

Entertainment

Criminally muddled plots sabotage thriller, slapstick comedy

By Judith Trojan

NEW YORK (NC) — By the time the serial strangler is nabbed in filmdom's latest cop thriller, "The January Man" (MGM), few in the audience will care.

As written by John Patrick Shanley, who has previously shown a flair for capturing the quirks of ethnic New York families ("Moonstruck"), "The January Man" pitches the services of eccentric New York detective Nick Starkey (Kevin Kline), who is called back to the force from exile as a fireman to investigate the serial strangling of 11 female apartment dwellers. It seems that Starkey was set up by his less-than-admirable brother, Police Commissioner Frank Starkey (Harvey Keitel), as fall guy for Frank's mysterious misdeeds. Hence Nick's two-year detour in the fire department.

Unfortunately, the rest of this movie is more muddled than mysterious. When New York Mayor Eamon Flynn (Rod Steiger) orders supersleuth Nick back to the streets to solve the murder case, everyone in the cast and the audience is mighty puzzled, to say the least, given Nick's offbeat manner.

Throughout most of this thrill-less thriller, the serial murders somehow take a backseat to the cutesy character turn by Kline. His unorthodox, laid-back lifestyle in Greenwich Village and farfetched, mellow manner of solving the crime by computer is simply senseless.

Although we're supposed to think Nick is some kind of wonderful, he thinks nothing of bedding the mayor's much younger daughter, Bernadette (Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio), within a half hour of meeting her. A friend of the murderer's latest victim, Bernadette simply

serves as window dressing to Nick's shenanigans, as does Nick's ex-lover, Christine (Susan Sarandon), now unhappily married to his brother Frank. This fact does not stop Nick from obliquely propositioning her.

There's also distraction from major ham-bones Steiger and Danny Aiello — who plays Nick's crabby commanding officer, Vincent Alcoa. Steiger and Aiello scream and swear a lot, and should share an award for worst performance by formerly good actors in poorly written roles. Nothing or no one is sacred to Steiger's Mayor Flynn who even goes so far as to make a particularly vulgar anti-clerical remark.

Irish director Pat O'Connor ("Stars and Bars") has no feel for New York street life — "The January Man" was filmed in Toronto — nor for police work; and he and writer Shanley fail badly at attempts to mesh a portrait of irreverent, high level Irish-American New Yorkers with a crime story of serious intent.

Due to excessive profanity laced with sexual vulgarities mistakenly used as key dialogue, some nudity, one irresponsible explicit sexual encounter and the depiction of violence against women as a lark rather than a shocking crime, the USCC classification is O — morally offensive. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

"Three Fugitives"

While the uneasy blend of slapstick and sentimentality in "Three Fugitives" (Touchstone) is diverting, the mix may confound those in search of solid comic entertainment.

Written and directed by Francis Veber and based on his 1986 French film "Les Fugitifs,"

the peanut-sized plot follows a pair of misfits — one the robber, the other his hostage — who meet during a bank heist and spend the rest of the film trying unsuccessfully to disentangle themselves from each other and the cops.

After 14 armed robberies and a five-year stint in prison, parolee Lucas (Nick Nolte) is determined to go straight. An innocent bank customer, he ends up as a hostage to inept, first-time bank robber Perry (Martin Short), who desperately needs money to keep a roof over his head and his troubled young daughter, Meg (Sarah Rowland Doroff), in her special school.

Life on the lam with street-smart Lucas, pathetic Perry and mute little Meg — who stopped talking when her mother died two years before — is an hilarious mess of role reversals, comic-book cop chases and less effective teary moments in which Lucas' heart melts for Meg.

Director Veber makes the most of Short's wired, rubbery, comedic gifts and Nolte's gruff, tough-guy bravado. Engaged in wonderful physical bits of business reminiscent of the Keystone Kops, the Three Stooges and Laurel and Hardy, diminutive Short and lanky Nolte — with the assistance of a legion of police — are a physically riotous comedy team.

This works until sentiment enters the scene. Meg's instant attachment to Lucas is unfathomable since he is so aloof and nasty to her father.

The overly sentimental heart of "Three Fugitives" may be a jolt to audiences due to its flat characterizations, but the zany comedy should consistently keep audiences rolling in the aisles. Especially side-splitting is a climactic sequence with Short masquerading as Nolte's wife.

