

reel reviews

★★★ Highlander
Plaza

Who among us hasn't wished for immortality; dreamed of wandering through the ages, doing as we please? Well, it *can* happen and such Immortals do exist. They're living among us, or so *Highlander* would have you believe.

It tells the story of Connor of the clan of MacLeod (Christopher Lambert) who was born in the Scottish highlands around 1520 A.D. He's not strictly immortal, mind you, for he will die if his head is chopped off. And this is a distinct possibility, for now is the time of the Gathering.

The Gathering is when the Immortals (about five in all) meet in modern-day New York City to take part in a battle royal for The Prize, the bestowing of some undisclosed supernatural powers.

It's a messy business because some of the Immortals have become close friends and chopping

off a friend's head is a distasteful chore.

This dilemma is solved by Korgon (Clancy Brown), a brutish, power-hungry Immortal who will stop at nothing to win The Prize. By the time of the Gathering, he's already killed most of the others and the Immortal Ramirez (Sean Connery) warns Connor that if Korgon reigns supreme, the world will be thrown into an eternity of darkness and despair.

From the beginning, *Highlander* is clearly headed towards a showdown between good and evil. It keeps attention by cutting back to 16th century Scotland and telling how Connor first learns of his special gift from Ramirez, who befriends the young man and trains him in the art of sword-fighting.

Though an enjoyable romp, the movie stumbles in several areas. I don't think a warrior living in the 1500's would say, "I was so nervous the first time I went into battle that I peed in my kilt."

Furthermore, the modern-day love interest is too obligatory and quite unnecessary while the ending is much too fuzzy about the implications of The Prize.

However, these defects are compensated by the kinetic camerawork of first-time film director Russell Mulcahy, a music video alumnus. Mulcahy swoops in and around the action searching for unique perspectives and his transitions from the past to present are especially inventive.

He also stages a terrific battle between Ramirez and Korgon. Their titanic struggle literally destroys a castle, and Mulcahy turns their fight into a surrealistic nightmare.

This move is a triumph of style over substance and when Mulcahy gets his hands on a script with style *and* substance, the results should be tremendous. As it stands, *Highlander* will probably be the best fantasy epic set in New York City for a long, long time.

by Michael Giltz