

# REEL REVIEWS

## ★★★★Runaway Train

Plaza

This is not a film, nor is it a movie. It is a flick. To be precise, it is an action-flick, one of the best action-flicks in a long time.

*Runaway Train* comes to us from Cannon, those masters of cheapie flicks that brought *Exterminator II*. Lately, however, Cannon's free-wheeling style and promise of artistic freedom have been luring top-name stars. Katherine Hepburn and Nick Nolte teamed up for *Grace Quigley*, and Sam Sheperd adapted his hit play, *Fool For Love*.

*Runaway Train* is easily the biggest feather in Cannon's hat yet. It is a gritty and compelling thriller with several performances getting touted as Oscar nomination possibilities. They might not get those nominations, but the mere fact that Cannon made a flick that would even be considered for an Academy Award is a big step forward.

The simple, straightforward premise involves Manny (Jon Voight) and Buck (Eric Roberts), two escapees from a maximum-security prison who find themselves trapped on a runaway train in bitter, winter weather. They are unable to reach the front cab, and therefore are unable to stop the locomotive.

They are soon joined by Sara (Rebecca DeMornay), the only other person onboard. The pressure flare as the three boil under the pressure-cooker atmosphere.

This flick has much to say about human nature, mostly through the marvelous Jon Voight as the cruel and inhuman Manny. "You're an animal!"

Poor					★
Fair				★	★
Good			★	★	★
Very Good	★	★	★	★	★
Excellent	★	★	★	★	★

cries Sara at one point. "No, . . . worse," he growls back. "I'm human."

Roberts is also quite good as Buck. However, he seems to be in a rut of playing overbearing braggarts, and one wonders how much of a range he's really capable of. In contrast, DeMornay is wonderful and pushes herself to extremes as Sara.

The score by Trevor Jones is extremely effective, and *Runaway Train* has an unexpected and memorable ending that won't soon be forgotten. It's a great flick.

## ★★★Iron Eagle

Oaks Six

*Iron Eagle* is manipulative, predictable, jingoistic, and I loved it. At their most basic level, movies allow us to safely live out our fantasies. This fantasy deals with striking back at kidnapers and terrorists, and it was inspired by the Iranian hostage situation. But, with the recent wave of terrorist activity, *Iron Eagle* couldn't be more timely.

Meet Doug, an all-American kid who wants nothing more than to follow in his father's footsteps and fly jets for the Air Force. Unfortunately, Doug (Jason Gedrick) has just received a rejection notice from the Academy.

As if that wasn't bad enough, Doug finds out that his dad is held hostage in

a nameless Middle Eastern country. Dad is quickly put on trial and sentenced to death for being an American! Well, sure, they made up some story about Dad "violating our airspace," but we know they're just an oil-rich little desert country with an inferiority complex.

Of course, the military's hands are tied by the State Department. In desperation, Doug turns to Col. Chappy Sinclair (Louis Gossett Jr.) for help. He soon convinces Chappy to help him formulate a plan to set his dad free.

With the help of his friends, who seem to have the run of the base with the unwitting help of their military parents, Doug "borrows" two fully equipped F-16's. Then, Doug and Chappy set off on a bold, all-or-nothing mission to rescue his dad.

One cannot underestimate the contribution of Louis Gossett Jr. All of the other actors are competent, but his superior acting keeps the flimsy script from being too unbelievable.

Furthermore, it was very imaginative on the writer's part to enable Doug to fly well when he listens to rock music played from a cassette player he straps to his knee. This has to be the most inventive way ever of working in the music from a soundtrack.

At times, *Iron Eagle* can be downright silly, but it's a coldly calculated action movie that lets us cheer in all the right places. It's fun. It's uncomplicated. And, by no small coincidence, *Iron Eagle* is the No. 1 move at the box office in its first week of release.

-By Michael Giltz