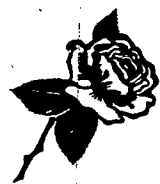
Due to much rough language and intense comic-book violence, the USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

"Matador"

Pedro Almodovar's "Matador" (Cinevista-World Artists) is a slick, serio-comic look at two kinky individuals — a high-class lawyer (Assumpta Serna) and a retired matador (Nacho Martinez) — whose respected positions in Madrid society cloak their search for the ultimate sexual high. Both like to kill their partners at the peak of orgasm. Needless to say, when they finally connect during a nutty murder investigation for all of their victims, their shared sexual obsession has a fatal outcome.

Currently winning raves for his more accessible film "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown," young Spanish director Almodovar fills his earlier film "Matador" with graphic bullfight scenes and sexual imagery. While his philosophical connections between sex and death — specifically in regard to the type of death scenes played out between matador and bull — are well-taken, the imagery will shock many, especially with its depiction of explicit, often violent sexual encounters between men and women.

Because of its numerous explicit sexual encounters, graphic violence, much nudity and profanity, the USCC classification is O — morally offensive. Not rated by the MPAA.



DINING AROUND THE DIOCESE



Brandston's
814 S. Clinton Ave.
(one mile from GEVA Theatre)
(716) 461-3756

"It's not often that a restaurant appears offering style, good food and reasonable prices. When one does, we should file it away in our memory bank for frequent recall. Do so with Brandston's." ... Quote from City Newspaper food critic Linda Mushlin.
Open Monday-Saturday for dinner. Prices from \$9.95 to \$17.95. Large parking lot.

Cannon's
1551 Mt. Hope Ave.
(1 minute north of W. Henrietta Rd.
exit of Rte. 390)
(716) 461-1026

A Rochester favorite for 23 years, featuring a diverse menu including seafood, steaks, chops, veal, and Italian dishes. For the late night diner we serve until 1 am Mon.-Sat., and midnight Sun. Lunches are served daily from 11 a.m. till 3:30.

Crystal Barn
Corner Clover & Jefferson
at the Barn Bazaar in Pittsford
(716) 381-4844

A pleasant blend of crystal chandeliers and Victorian motif set in an authentic country barn, creates a memorable atmosphere... for lunch, cocktails or an enjoyable dining experience. Your host George and Katherine Gerkos and Chef Russell Brindisi pride themselves in presenting you with the most carefully selected and prepared dinners as well as unique special creations for each evening. We most sincerely hope that you'll find our quality uncompromising and our service unsurpassed. Reservations are appreciated.

Fornataro's
2155 Long Pond Rd.
(corner Long Pond & Spencerport Rds.)
(716) 426-1240

Along the streets of Rome or in the Italian countryside, the word "trattoria" conjures up images of a family-like dining room just off a kitchen, fragrant with the rich aroma of simmering meat sauces, tomatoes and fresh peppers. Such could be a description of Fornataro's. Serving dishes like Filet Fornataro (beef dressed in a sweet sauce with melon balls and grapes), Saltimbocca, Veal Marsala and Madeira, Fettucine Alfredo in its golden cheese dressing, and Beef Tenderloin flavored with spices and

cognac in a marinara sauce. Most pastas are homemade. Wines and liquors are used liberally in the cuisine as are artichoke hearts and fruits. Lunches served Monday thru Friday, dinner seven nights a week. Banquet and private party rooms are available.

Gerratano's
885 Buffalo Road
(716) 436-9340

Recommended by the Times-Union Food Guide, Gerratano's offers home cooking, Italian-style. This four-star restaurant features specialty dishes including homemade eggplant, lasagne and bread. Serving breakfast, lunch and dinner. Open 6am till 9 p.m.

Grana's Restaurant
875 Monroe Avenue
Rochester, N.Y. 14620
(716) 244-0124

The Granas of the Fountain Blue and Penfield invite you to dine at Grana's Restaurant, a fun place to eat! Specializing in an Italian-American cuisine, Grana's offers a prime rib special Sunday and Tuesday nights for only \$7.95 (including a salad bar). Lunches are served daily from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Dinners from 4:30 to 10:00 p.m. weekdays, 4:30 to 11:00 p.m. weekends. Your hosts, the Grana family.

Irondequoit Town Lounge
705 Titus Avenue
(716) 342-3465

Serving lunches 11:30-3 p.m. daily except Sunday. Featuring an Early Bird Special every night but Friday. Fish Frys every Friday. Our party room can accommodate up to 60 people for your next gathering. Clip out this ad and receive \$5.00 off two dinners (not valid on dinners under \$8.00), offer good Sunday thru Thursday, during the month of February. Please present ad when ordering.

