

Comedy and romance both 'nothing but dull'

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — When a car goes through a stop sign in the bizarre hamlet of Valkenvania, the riders are in for "Nothing but Trouble" (Warner Bros.).

The police chief (John Candy) flags down the driver, Thorne (Chevy Chase), but Thorne speeds up in order to impress Diane (Demi Moore) and two clients in the back seat (Taylor Negron and Bertila Damas).

They are all caught however, and hauled before an ancient, decrepit, judge (Dan Aykroyd). Presiding from his crumbling mansion courthouse, he flippantly sentences them to death on the next day and plummets them through the trapdoor floor to await their fate.

A bribe effects the clients' escape, but Thorne and Diane are not so lucky. The judge insists on marrying Thorne to his huge granddaughter (also played by Candy) and Diane looks apt to be drawn and quartered by night's end if Thorne doesn't save the day.

The arrival of a carload of rap musicians and the appearance of two would-be Sumo wrestlers add to the confusion in the garbage-strewn situation in which the doomed duo are stuck.

Writer and first-time director Aykroyd's screwball comedy tries for outrageous but never gets beyond outlandish.

The cast is genial and generally talented — Candy is especially good in the dual role of the top cop and the man-hungry granddaughter — but the material just doesn't hold up.

It's as if a 10-year-old was given the run of an awesome movie set — a fun house



Warner Bros.' Inc.
The Infant Bodies, L'il Debbull (John Daveikis, left) and Bobo (Dan Akroyd), capture Diane (Demi Moore) as she protests a death sentence set down by Valkenvania's ancient judge in 'Nothing But Trouble.'

filled with sliding walls, trap-door chutes and secret panels — but had no idea what to do with it.

Due to comic-book violence, brief sexual innuendo and minimal rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

'He Said, She Said'

A two-part film from a male and female director, "He Said, She Said" (Paramount) analyzes a couple's romance from the separate viewpoints of the two sexes.

Reporters Dan (Kevin Bacon) and Lorie (Elizabeth Perkins) are professional adversaries with competing columns in the *Baltimore Sun* daily newspaper that are so popular they are given their own TV show.

Although they agree on nothing, they are still live-in lovers of several years standing. Dan's prone to the weepies at 4 a.m. and he can't express his feelings. Lorie's getting fed up with their uncommitted living arrangements.

As the film opens, Lorie loses her cool on camera and hits Dan with her coffee mug. At home he finds she wants him out of her life since he refuses to consider getting married.

This unusual approach to the war of the sexes, complete with different directors to represent each side, is a big bore.

Lorie and Dan are not appealing. They are a completely self-absorbed yuppie couple with apparently no other interests in life outside their brilliant careers and their fascinating selves.

Co-director Ken Kwapis' "He Said" portion presents Dan as a trite male stereotype whose sexual conquests are legendary but whose heart belongs only to Lorie. Marisa Silver's "She Said," in turn, presents Lorie as a character who, when she inquires about marriage after three years' cohabitation, apologizes for being insecure and neurotic.

Identical situations are replayed from their varying perspectives which, to put it mildly, is tiresome. The choppy flashbacks and forwards only compound the film's problems.

Because of acceptance of promiscuity and cohabitation and a flash of nudity, the USCC 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.

Shelters

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— combined with the support provided at the shelter facilities — can help the homeless get back on their feet.

Such was the case with Doug Alexander, who was living on the streets in 1987. He had gotten involved in drugs and alcohol after his release from the State Correctional Facility at Attica, and had subsequently lost his home.

For several years, Alexander moved from shelter to shelter, and spent many nights sleeping outside in such places as the old subway bed running beneath Broad Street in downtown Rochester.

Sometimes he couldn't even find a place to sleep, Alexander recalled.

"I used to walk the streets all night," Alexander said. "I did that a lot."

Finally, Alexander began attending the afternoon drop-in program at Dimitri House. That facility — the only parish

shelter remaining open — had begun to expand its services as the needs of the homeless became more obvious.

At the drop-in program, Alexander learned about Dimitri House's transitional-shelter beds and services, which are similar to what will be offered by the Francis Center.

After living at Dimitri House for a year, Alexander linked up with Rogers House, the parish's program for ex-offenders. He began to work at the restaurant operated by Rogers House, where residents gain job skills.

Through Rogers House, a Rochester-area company offered Alexander a job as a janitor in June of 1989. He has since become a machinist with the company.

