

King Solomon's Mines misses cinematic pay dirt

By WENDY THOMPSON
Movie Reviewer

King Solomon's Mines
Starring: Richard Chamberlain, Sharon Stone
Director: Jay Lee Thompson
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"King Solomon's Mines," at first glance to us baby-boomers, seems a feeble parody of "Raiders of The Lost Ark." But actually, "Raiders" was loosely based on the original "King Solomon's Mines." First filmed in Great Britain in 1938, it was remade in the U.S. in 1950, with Stewart Grainger and Deborah Kerr. This year's version is yet another remake of this time-honored film.

Frankly, I don't know why they bothered. With Spielberg's Academy award winning adaption (and "prequel") fresh in our minds, the time is certainly not right.

The movie might have been toler-

able if the parody had been intentional, but alas, this one wins sweepstakes for worst picture. It's not just bad, it's embarrassing. I felt sorry for these people's mothers.

Surprisingly, Richard Chamberlain is smack-dab in the middle of this fiasco. But we don't go very far into the jungle with his character, adventurer Allan Quartermain, before discovering that his one-liner delivery is limper than Tarzan when Jane's not around. His humor is handled with the aplomb of an orangutan. It's as if he only said the lines because they were in the script, not because he was enjoying himself. Which is precisely that quintessential ingredient that lets Harrison Ford pull them off with such zing. No, Richard, we're not laughing with you -- we're laughing at you.

This aspect was the only thing keeping people in the theater once the movie began. We wanted to see how bad it got -- and it got bad.

The "Raiders" similarity began at

the beginning. We see an adventurer-type with a group of natives and a whiny blond plundering through the jungle. Then we switch to an old scholarly-type with his turbaned assistant and a big Turkish-looking guy. An archeologist, of course, looking at a small statue with Canaanite hieroglyphics on its tummy. These turn out to be a map to King Solomon's mines, where, legend has it, King Solomon stored his gold, diamonds and riches. The tummy of this statue is a fertile plain that lies just south of a pair of mountains (the statue's breasts) that hold the treasure beneath them.

We soon learn that the Turk is a bad guy, in cahoots with the Nazi's and interested in getting to King Solomon's mines first to exploit the wealth. The blond is the archeologist's daughter, an Iowa college student who has hired Quartermain to help her find her father. This girl is blond to the core. She can't act and is neither charming nor beautiful.

She's always messing things up by not doing what she's told, but somehow her breathless sighs of "Oh, Quartermain" win the adventurer's heart. The movie tracks Quartermain and the girl through the jungles of Africa to get to the mines before the Turk and the Nazi's.

The special effects budget must have been non-existent. In one scene Quartermain and companion are ceremoniously dumped into a cannibal's pot, about to become the protein portion in the vegetable soup. The obviously plastic tomatoes, corn, lettuce, etc. floating around them lend a comic air to the meal. As they venture on toward the treasure they come across another hostile tribe whose leader looks suspiciously like Tina Turner from the back -- wait 'til she turns around.

The joke is on us when they finally get their first glimpse of the long-awaited twin-peaks -- two earthen boob-shaped mountains, complete with nipples -- get real. □

movies-

RATING KEY
***** = Excellent
**** = Good

*** = Fair
** = Poor
* = Forget it

-movies

AFTER HOURS (R): Martin Scorsese's weird comedy returns. Saturday and Sunday nights only. Schulman 6.

BACK TO THE FUTURE (R): Michael J. Fox, (TV's "Family Ties") stars in this time-traveling comedy. ***** Cinema 3.

EASTWOOD FESTIVAL (R): Clint Eastwood is Detective Harry Callahan in **Sudden Impact**, a different detective in **Tightrope** and Callahan again in **Dirty Harry**. Aggie Cinema, Friday, 7:30, 9:45, and midnight (respectively), Rudder Theater.

GREMLINS (PG): Cute little fuzzy beasts accidentally multiply and mutate into mean little fuzzy beasts in a small town at Christmastime. Aggie Cinema and Cepheid Variable, Saturday, 7:30 and 9:45. *** Rudder Theater.

JAGGED EDGE (R): A mystery-thriller starring Glenn Close and Jeff Bridges. ***** Plaza 3.

JOURNEY OF NATTY GANN (PG): A Walt Disney film about a girl who is separated from her father and travels across the country's wilderness with a befriended wolf to find him. Manor East III.

KING SOLOMON'S MINES (PG-13): Richard Chamberlain stars in this unintended farce of "Raiders of the Lost Ark." * Cinema 3.

KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN (PG): A flamboyant homosexual (William Hurt) and a bearded revolutionary (Raul Julia) share a gloomy prison cell. Schulman 6.

KRUSH GROOVE (R): It's the city beat of the city streets, with music from Sheila E., The Fat Boys, Run-DMC. ** Schulman 6.

NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET PART 2: FREDDY'S REVENGE (R): The saga continues. The first one was supposedly one of the better horror movies. Schulman 6.

ONCE BITTEN (PG-13): A comedy about a teen-aged boy who discovers his one-night stand is a woman who has been around for centuries. Manor East III.

ONE MAGIC CHRISTMAS (G): A Walt Disney film about a mother raising two children on her own who tries to show them the real meaning of Christmas. Post Oak Mall.

RAINBOW BRITE AND THE STAR STEALER (G): Rainbow Brite is the heroine fighting against the villain Star Stealer, who is stealing all the suns. Animated feature. Saturday and Sunday matinee only. Schulman 6.

RETURN OF THE SOLDIER (R): A man comes home from war to three women. Does he or doesn't he have amnesia? Schulman 6.

ROCKY IV (PG-13): Predictable. But irresistible if you're a Rocky fan. *** Post Oak Mall.

SANTA CLAUS -- THE MOVIE (PG): Dudley Moore is an elf, full of elf-confidence and elf-assurance, in this adorable movie about Santa Claus. *** Manor East III.

SPIES LIKE US (PG): Chevy Chase and Dan Ak-

royd team up as bumbling spies in this comedy about international intrigue. Post Oak Mall.

STREETS OF FIRE (PG): A superstar rock singer is kidnapped by a motorcycle gang in this rock 'n' roll fable that combines '50s and '80s styles in a future setting. Aggie Cinema, Saturday, midnight, Rudder Theater.

TARGET (R): Gene Hackman and Matt Dillon star in this mystery movie about a father and son who don't really know each other until they team up to rescue their kidnapped wife/mother. ***** Plaza 3.

THE STUFF (R): "The Stuff" is a delicious new food, it lurks in the refrigerator, and it's a deadly menace. A horror/comedy. Schulman 6.

TREES OF WOODEN CLOGS (UNRATED): An Italian film about a peasant family forced to leave their home. Focuses on simple, natural aspects of peasant farm life in turn of the century Lombardy. Awarded Grand Prize at Cannes in 1978. Aggie Cinema, Sunday, 7:30, Rudder Theater.

WHITE NIGHTS (R): Mikhail Baryshnikov stars as a defected Russian ballet dancer whose plans crash-land in Russia, where he is still considered a criminal. Baryshnikov's dancing is perfect, though it seems tormented. Gregory Hines and Isabella Rossellini also star as a couple assigned to "befriend" him. ***** Cinema 3.

YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES (PG-13): Stephen Spielberg's affectionate speculation about what might have happened had Holmes and Watson met during their college years. Plaza 3.