

REEL

CRITIQUE



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Viggo Mortensen (right) plays Frank T. Hopkins, a horse racer fallen from glory, who is invited to compete in a 3,000 mile race across the Arabian Desert by Sheik Riyadh (Omar Sharif, left).

"Hidalgo" Touchstone Pictures Starring Viggo Mortensen

"Hidalgo" is a movie that was made for a specific audience. It just so happens to be the same audience that enjoys "America's Funniest Home Videos" and CBS sitcoms. Amusing at times, slightly entertaining at others, "Hidalgo" is grade-A Hollywood cut.

Prepared from a recipe of box-office success, this Disney film is as predictable and clichéd as it gets, but at the same time, it doesn't inflict too much harm on a viewer's brain cells.

"Hidalgo" is the story of Frank T. Hopkins, a half-American Indian who has fallen a long way from glory, and his horse Hidalgo, who compete in a long-distance race through the Arabian Desert. Along the way, the pair of misfits encounter sand storms, swarms of locust, scheming rival racers and bandits.

Viggo Mortensen plays Frank T. Hopkins much like Indiana Jones on downers, quick with a sarcastic quip or fisticuffs when he's not brooding with his horse. Hopkins has an unnaturally close relationship with his horse, and the two enjoy all sorts of activities together, from saving damsels in distress to eating insects.

The horse seems to be the smarter and more responsible of the pair. Casting director Nancy Foy did an excellent job in choosing the horse that played Hidalgo. The eyes of the beasts give off an uncanny intelligence and charm. After watching the first half of the movie, audiences won't be able to help but fall in love with Hidalgo and care about his plight. This is exactly what director Joe Johnston ("The Rocketeer," "October Sky") is banking on - that audiences will be too distracted caring about the horse to notice the shallowness of the script.

The film features a lack of likeable characters. Hopkins is too busy feeling sorry for himself to give the audience a chance to. The other characters are either villains or stereotypical foreigners with an uncanny grasp of the English language and the nuances of its humor. Besides the amusing scenes in which the horses are actually racing for their very survival, the movie focuses on a hastily thrown together plot that focuses on stealing a prize horse. Along the way, the love interest is kidnapped and - of course - Hopkins and Hidalgo go and save the day. On the way, they get themselves into the villain's complex, which is amusing, but the gunfight that ensues has been seen dozens of times before in better crafted visual styles.

The cinematography is one aspect of the film that never fails to please. The sepia tone that cinematographer Shelly Johnson uses to capture the desert locals helps add to the destitution of the dilemma of a race through the heat and sand. During one overly sentimental scene, a well-crafted use of camera techniques and special effects helps bring together a well-composed hallucination sequence.

The movie often takes the road of fantasy in creating highly unbelievable scenarios and situa-

tions that only serve to keep the complacent audience staring at the "purty pictures" on the screen. The sappiness of some scenes is often overwhelming, but what can one expect from a movie that came from "The House of the Mouse."

The movie is not a terrible one, but at the same time film-goers looking for a movie that will not only entertain but will offer some mental exercise will be well-advised to stay away. "Hidalgo" shouldn't offend anybody but the thinking man. Every one else is sure to get a kick from this standard Hollywood piece of driftwood floating in a sea of queso.

— Robert Saucedo

"The Lost Skeleton of Cadava" Columbia-Tristar Starring Larry Blamire

A tongue-in-cheek sendup of a 1950s science fiction film, "The Lost Skeleton of Cadava" is hilarious in its awfulness. Seemingly built for late-night movie watching parties, the movie is laugh-out-loud funny as it celebrates and builds upon the clichés that helped earn legendary director Ed Wood his infamous legacy.

When a serious scientist (Larry Blamire) and his bubbly wife embark on a trip to the woods to locate a meteor that contains atmospheria, an elusive element that potentially holds the key to mankind's salvation, they become entangled in a web of mock-horror. A mad scientist with dreams of conquering the world, Dr. Roger Fleming, is also in search of atmospheria to resurrect the evil skeleton that resides in the cave of Cadava.