And on April 6, 1991, Alexander was baptized and confirmed as a Catholic at Corpus Christi's Easter Vigil service.

"I got all this through Rogers House and Dimitri House," Alexander declared.

He said the shelters offered the one-to-one contact he needed to help get his life

together, and remarked that other homeless men could benefit such support.

"Some of the guys are hurting inside and they have things they want to say, but they don't know how to do it," Alexander said.

He said volunteers are important to shelter clients because the volunteers help the homeless out of concern, not to get paid.

"(The homeless) respect what (the volunteers) do, because they know they care about them and respect them," Alexander said. "It sometimes takes four, five months, but then the ice starts to melt. That's what they did for me."

Privett acknowledged that the service of volunteers does help to develop trusting relationships with the homeless. He said Francis Center will still make use of volunteers — to supplement the efforts of the paid staff — but also to keep alive the relationships and trust that have built up over the years. He said he hoped that many of these volunteers would be people who had worked at the two shelters slated to close.

In addition to ongoing use of volunteers, the Francis Center will continue a number of programs and services the shelters offered, including contacts with local health-care and social-service providers, agency referrals, literacy training and employability assessments.

Francis Center will be overseen by Mary McGuire, who will also be the director of the CFC's newly formed Department for Homeless and Housing Services. In that position, she will also coordinate the shelter shuttle — which transports homeless individuals from shelter to shelter — Women's Place, and the agency's housing program.

As these programs reveal, homelessness has evolved from what was once seen as a temporary condition to one that has become institutionalized, Piersante acknowledged.

"I think the economy has a lot to do with it," she remarked, noting that she and her staff are finding it harder to get homeless people into programs.

"We're hitting our heads up against walls," Piersante said. She noted that when Dimitri House staff members try to place individuals with local mental-health providers for example, increasingly the response is that individuals who are not an obvious threat to others get little priority for services.

The fact remains, then, that such facilities as Dimitri House and Francis Center will have to remain open for the foreseeable future, Piersante said.

And if the demand for emergency shelter beds continues to grow, at least one of the closing shelters — most likely Blessed Sacrament's — will be forced to reopen, Privett acknowledged. Since Francis Center will open in May, he pointed out, McGuire and her staff will have several months to determine whether additional beds will be needed next November.

"We're going to have to assess the needs as we go along," McGuire added. "It's going to be ongoing."

For the time being, McGuire concluded, "Let's do what we planned, and see if we are meeting the needs."

Food

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try is growing even more rapidly. And with the economy faltering and unemployment rising, the future may grow darker rather than lighter.

Ferraro pointed out that incomes are not keeping pace with inflation, thus forcing many people to choose whether to pay the rent and utility bills, or to reduce spending on food. "The easiest part of your family budget to cut is food," he said.

Coupled with the increase in demand is a decrease in government surplus food supplies, Ferraro said. And with the economic slow down, lower production levels have led local businesses to cut back on donations to the food bank.

"The demand is going up and up, and there's no way we can keep up with a demand that's escalating faster than I've ever seen it," Ferraro said.

Jilda Campanelli, who runs the food pan-

try at St. Cecilia's Parish, Elmira, said she has been forced to limit families to one visit to the pantry each month, as opposed to two times a month last year. Nevertheless, her pantry still serves 40-45 families a week, she reported. A number of new people are coming in, she said, because they have been laid off from jobs.

Because of growing demands in the region, Campanelli observed, the 16 pantries in Chemung County are linking together to form the Chemung County Food Pantry Coalition. The coalition is intended to better coordinate services and to avoid abuse of the pantries that might deprive other people of food, she explained.

Thus far, Campanelli said, emergency food providers in Chemung County have managed to keep up with the demand. "We're fortunate down here because the community as a whole is very conscious about taking care of people."

Ferraro said that growing hunger in the United States is due to more than just infla-

tion or a faltering economy.

"Some of the roots of domestic hunger are no different than the causes of hunger in Third World nations," Ferraro observed. "Hunger is a symptom of problems that are ingrained and are not being dealt with."

The current problems, Ferraro noted, are due in part to agricultural policies that encourage growth of crops for industry rather than consumption — as is the case in much of the Third World.

The likelihood that these policies will change in the immediate future is slim, Ferraro acknowledged. And thus emergency food providers are faced with a situation that could grow worse in the months ahead.

If present trends continue, food providers will not be able to keep up with the demand without more government assistance, Ferraro predicted.

"We're maxed out," Ferraro concluded. "We've taken the idea of private-sector initiative as far as it goes."