**Plaza** (378-2434) *Driving Miss Daisy, Ernest Goes to Jail, Firebirds*

**Royal Park** (373-4277) *The Gods Must Be Crazy II, Pretty Woman, Joe Versus the Volcano* (\$1), *Madhouse* (\$1)