Also in search of atmospheria are two well-meaning aliens who need to repair their ship that crashed and unfortunately let loose a bloodthirsty mutant, which is not much more than a man inside of a costume that looks as if it was built for a play at a school that lost all of its theater funding for the year.

Much like the movies it mocks, the film's plot is just gift wrapping for the collection of genre standards. Eclectic objects find a home in this bizarre movie, with everything from bizarre weapons made from household appliances to the mysterious half-animal, half-woman temptress Animala.

Writer/director/actor Blamire cleverly inserts satire among the slapstick humor that helps sell this retro comedy. The script cleverly parodies the schlock-tastic dialogue of 1950s science fiction movies to a T. Audiences won't help but find themselves quoting the movie's spot-on dialogue. Just thinking back to Animala's rock dance will leave fans softly giggling at the memory.

The movie is filmed in black and white and features a standard science-fiction score that helps add to the legitimacy of the movie. Part of the movie's charm is the way it takes itself seriously throughout the hour-and-a-half screen time. The movie lends itself to repeat mocking and is ideal for a night of movie watching with friends.

Unfortunately, like most one-joke ideas, the movie often contains slow parts and lolls in the humor, but audiences will be too busy resting their smile muscles to care. More hilarious jokes are just around the corner.

The actors are exceptional at bad acting. Never letting in on the joke, the actors all help to carry the sight gags and inane dialogue with flair so believable, one begins to wonder if some of today's notoriously bad actors may be faking bad as well.

While most modern spoofs seem to find the need to hide behind gross-out humor and sex jokes, the movie, at a rating of PG, is so cleverly crafted it never strays from the wide-eyed innocent roots of the movies it spoofs.

— Robert Saucedo

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Biol 113
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Biol 113
Sun 9p, Tue 7p

Biol 114

Chem 101
Keeney-Kennic
Sun 12a

Chem 101
Magnuson
Tue 5p

Chem 102
Sun 3p

Chem 102
Sun 3p

Chem 102
Conway
Thu 6p

Chem 102
Peck
Mon 12a

Chem 107

Chem 228
Hogg
Mon 9p

Chem 228
Sulikowski
Sun 9p

Chem 228
Tiner
Sun 5p

Econ 203
Nelson
Mon 4p

Econ 322
Sun 3p

Finc 309
Joyner
Sun 7p, Mon 7p, Mon 7p

Finc 341
Joyner
Sun 7p, Sun 7p, Mon 7p, Mon 7p

Info 303
Darcey
Mon 3p, Tue 10p

Math 141
Sun 9p, Mon 9p, Tue 7p, Wed 7p

Math 141
Sun 9p, Mon 9p, Tue 7p, Wed 7p

Math 142
Sun 6p, Mon 6p

Math 142
Sun 6p, Mon 6p

Math 152
Wed 10p

Math 152
Wed 10p

Mgmt 309
Wesson
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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Maria Shriver takes seat as federal juror

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Journalist-turned-California first lady Maria Shriver has another new job: juror.

Shriver, wearing a pantsuit and reading glasses, took notes Wednesday in U.S. District Court, where she is on a jury hearing a product liability case.

There was no evidence of extra security for the wife of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Everyone entering the federal courthouse must pass through a metal detector and each courtroom has an armed bailiff.

Shriver, a former "Dateline NBC" reporter, asked to be relieved of her duties at NBC News after her husband was elected governor. She said it became clear to her that as first lady of California, her journalistic integrity would constantly be scrutinized.

Shriver had the seat nearest the witness stand. She is one of three women on the panel hearing the case of a man who claims he suffered nerve damage that cost him the use of his right arm when he fell from an extension ladder while working for a heating and cooling company.

He is suing the ladder manufacturer, alleging the product was defective.

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