

reel reviews

Gung Ho*Center*

Like many towns connected with the occasionally beleaguered auto industry, Hadleyville is in trouble. Its factory, the community's economic lifeline, has closed and people are being forced to leave their homes and search for work elsewhere.

In a last-ditch effort to save Hadleyville, the townspeople sent Hunt Stevenson (Michael Keaton), who was a foreman at the plant, to Japan in an effort to convince Assan Motors to invest in their town by reopening the factory.

To everyone's astonishment, especially Hunt's, their ploy works and the auto workers gleefully return to their jobs. However, trou-

ble ensues when a team of Japanese executives moves in and tries to remodel the plant in the image of similar factories in Japan.

Caught in the middle are Hunt, who finds himself trying to please his friends instead of doing his job, and Kazahiro (Gedde Watanabe), an executive torn between the Japanese work ethic, which places the company above all else, and his natural tendency to treat workers as individuals.

Though the Japanese are characterized as obsessed with efficiency and productivity (one man works late rather than join his wife, who is in labor), the film is equally critical of their American counterparts.

When an Assan official com-

plains about a minor defect, one of the workers says, "Aw, let the dealer worry about that," and union employees who have been out of work for months moan about being paid eight dollars an hour instead of the standard wage of eleven dollars that they'd been getting before.

Gung Ho doesn't tell a story, it tells a fable, complete with a moral that goes down lightly in the comedic setting Director Ron Howard has fashioned. His obvious influence is Frank Capra, but Capra's films had more grit and tension.

Gung Ho is good, but keep your eyes open for the television spin-off we'll be seeing in a few years.

By Michael Giltz