

# Movies spring from sublime to ridiculous

By Judith Trojan  
NC News

NEW YORK — If you've been turned off by the violence, profanity and sexual promiscuity in films today, don't miss "Field of Dreams" (Universal).

Despite its overt sentimentality and mythic pretensions, this film gives some refreshing space to a protagonist who takes a step into mystical turf to make peace with his deceased dad and reconnect with the youthful idealism he lost somewhere along the line. For one brief moment, all men and women need their own "Field of Dreams."

Part "Twilight Zone," part "It's a Wonderful Life," Phil Alden Robinson's "Field of Dreams" focuses on 36-year-old Ray Kinsella (Kevin Costner). Former 1960s activists and Berkeley grads, Ray and his spirited wife, Annie (Amy Madigan), have chucked the rat race for a bucolic life on an Iowa corn farm. Together with their young daughter, Karin (Gaby Hoffman), they live their heavily mortgaged life in peace until Ray begins to hear voices in his cornfield. When a voice suggests, "If you build it, he will come," Ray feels impelled to plow under part of his valuable crop land to build a state-of-the-art baseball field.

When the spirit of Shoeless Joe Jackson (Ray Liotta) appears ready to play, Ray and his supportive wife know they've taken a risk worth taking. The most notable casualty in the 1919 World Series Chicago "Black" Sox scandal, Jackson and the rest of his team have come to Ray's field to resume and restore Jackson's tarnished career.

Since Jackson was an idol of Ray's dad, it soon becomes apparent that the visions and voices will somehow enable a reconciliation between father and son. To tell you how this happens would only ruin the magic. But suffice it to say that Ray must journey far and wide and make some off-beat mystical connections before the plot can come to its emotional close.

Costner is perfect as Ray, a role that calls for a boyish look and a man who can believably balance 1980s skepticism with 1960s idealism. Costner also brings conviction to some of the most shamelessly sentimental lines this side of Frank Capra movies.

Madigan's Annie seems effusive and too supportive given the fact that her husband has risked their life savings to build a baseball field in the middle of nowhere. But James Earl Jones as burned-out, 1960s



Ray Kinsella (Kevin Costner), his wife (Amy Madigan) and daughter, (Gaby Hoffman) are greeted by a youthful John Kinsella, Ray's father (Dwier Brown, right), in "Field of Dreams."

guru writer Terence Mann and Burt Lancaster as long-deceased physician-baseball rookie Archie "Moonlight" Graham are powerful. Both men ensure Ray's journey toward redemption and provide larger-than-life examples of why we need to finish unfinished business before we depart.

While religious parallels can easily be drawn, especially during the movie's moving climax, "Field of Dreams" is much more satisfying as a paean to baseball and American idealism and a reminder of all the simple treasures — family unity, faith, unpolluted land and air — that still can be retrieved to save us from the filth, cynicism and hopelessness that shrouds the American consciousness today.

As adapted by director-writer Phil Alden Robinson from W.P. Kinsella's novel *Shoeless Joe*, "Field of Dreams" is full of happy, confounding surprises. While cynics may dismiss it as a far-fetched, heavy-handed message fantasy, others will be refreshed by its positive point of view, its shameless love for baseball and its respect for those who follow their American dreams.

Due to some minor rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is

PG — parental guidance suggested.

## 'Swamp Thing'

Millimeter Films' "The Return of Swamp Thing" marks the unheralded return of the crime-busting human plant who keeps the bayou safe for kids and damsels in distress.

Based on characters appearing in DC

Comics, this installment follows the efforts of Swamp Thing (Dick Durock) to save comely Abby Arcane (Heather Locklear) from the evil clutches of her scientist stepfather, Dr. Anton Arcane (Louis Jourdan).

Arcane is out to discover the genetic code that will ensure him eternal youth, so he and his fellow scientists (Sarah Douglas and Ace Mask) will stop at nothing to swap genes with likely candidates. Their gene tampering has produced a bevy of mutant beings, including a half-man-half-elephant and a half-man-half-cockroach.

In fact, Swamp Thing was formerly Dr. Alec Baldwin before he got zapped by Arcane's screwy experiments. Despite his hate for Arcane, Swamp Thing is a kind-hearted avenger who seems to have nine lives. When he and ditzy vegetarian Abby fall in love, Swamp Thing, who resembles a giant asparagus stalk, is lonely no more.

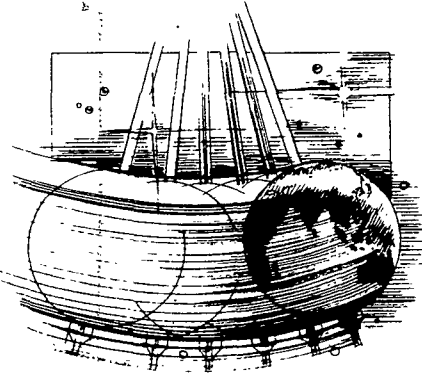
Aside from some clever makeup and impressively fiery special effects and stunt work, this nonsensical adventure directed by Jim Wynorski is a joke bogged down with cheesy sets and adult actors who sleepwalk through their roles. A running subplot involves two curious boys, one black and one white, who seem to be patterned after "Our Gang" characters and are such bad actors that they actually provide comic relief.

Due to some sexual innuendoes, rough language and a great deal of graphic, 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.

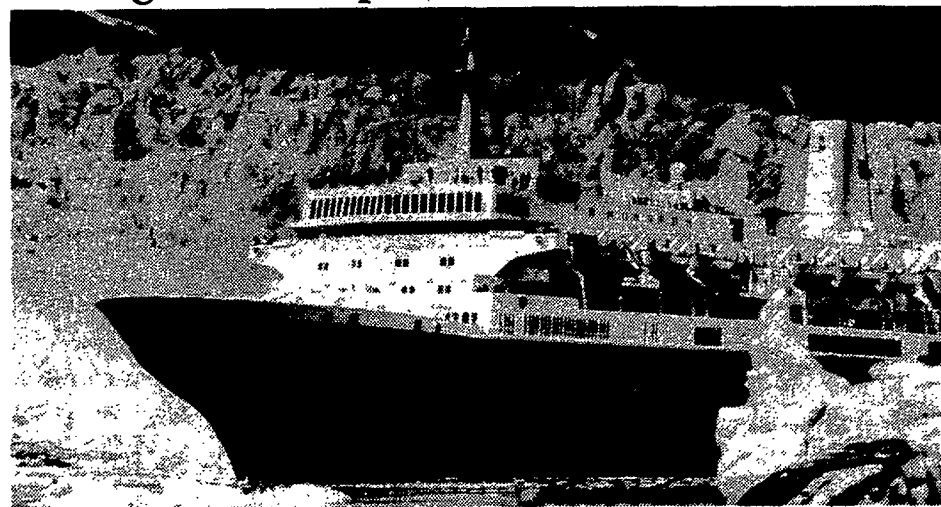
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