

# Baseball, yachting provide films' settings

By Judith Trojan  
NC News

NEW YORK — Even if you're not a baseball fan, you're sure to enjoy "Major League" (Paramount), a lighthearted comedy about some misfit ballplayers who rally for one rousing last hurrah.

Although there's nothing new here, writer-director David Ward (screenwriter of "The Sting") has a fun time whipping his team of losers into shape for the big game. With over 30 years of losses, the Cleveland Indians sit at the bottom of the majors, which is fine with the team's new owner, Rachel Phelps (Margaret Whitton), who hopes to close out one more season in last place and move the franchise to Miami. In return, she'll win some cushy perks for herself.

To reach her goal, Rachel hires players least likely to succeed. Burned-out old-timers and unseasoned rookies descend on spring training and leave a trail of losses in their wake. But these guys are survivors, despite Rachel's efforts to make their lives miserable — forcing them to commute to games in a broken-down propeller plane



Corbin Bernsen, Tom Berenger and Charlie Sheen (top to bottom) are players for the Cleveland Indians in "Major League."

and depriving them of such locker-room amenities as hot water. The team begins to win some games thanks to the level-headed manager, Lou Brown (James Gammon). And when the players find out about Rachel's underhanded scheme, team spirit soars and they go for the gold.

Strapped with a feel-good plot as old as the hills, "Major League" is fun and funny due to inspired casting and characters who don't take themselves too seriously.

Standouts include Tom Berenger as Jake Taylor, a onetime promising catcher with bad knees who just wants one more chance to play big-time baseball and another chance with his former love, Lynn (Rene Russo, a Susan Sarandon look-alike). Charlie Sheen is a standout as steel-jawed "Wild Thing" Rickie Vaughn, a rookie punk pitcher with bad eyesight who "graduated" from the California Penal League.

Corbin Bernsen ("L.A. Law") is perfectly cast as vain, pretty-boy Roger Dorn, who is more concerned with his looks and his stock portfolio than with catching wild balls. Especially funny are Wesley Snipes as Willy Mays Hayes — who can run fast, but may never hit a ball — and ballplayer-turned-actor Bob Uecker as the Indians' sportscaster, Harry Doyle.

The most noteworthy aspect of "Major League" is that it doesn't sink in a sea of "Rocky-itis." It does contain a boring love story, but it takes a back seat to the baseball action. And, thankfully, this movie features none of the other soapsuds normally found in feel-good movies. The guys are likeable, their humor is light and their win, though expected, is rousing. "Major League" shows that team spirit can actually be fun.

Due to much locker-room language and two implied sexual trysts, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

## 'Dead Calm'

Australian Phillip Noyce ("Newsfront") shows some real flair as a director of suspense in "Dead Calm" (Warner Bros.), a



Sam Neill and Nicole Kidman stand on the deck of their becalmed yacht in "Dead Calm."

taut psychological thriller that will keep adult audiences on the edge of their seats from the opening credits to a surprising but implausible denouement. Unfortunately, Noyce jacks up the intensity of his well-paced scenario, based on the 1963 novel by Charles Williams, with unnecessary snippets of graphic violence that many will find off-putting and gratuitous.

John and Rae Ingram (Sam Neill and Nicole Kidman) are taking a much-needed restorative Pacific cruise aboard their

yacht, the Saracen. An Australian naval officer, John has his hands full comforting Rae, who is agonizing over their young son's death in a car accident.

The devoted couple's time at sea is healing until they are descended upon by a young American, Hughie Warriner (Billy Zane), who rows frantically away from his decrepit schooner, the Orpheus, which is sinking nearby.

Hughie blames food poisoning for the

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## TV networks seen as responding to grass-roots protests of 'sleaze'

By Richard H. Hirsch  
NC News

NEW YORK — There's a fresh wind blowing through NBC, CBS and ABC following a remarkable series of grass-roots protests against what many parents see as a new wave of objectionable programs on network television.

Ironically, the protests have not been directed primarily at the networks, but rather at the advertisers who buy time on network shows.

Among the significant results of the protests are the following:

- Pepsi withdrew its commercial featuring Madonna because of complaints from such organizations as the Rev. Donald Wildmon's American Family Association. Pepsi said the organization "confused" its ad with the singer's controversial "Like A Prayer" video, which appears on the music-video channel MTV.

- Domino's Pizza canceled its ads on NBC's "Saturday Night Live" because of

"offensive skits," which also were cited by the American Family Association.

- Terry Rakolta, a Michigan housewife, complained to the sponsors of the Fox network situation comedy "Married ... with Children" and drew solicitous responses from concerned advertisers.

- Christian Leaders for Responsible Television, an organization connected to Mr. Wildmon, announced that following its analysis of the April 27-May 24 ratings "sweeps" period, it intended a one-year boycott of one or more of the "leading sponsors of sex, violence, profanity and anti-Christian programming on television."

- Amid all this activity, CBS and NBC announced the appointment of new leaders of their "resurrected" standards and practices.

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## ANALYSIS



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