

# Trio of films proves largely innocuous, but uninspired

NEW YORK (CNS) — There are no surprises in "Courage Mountain" (Triumph Releasing), an uninspired but wholesome visit with fictional heroine Heidi, a 14-year-old en route to an Italian boarding school circa 1915.

Heidi (Juliette Caton) has fears about leaving her beloved grandfather (Jan Rubes), her 18-year-old pal Peter (Charlie Sheen), and her lovely Alpine home. But with her grandfather's gentle nudging and supportive prayers, Heidi takes the leap to a new life.

The country bumpkin is a fish out of water at the finishing school and is the subject of some ridicule at first, especially from a prim and proper class favorite named Ursula (Joanna Clarke).

The school mistress, Jane Hillary (Leslie Caron), provides calm reassurance until the school grounds are overrun with Italian soldiers who use the estate as an encampment when the threat of an Austrian invasion proves imminent.

Most of the girls are returned to their parents. But despite Hillary's protestations, Heidi and several of the girls are waylaid in a local Dickensian orphanage run by an opportunistic meany, Signor Bonelli (Yorgo Voyagis), and his equally corrupt wife. The girls escape from the rat-infested sweatshop and Heidi commandeers a treacherous excursion over the Alps to her home in Switzerland.

Director Christopher Leitch strains credibility with some pretty farfetched action, including Bonelli's single-minded efforts to track the girls over hill and dale in the dead of winter and Peter's climactic high-flying ski-to-the-rescue.

But this new Heidi adventure does provide some good clean fun for older children who will enjoy hissing at the key-twirling Bonelli and rooting for Heidi.

Young adolescents will also love Sheen in his dashing army uniform and the hints of a blossoming romance between Peter and Heidi.

Though it has some comic-book menace and minimal battlefield carnage, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-I — general patronage. The Motion Picture

Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

## 'Madhouse'

There are no good reasons to spend time watching "Madhouse" (Orion Pictures), a humorless comedy about "houseguests from hell" starring John Larroquette and Kirstie Alley.

The upwardly mobile Los Angeles lovebirds are just settling into their first real home when they are descended upon by his loser cousins from New Jersey, her crass sister and their fire-gutted neighbors.

Writer-director Tom Ropelewski leaves no crass stone unturned here. Lame gags run the gamut from an ornery New Jersey cat that will not die, a toilet that will not flush, spoiled women who whine, men who wail and terrorist-type offspring.

When, in a fit of desperation, Larroquette turns his neighbor's electric buzz saw on the offending parties, audiences may wax nostalgic for the honest family pleasures and actual laughs of "National Lampoon's Vacation."

Due to some suggestive sexual situations, vulgar jokes and encouragement of cat abuse, the U.S.S.C. classification is A-III — adults. The M.P.A.A. rating is PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

## 'Homer and Eddie'

Good intentions don't help "Homer and Eddie" (Skouras), a buddy film with two defective pals who travel from Arizona to Oregon in search of long-lost parents and \$87 in stolen cash.

As a child, Homer Lanza (James Belushi) was beamed by a baseball, leaving him mildly retarded and institutionalized by his wealthy, uncaring parents. Trusting and kind and living on his own as a dishwasher, Homer attempts to hitchhike from Arizona to Oregon where his father lies dying of cancer.

Of course, he's immediately robbed of his \$87 travel stash and left penniless until he's picked up by homicidal maniac Eddie (Whoopi Goldberg). Eddie, formerly Edwina, is an escaped mental patient of indeterminate sex, whose inoperable brain



File photo Heidi (Juliette Caton) and her best friend Peter (Charlie Sheen) enjoy a fun moment before she leaves her Swiss Alps home for an Italy boarding school in "Courage Mountain."

tumor has given her one month to live and a range of nasty, uncontrollable spells that tend to hurt people.

Eddie uses her considerable muscle and her gun to pick up cash along the way. She reunites with her derelict mom (Beah Richards) in an Oakland cemetery, and Homer realizes the painful truth about his parents when he shows up unannounced at his father's wake in Oregon City.

Along the way, Eddie's foul mouth and hair-trigger temper periodically get the best of her and she even clobbers Homer, who cheerfully tries to focus on Eddie's few good points. In one of her more benevolent periods, she buys him an assignment with her 300-pound prostitute cousin, Esther (Ernestine McClendon), and she does make sure he gets to his father's wake. But Eddie is a repulsive character for the most part who will

engender little audience empathy for brain tumor victims.

Belushi has appeal as innocent, endearing Homer, a guy whose damaged brain has made him a much better man than his parents. Despite his hard-luck life and Eddie's arguments against religion and trust, Homer's sense of God and right and wrong is never shaken. He finally convinces Eddie to confess her sins in a local Catholic church before her predictable end.

But Homer alone can't carry this film, which, as directed by Russian emigre Andrei Konchalovsky ("Shy People"), is little more than a parade of brain-damaged souls living on the fringe.

Due to much profanity and some grisly, pointless violence, the U.S.S.C. classification is A-III — adults. The M.P.A.A. rating is R — restricted.

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