Mastrella's
4300 Culver Road
(716) 323-1450

Stop by Mastrella's for the best burger in Seabreeze. Enjoy the Friday fish fry, or try Mastrella's seafood, Italian specialties like lasagne, or a bowl of fresh homemade soup. Serving lunch daily, Mastrella's also features live entertainment Friday and Saturday nights. Thursdays savor the N.Y. strip steak dinner special for \$9.95.

Mastrella's also caters small parties. Dining hours: Thurs., Fri., Sat. 5-9 p.m.

Mr. Dominic's at the Lake
4699 Lake Avenue
(716) 865-4630

Noted for their fine Italian dinners that include 11 veal dishes and homemade pasta, Mr. Dominic's is now open for lunch. Early Bird dinner specials Sunday-Friday. Also offering 10% senior discount. Delivery is available for your luncheon group of ten or more. Lunch hours from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Tuesday-Friday. Dinner hours Monday-Friday 4:00-9:30 p.m., Saturday 5:00-10:00 p.m., Sunday 3:00-9:00 p.m.

National Hotel
Rte. 20A & 39
Cuylerville, N.Y. 14481
(716) 382-3130

Built in 1837, the 150 year old National Hotel is a landmark in and of itself. Serving dinners only, Tues.-Sat. 4:30-10 p.m. and Sundays, 12-8 p.m. A special Senior Citizen menu is featured nightly and Sunday. From Rochester, take 390 South to exit 8. The National Hotel is located on Rts. 20A & 39 in Cuylerville just 3 miles south of Geneseo or 10 miles east of Letchworth State Park. Reservations are appreciated.

Oswald's) Hof Brau Haus
406 Lyell Ave.
(716) 458-2084

Authentic German cooking in an old world Gasthaus decor. Specializing in German wines, and featuring more than 50 imported beers. Special arrangements for groups. Serving lunch and dinner. Live Bavarian entertainment on weekends.

Papa Joe's
8506 Grieg Street
Sodus Point, NY
(315) 483-6372

Your hosts Don and Jude Buchwald welcome you to Papa Joe's Restaurant located on the scenic waters of Sodus Bay. Featuring steak, veal, chicken, seafood and pasta dishes. Not one, but two chefs, Chef Pasquale and Chef Nique, prepare all your meals fresh daily on the premises for your dining pleasure. Every Thursday we feature Prime Rib, Chicken French or Chicken Centra for only \$7.95 each. Steak and lobster, at only \$14.99, is served daily for the season. Enjoy complete lunch and dinner menus on our casual outdoor deck or in our elegant indoor dining area.

Lunches and dinners served 7 days a week, 11:30 a.m. till 10:00 p.m. Major credit cards accepted. Reservations appreciated. "Papa Joe's ... A truly unique dining experience."

Sherwood Manor Restaurant
60 W. Main Street
Honeoye Falls, NY
(15 Minutes south of Monroe
and Clover Sts.)
624-3580 Closed Mondays

Your host, Andy Carafos, invites you to dine in relaxed elegance, sampling from a menu featuring the finest quality prime rib served in upstate New York. Fresh seafood, veal, steaks, chops, and poultry, as well as several daily luncheon, dinner and early bird specials round out the extensive menu. Banquet facilities available for parties to 125.

The Villa Carlo
55 Main St., Mt. Morris, NY 14510
1 mile south of Letchworth State Park
(Mt. Morris entrance)
(716) 658-2204

Before or after skiing at Swain, come and experience the casual dining pleasure of the Villa Carlo. Enjoy a cup of Cappuccino after a meal featuring all homemade soups, bread, pasta and desserts. Cooked to order for your dining satisfaction by our owner/chef. Reservations are appreciated. Open 7 days. Monday-Saturday 11:30 a.m.-10:00 p.m. Sundays, noon till 9:00 p.m.

Yellow Rose Cafe
1784 Penfield Rd.
Penfield, New York 14526
(716) 385-3673

Come and dine at this historic landmark; former home of Daniel Penfield, founder of Penfield. We offer good cooking, good service and a quiet, gracious atmosphere. Hours are Mon.-Fri. 11:30 a.m.-1:00 a.m.; Sat. 11:30-2:00 a.m. and Sun. 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Both lunch and dinner are our special talents. See you there!

Dining Around the Diocese

The first issue of each month, the Courier-Journal will be featuring some prime dining spots in and around the Rochester diocese. If you, or someone you know, would like to have your restaurant included in our Dining Guide, call the Courier-Journal at 328-4340. Look for our Dining Guide in the upcoming months, and pay a visit to the restaurant of your choice, and enjoy a pleasant evening of "Dining Around the Diocese."

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