

# reel reviews

## ★ ★ ★ ★ **The Mosquito Coast** *Oaks East Six*

Halfway through this movie, I sat back and wondered, "What is going to happen next?" I didn't have a clue. In this day and age, when almost every major motion picture has the inevitable Ride-Into-The-Sunset ending, that doesn't happen very often.

*The Mosquito Coast* is one of the best pictures of 1986. And the key to the film's success is Harrison Ford's subtle, finely controlled performance. He plays Allie Fox, an eccentric inventor and local crank — the type of person you'd try to avoid talking to when he stops by.

Allie sees decay and corruption throughout America. "This place is a dump," he tells his son, Charlie (River Phoenix). Allie also sees signs of imminent nuclear war everywhere he looks; in the economy, in racial tensions, in political intrigue.

He begins to mumble about how it would take courage to pack it in and start all over again. And not just ordinary courage, mind you, but "4 in the morning courage, and who's got that?" Then, quite suddenly, he decides to do just that. Allie drags his wife and four children off to the Mosquito Coast,

where they literally hack out a new home for themselves in the jungle.

As Mother, Helen Mirren projects a quiet love for Allie, as well as an innate sense of adventure, all of which makes her compliance with his wild scheme believable, even in the face of his increasingly bizarre behavior.

The story of their life in the jungle slowly develops into an obvious, if well-crafted metaphor for civilization as a whole. Director Peter Weir brilliantly propels the internal and external action of the film with his carefully chosen images. When Allie is laughing happily on in the family's stay in the jungle, Weir pulls the camera back until it's high above the trees, and turns Allie's laughter into a sad, mournful echo, accentuating their isolation.

And at the center of it all is Ford. He had every opportunity to degenerate into overacting or quirky mannerisms, but instead, he chose to carefully develop a genuine character. His performance is so convincing, so real, that when he falls into madness, we, like Mother, almost can't believe it ourselves.

By Michael Giltz