

NEW TUNES

Tune In Tomorrow

★ ★ 1/2

Hippodrome

It's been five or 10 years since Peter Falk crossed that invisible line separating well-known character actors from national treasures. Columbo still may be the first image that pops into your mind when his furrowed brow appears. But there are many other roles as well. There is his faultless performance in *The In-Laws*, his gentle cameo in *The Princess Bride*, his exquisitely funny turn as an elderly woman in *Happy New Year*. Falk even played an angel in the widely praised German film *Wings of Desire*.

And, somehow, those count-

less roles have been snipped out, strung together and transformed from an erratic but interesting career into a Body of Work.

Add another one to the list. Peter Falk shambles through this fitful comedy with engaging ease. He's asked to don a French maid's uniform, harangue a radio show's cast about the essence of art and rail against deplorable Albanians. And, naturally, he does it all with charm.

Falk plays Pedro, a scriptwriter for radio soap operas. He wanders into New Orleans and immediately turns the timid local serial into a squalid depiction of incest and passionate rage. Ratings soar.

So do the fortunes of Martin



Island Pictures

Keanu Reeves (seen here in *RIVER'S EDGE*) plays an aspiring author in *TUNE IN TOMORROW*.

(Keanu Reeves), a copywriter for the radio station and an aspiring author. Pedro gives him a few friendly pointers — about writing *and* about Aunt Julia (Barbara Hershey), an attractive relative who saunters into town and catches Martin's eye.

Pedro's advice isn't given out of the kindness in his heart. He eavesdrops on their conversations and recreates them word for word on the radio broadcasts. This creates a weird give-and-take between the soap opera and the real-life romance taking shape. As Pedro likes to say, "I see a lot of reality impacting here."

Tune In Tomorrow is offbeat, but it also wants to give Martin and Julia their romantic moments. This is hard to accom-

plish when hordes of angry Albanians are descending upon the New Orleans radio station to protest discrimination. Other small matters — such as Keanu Reeves' unconvincing New Orleans accent and some sloppy cinematography during the climax — don't help either.

Even more distressing is the fact that the *really* silly stuff — fanciful on-screen depictions of the soap opera — only accounts for about 10 minutes of the movie. This strange world of rat-obsessed men, incest-riddled families and those despicable Albanians is hilarious. Like everyone else in *Tune In Tomorrow*, we'd rather ignore the protagonists and get back to the radio show.

Michael Giltz