

'Tap' honors art form; sequel mired in gore

By Judith Trojan
NC News

NEW YORK — If you're looking for a film that will send you out of the theater smiling and strutting your stuff, don't miss "Tap" (Tri-Star), starring the electrifying dancer-actor Gregory Hines.

Showcasing the down-but-never-out art of tap dancing, "Tap" tracks the return of ex-con Max Washington (Hines) to his roots in tap. After a harrowing stint in Sing Sing for a botched robbery and prison assault, Max is torn between the tap legacy of his talented father and the big bucks promised by his mobster friends.

Although tantalized by the lure of easy money and confounded by his father's virtuous life in poverty, Max still feels a compulsion to tap. He reconnects tentatively with a community of veteran tappers and attempts to rekindle a past romance with Amy (Suzanne Douglas), a dancer and single mom with a sassy young son, Louis (Savion Glover). Formerly teamed with Amy in a black Fred and Ginger tap act, Max helped raise Amy's son, but left them when he mistakenly thought crime paid better dividends.

All are skeptical of Max's future except Amy's father, Little Mo (Sammy Davis Jr.), who recognizes Max's extraordinary gift and potential to help synthesize old and new into a contemporary style of tap dancing.

Although this good vs. evil scenario is familiar and simplistic, it's so nicely blended with the exhilarating tap numbers, highlighted by exquisite cinematography, punctuated by toe-tapping music and flavored with fine ensemble acting and footwork that it recalls the classic musicals produced during Hollywood's golden age.

Writer-director Nick Castle brings his own father's legacy to this film. Choreographer-vaudeville dancer Nick Castle Sr. was the dance director on many Hollywood films from the 1930s to the 1960s. With this birthright in mind, Nick Jr. was able to create a unique feature film tribute to the art of tap dancing.

"Tap" not only documents the work of such great veteran tap stylists as Bunny Briggs, Sandman Sims, Harold Nicholas, Steve Condos, Arthur Duncan, Pat Rico and Jimmy Slyde, but also showcases a contemporary tap system called Tap-



Tri-Star Pictures/NC News

Gregory Hines as Max Washington tap dances in his cell in a scene from "Tap." The film centers on Washington's difficult choice between a potentially low-paying career as a tap dancer and a lucrative life of crime.

Tronics. Hines' finale incorporating both classic and electronic tap is nothing short of genius. He projects such a sense of passion as a tap dancer that this role will surely win him points as a top new matinee idol.

But the most important aspect of this film is its respect for this unique American art form and its black origins. By presenting the work of veteran hoofers alongside that of Hines and young dynamo tapper Glover within a contemporary urban setting, Castle introduces the uninitiated to tap's legacy in the black community, the intricacy of the art form and the need to preserve its roots.

Due to a fleeting sexual encounter and some locker-room language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

'The Fly II'

Directed by special-effects master Chris Walas, "The Fly II" (Fox) has some remarkable creature features and an involving struggle between the forces of good and evil. But Walas oversteps the bounds of good taste when he zaps the scenario with

globs of unnecessary gore.

A sequel to "The Fly," released in 1986, "The Fly II" picks up with the birth of the original mutant fly-man's baby, Martin Brundle (Eric Stoltz). Born in the lab owned by industrialist Anton Bartok (Lee Richardson), Martin is raised and studied like a lab animal but evolves into a brilliant scientist out to crack his father's unique teleportation device.

When the boy realizes that his life is not really his own, he sets out to free himself from his damaged chromosomes and Bartok's exploitation. This is heady sci-fi material that incorporates such classic elements as a sympathetic, larger-than-life monster (a man-sized fly), a nasty, natty villain who seems to be at his desk 24 hours a day, dramatic music and a feisty girlfriend (Daphne Zuniga) who protects and loves the metamorphosing protagonist despite his insect blood.

Aside from the unnecessary gore, the test use of the teleportation device to transform lab animals into protoplasm is frightening, especially if kids mistakenly see this film and attempt the same trick in their moms' microwave ovens. Children should be kept away from this film at all costs, especially in its future videocassette incarnation.

Due to much gratuitous gore, an equally gratuitous sexual encounter and some rough language, the USCC classification is O — morally offensive. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

Trojan is on the staff of the USCC Office for Film and Broadcasting.

Dispensation issued for St. Patrick's Day

Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey, vicar general of the diocese, has issued the following statement with regard to Lenten dietary restrictions and the celebration of St. Patrick's Day, March 17: "Those wishing to celebrate St. Patrick's Day and seeking a dispensation from the Lenten law of abstinence from meat on Friday are granted that dispensation. To the degree possible, observance of abstinence and the Lenten spirit is encouraged on another week day."

Cathedral organ concert to feature music for weddings

ROCHESTER — Sacred Heart Cathedral, 296 Flower City Park, Rochester, will host a wedding music concert Sunday, Feb. 26, at 2 p.m. The concert will include selections of organ professionals and reciters, as well as psalms, hymns and

acclamations appropriate for weddings. Dr. J. William Greene, organist and choirmaster at the cathedral, will perform and direct. The soloists will be Cheryl Heyhurst, Kristen Kessler and Ruth O'Brien. Heyhurst and Terrance Keach will be the cantors.

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