

Comic drama's plot divorced from believability

Action flick offers viewers no return

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — A comic drama so lightweight in its achievements, *Married to It* (Orion) barely sticks around to deliver its predictable feel-good ending.

Arthur Hiller directs a competent ensemble cast in this New York based-story of three vastly dissimilar married couples who become instant best friends and co-commiserators as each marriage hits turbulence.

Newly arrived from Iowa, fresh-faced Nina and Chuck (Mary Stuart Masterson and Robert Sean Leonard) were childhood sweethearts. She's a private-school psychologist and he's making inroads on Wall Street.

At a parent-teachers' meeting, Nina meets homey Iris (Stockard Channing), married to social worker John (Beau Bridges), and wealthy glamorpus Claire (Cybill Shepherd), who barely tolerates being stepmother to husband Leo's (Ron Silver) resentful daughter (Donna Vivino).

The following week the three wives — reluctant husbands in tow — gather and all bond despite big differences in ages, incomes and attitudes.

Soon the couples are inseparable — even if their marriages aren't. Chuck



Greg Gorman-Orion Pictures

(From left to right) Claire Laurent (Cybill Shepherd), Leo Rothenberg (Ron Silver), John Morden (Beau Bridges), Iris Morden (Stockard Channing), Chuck Bishop (Robert Sean Leonard) and Nina Bishop (Mary Stuart Masterson) star in the comedy, *Married to It*.

stonewalls Nina after he is accused of stock manipulation, Claire and Leo split up, and John and Iris realize they are in a deep rut.

The movie has affable moments and mostly sympathetic characters — foul-mouthed Claire being a bit much — but the contrived friendship of the sextet is too sudden to be believable. Add to that mously lame dialogue and you have a bland movie whose message of seeing a marriage through thick and thin is just a convenient way of manufacturing a happy ending.

Neither swell nor awful, *Married to It* mostly blows it.

Due to a discreet bedroom scene and frequent rough language, the U.S.

Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

Point of No Return

The point of *Point of No Return* (Warner Bros.) could have been to show the gradual reformation of Bridget Fonda's murderous central character. Don't kid yourself — such is not the case.

Director John Badham's sleek remake of 1991's *La Femme Nikita* instead concentrates on increasingly glamorous and graphic violence. While Fonda gives a solid performance, the movie's meat is in the ultraviolent set-pieces, where she continually escapes death while brutally inflicting it upon others.

A convicted cop killer facing death, Maggie (Fonda) is offered a second chance by a government agent (Gabriel Byrne). The hook is she will be trained to assassinate on demand for this

covert organization.

Maggie performs magnificently. But she wants out when her lover (Dermot Mulroney), knowing nothing of her sordid career, wants to marry her.

In shortchanging her metamorphosis from brutal murderer to something faintly human, the drama turns into just another exploitative action picture where the thrill is in the kill and any redemptive quality is obscured by the blitz of bullets.

Because of excessive violence, brief bedroom shots, fleeting nudity and much rough language, the USCC classification is O — morally offensive. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

USCC critic enjoys perfect night

NEW YORK (CNS) — Gerri Pare was perfect on Oscar night, going six for six on picking the winners in the leading categories at the Academy Awards.

A film critic with the U.S. Catholic Conference Office for Film and Broadcasting, Pare had correctly guessed the winners in a column run by Catholic News Service in mid-March. The awards were presented March 29.

"I absolutely did not bribe the accountants at Price Waterhouse," Pare said. "I was stunned."

Pare's Oscar predictions were:

- *Unforgiven* (classified A-IV — adults with reservations, by the USCC; rated R — restricted, by the Motion Picture Association of America) to win best picture.

- Al Pacino as best actor for *Scenes of a Woman* (A-III — adults, R).
- Emma Thompson as best actress for *Howards End* (A-II — adults and adolescents, PG — parental guidance).
- Gene Hackman as best supporting actor for *Unforgiven*;
- Marisa Tomei as best supporting actress for *My Cousin Vinny* (A-III, R).
- Clint Eastwood as best director for *Unforgiven*.

Of these, only *Howards End* made Pare's best-of list for 1992.

Her long-shot pick was Tomei.

"There were so many films that had serious themes," Pare said. "Hers was such a feisty delight, the voters said, 'She was good. I'm going to vote for her.'"

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