

'Line of Fire' misses mark; 'Rising Sun' sinks

By Henry Herx and Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — An aging Secret Service agent finds himself *In the Line of Fire* (Columbia), pitted against a professional assassin who taunts the agent that he will fail to save the president — again.

World-weary and ready to retire, agent Frank Horrigan (Clint Eastwood) receives a series of phone calls from a man calling himself Booth (John Malkovich). Booth says he plans to assassinate the incumbent president, and taunts Frank about how he froze when the shots were fired at JFK in Dallas.

Frank is determined to stop Booth even if it means getting in the line of fire at a presidential dinner he is sure the killer has penetrated.

The cat-and-mouse quality of director Wolfgang Petersen's thriller is more satisfying than the action sequences and poorly staged climax. Exchanges between Eastwood and Malkovich are shrewdly revealing of their scarred characters.

Suspense is an ingredient, yet the drama uses all the genre's old chestnuts — the doomed partner, rooftop chases and crosscuts of a cop rushing to prevent the fatal shot (in a scene that really stretches credibility).

In the Line of Fire could have been a nifty thriller, but instead ends up as a



Sean Connery (left) is John Connor and Wesley Snipes is Web Smith in the Twentieth Century Fox feature film *Rising Sun*, directed by Philip Kaufman.

middling movie, undistinguished from others like it save for the two fine lead performances that keep it moving inexorably along.

Because of intermittent violence and some rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

'Rising Sun'

Henry & June director Philip Kaufman brings Michael Crichton's novel *Rising Sun* (20th Century Fox) to the big screen, combining some of the trashy voyeurism of *Sliver* with the sexual violence of *Basic Instinct*.

The movie follows the serpentine investigation of a prostitute's murder during a rough sexual encounter in L.A.'s Nakamoto building. Underway

in the building at the same time are critical negotiations on a politically sensitive purchase of an American company by the Japanese. Scandal must be quashed at all costs.

Just itching to nail the killer is L.A.P.D. special liaison detective Web Smith (Wesley Snipes) whose new partner, John Connor (Sean Connery), unlike Web, is seasoned in the ways of the Japanese.

While straightforward Web rushes in where angels fear to tread, wily Connor accepts nothing at face value — especially a computer disc showing the crime being committed under the surveillance of Nakamoto's omnipresent video cameras. Connor suspects it has been doctored to make playboy Eddie Sakamura (Cary-Hiroiyuki Tagawa) the scapegoat.

Kaufman turns in a sleek, cynical and supremely shallow movie likely to be praised for its sly wit, performances and glossy visuals — while its dehumanizing content is overlooked.

The graphic replay — ad nauseam — of a young woman's strangulation during sex becomes a voyeuristic device in this nihilistic movie.

Because of the crass exploitation of sexual violence, other intense violence, recurring nudity and much rough language, the USCC classification is O — morally offensive. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

Despite flaws, novel provides lessons about recovery

Explores effects

The Flight of the Loon: One Family's Battle with Recovery, by Robert Bollendorf; ACTA Publications (Chicago, Ill., 1992); 130 pages; \$5.95.

By David and Julianne Palma
Guest contributors

As human beings, each and every one of us is a member of a family. Unfortunately, when we enter a family, none of us is given a user's guide. Not many novels talk about modern family life's day-to-day struggles. And it is the rare story that deals with the theme of addiction and its effect on the family.

Flight of the Loon is a thorough examination of the process a family experiences after confronting a member who is an addict. The book is a sequel to *Sober Spring: One Family's Battle with Addiction* (1988). The reader picks up with the Brandt family approximately

one year after they confronted the father with his alcoholism. It realistically portrays the ongoing struggle of each family member trying to deal with his or her feelings.

The title comes from an analogy the author draws between the struggles faced by a pair of loons to establish a nest on a Wisconsin lake and those faced by a recovering family.

The problem with this symbol is that the characters are all too aware of it. As early as page four, Paul, the young hero, discovers "his relationship to the loon." At the end, he and his sister Sally run side by side to reach the site where two young loons are racing along the water in preparation for their first flight. The symbol does not benefit from such heavy-handed treatment.

With the exception of Paul's, the characterizations are one-dimensional. For all the author's efforts to give family members multiple facets, they enter the action primarily in reaction to

the father. The best portrayal comes in the developing relationship between the protagonist, Paul, and Sally.

The villain, an addicted teenager with absent parents, is easy to despise because he's a stereotype. At least the author spares us the scene of this bully sniveling at the hero's feet. During the climactic scene, he merely departs with "a look of fear" on his face.

Robert Bollendorf is a professor of addiction counseling and a noted speaker on addiction and recovery. He draws on his extensive experience in his portrayal of a dysfunctional family's varying attitudes and behaviors. Unfortunately, in many places the dialogue is very stilted, sounding like a verbatim transcript from a counseling session.

"I'm sorry I've been so caught up in alcohol, Hank. I've been focused on it and oblivious to you, as strange as that may sound. I need you to know that I'm committed to you and to our fa-

mily and that I do love you. It's time for me to focus on people again."

"Thanks for that, Molly," Hank said with genuine relief. "I believe that we can make it if you and I are pulling in the same direction, but I think we need more help. How do we get it?" (p.111)

One does, however, not have to be a brilliant writer to touch people's hearts. Bollendorf's account can encourage and enlighten people experiencing family crises.

We can all learn from this story. As people and as families we need to become more whole in spirit, in mind and in body. To become whole again, Bollendorf asks us to honestly recognize what needs to be healed in each of us and in our families. Only then can we enter the healing process.

Deacon David Palma serves as pastoral associate at St. Gregory/St. Anne Church in Palmyra. Julianne teaches at Our Lady of Mercy High School.

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