

# 'Volcano' erupts with fun; 'Power' is boring

NEW YORK (CNS) — "Once upon a time there was a guy named Joe — he had a very lousy job." So begins John Patrick Shanley's delightful comic-fantasy "Joe Versus the Volcano" (Warner Bros.), a film for all people who've ever dreamt of chucking the rat race for a beach shanty on a South Sea island.

Joe Banks (Tom Hanks) is a hypochondriac — and who can blame the guy. He and the rest of his grim co-workers slog to work daily through a minefield of mud holes that surround American Panascope, a medical supplies firm sunk in the wilds of Long Island City. Dickens couldn't have concocted a grayer, more miserable work space than Joe's airless basement cell.

Public relations librarian Joe has his hands full filling orders for catalogs of such tasteful items as rectal probes and petroleum jelly. But with the fluorescent lights blinking unmercifully overhead, Joe and his fellow workers are little more than sickly lab rats primed for some horrific daily torture by Watari (Dan Hedaya), their nasty boss.

Since Joe is forever ailing in this alien environment, he spends lots of time and money tracking down a medical cure. When his new doctor (Robert Stack) socks him with the news that a "brain cloud" will kill him painlessly in six months, Joe zaps Watari with a cathartic resignation speech that will have audiences silently applauding.

All set to count out his last six months alone, Joe is suddenly visited by an eccentric billionaire named Graynamore (Lloyd Bridges), who offers Joe 20 days on the remote South Pacific island of Waponi Woo if, after those 20 days, he'll heroically jump into the Big Woo and end his days like a man. It seems that once every 100 years, the Big Woo must be appeased with a human sacrifice or else the island will sink into the sunset forever. Since Joe was previously a heroic Staten Island fireman, Graynamore feels Joe is the perfect man for the job.

With no ties to hold him back, Joe snaps up the offer. Aided by Graynamore's bottomless credit and the inspiration of a savvy limo driver (Ossie Davis), Joe trades in his dingy life for designer duds, new



Actor Tom Hanks as Joe Banks and actress Meg Ryan (in one of her three roles) as Patricia meet the Waponi Chief in Warner Brothers' romantic comedy-adventure "Joe Versus The Volcano."

haircut and watertight luggage and sets off for the South Seas.

Writer Shanley ("Moonstruck") does not play it safe with his first directorial effort. Much of his fantasy was shot on a studio back lot and in tanks which gives it a magical, Crayola-crayon quality like Hollywood fantasy films of yore. Old and new (written by Shanley and Georges Delerue) musical flourishes are cleverly incorporated throughout to add comic and romantic touches. The nutty casting of lead and bit parts is also a hoot. Abe Vigoda, for example, plays the Waponi chieftain, and Meg Ryan ("When Harry Met Sally...") co-stars in a great trio of performances as a mousy secretary, a ditzy Beverly Hills brat and a no-nonsense sailor, all of whom have eyes for Joe Banks.

Once again, Hanks turns in an endearing

performance as Banks, a burned-out romantic who grabs the brass ring when a brain cloud threatens to snuff out his dreams forever. Thankfully, Joe never opted for a second medical opinion.

Due to some minor sexual innuendoes, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

### 'The First Power'

The biggest plus of "The First Power" (Orion Pictures) is its amazing stunt work, but this so-called supernatural cop thriller, written and directed by Robert Resnikoff, leaves much to be desired in all other departments.

Lou Diamond Phillips ("La Bamba") has little to work with in his starring role as

Los Angeles homicide detective Russell Logan. Wound tight and ever ready to pounce on his prey, Logan has made a name for himself as the captor of numerous serial murderers. His latest is the brutal pentagram murderer named Patrick Channing (Jeff Kober), who carves Satanic images on his victims.

Channing is swiftly tried, convicted and sentenced to die in the gas chamber, where he is reincarnated into an invincible spirit who possesses the bodies of weak humans and gets them to do his dirty work.

Logan has little understanding of this phenomenon until he ties in with psychic Tess Seaton (Tracy Griffith). Logan apparently hasn't caught such recent horror epics as "Shocker" or the sick flicks featuring Jason and Michael Myers.

Together, Logan and Tess are targeted by Channing's Satanic spirit. With the help of a rogue nun, Sister Marguerite (Elizabeth Arlen), they manage to impale Channing with a dagger-ended crucifix but not until they are almost drowned, burned and beaten to death by this superhuman creature.

Channing's superman antics provides much opportunity for Hollywood stunt men to strut their stuff in this otherwise dopey effort that deteriorates from a promising cop thriller into a predictable, long horror film that steals from the Michael Myers/Jason genre of bionic boogymen and eventually sets up its audience for a sequel.

Due to much menace, grisly violence and bloody gore, the U.S.C.C. classification is O — morally offensive. The M.P.A.A. classification is R — restricted.

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