

## ★ ★ Heartbreak Ridge

Plaza

Clint Eastwood makes two types of movies. First, he makes big-budget action flicks, like *Firefox* and the "Dirty Harry" movies. But he also makes small, personal character studies, such as *Honkeytonk Man* and *Bronco Billy*. They never make any money but they're usually very good. You get the feeling they're Eastwood's reward for making the big-budget action flicks.

*Heartbreak Ridge* lies uneasily between these two extremes. But it doesn't succeed as a character study or an action flick, mainly because of a poor script.

Eastwood plays a grizzled war hero who's nearing retirement. A veteran of Korea and Vietnam, he's won many battles but never a war and the embattled Marine is searching for a way to end his service with dignity, as a winner. Realizing he won't have the military anymore, he also begins to reach out to his ex-wife (Marsha Mason), who still has strong feelings for him.

The most we ever really learn about the Eastwood character is that he can curse up a storm. Almost every line he utters is an imaginative variation on some expletive. It's amusing at first, but after two hours it grows *very* tiresome. You get the feeling that if someone said "Thank you" he'd say "You're f--king welcome."

Of course, there's a nominal bad guy in the form of a superior officer who doesn't like Eastwood's stubborn attitude, as well as a rag-tag group of misfits who need to be drummed into shape. Eastwood is tough on his men but, as a few short scenes explain, he really cares about them and they soon respond to his firm author-

ity. It's all very predictable.

There's something inherently sad about a military film that has to climax with the invasion of Grenada. Still, Eastwood does add a nice touch. Though his character relishes his effectiveness in combat, it's the bad guy who is shown as gung-ho for war.

When a military alert is downgraded, the bad guy is disappointed because he was looking forward to his first taste of battle. "Maybe next time, sir," Eastwood chides him mockingly. Eastwood's character may be at his best under fire, but even he knows better than to hope for war. I liked that.

by Michael Giltz