

## Only 'mad king' provides moviegoers sound fare

NEW YORK (CNS) — The following are capsule reviews of movies recently reviewed by the U.S. Catholic Conference Office for Film and Broadcasting.

### 'Higher Learning'

(Columbia) Provocative drama focuses on three youths entering a racially tense university, where the African-American student (Omar Epps) comes to terms with prejudice, a woman student (Kristy Swanson) questions her gender preference after a rape and a misfit (Michael Rapaport) turns into a skinhead. Writer-director John Singleton juggles so many characters and issues that the story's thrust toward violence overshadows the such themes of accepting responsibility and perseverance in educational studies. Brief but intense violence including suicide, a few restrained bedroom scenes, fleeting substance abuse, some racial slurs and much rough language. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

### 'The Madness of King George'

(Goldwyn) Farce mixes with historical drama in this period piece set in 1788 England, where the behavior of George III (Nigel Hawthorne) enables his pompous son (Rupert Everett) to be named regent while the queen (Helen Mirren) fumes and a strong-willed doctor (Ian Holm) uses intimidation and restraints to curb the king's outbursts so he may be restored to the throne. Hawthorne's performance as the erratic king gradually reveals his frail humanity in director Nicholas Hytner's sprightly re-creation of royal plotting and court intrigues. Some crude sexual innuendo and intermittent toilet humor. The USCC classification is A-III —



Twentieth Century Fox  
Jesse Bradford plays Angus McCormick in 'Far From Home: The Adventures of Yellow Dog.'

adults. Not rated by the MPAA.

### 'Far from Home: The Adventures of Yellow Dog'

(20th Century Fox) Bland family picture concerns a 14-year-old (Jesse Bradford) and his dog stranded for weeks in the Pacific Northwest on a thickly forested, uninhabited island as his worried parents (Bruce Davison and Mimi Rogers) continue to hope they will be rescued. Writer-director Phillip Borsos



New Line Cinema  
Susan Sarandon and Sam Shepard are the parents of seven sons in 'Safe Passage.'

presents a formula survival story, surprising only in its consistent predictability. The USCC classification is A-I — general patronage. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

### 'Safe Passage'

(New Line) A middle-aged woman (Susan Sarandon) is joined by her estranged husband (Sam Shepard) and six sons when a seventh son, a Marine in the Mideast, is reported missing after a terrorist bombing, and while awaiting fur-

ther news vent long-standing familial frustrations. Director Robert Allan Ackerman's drama deals with personal problems and family relationships, but its tone and pacing blunt its examination of the strength of family ties. Several sexual references, brief recreational drug use, occasional profanity and minimal rough language. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

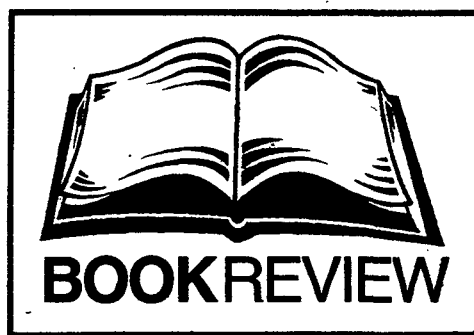
## Personal book focuses on past, not what is good now

"Everybody Has a Guardian Angel," by Mitch Finley; Crossroad (New York, 1993); 188 pp; \$16.95.

Reviewed by Mary Kenny  
Catholic News Service

In an era when Catholic schools are subject to criticism, Mitch Finley writes enthusiastically about the benefits he received from Catholic schools — benefits he seeks in sending his sons there.

"Everybody Has a Guardian Angel" is intensely personal, and therein lies its charm. The author captures well his feelings upon first entering a Catholic school. He describes the women religious, the prayers, the statues and de-



votions, the Baltimore Catechism. Readers who attended Catholic schools in the '40s and '50s will find their own recollections triggered.

Finley's parents divorced when he was 15. He recalls the pain and embarrass-

ment this caused him, particularly in the Catholic community where at that time divorce was practically unknown. At age 65, on Father's Day, his father took his own life. Finley writes movingly of the experience and its effect on him.

In keeping with the personal tone of the book, Finley expresses his opinions freely. Particularly delightful is his description of the ideal parish priest. He does not much care for the current liturgy or the current music in most churches. He is so dismayed at the quality of television programming that his family does not own a TV.

Finley is firm about the need for the church to support families. "Not that a

teen-ager is guaranteed to be a faith-filled Catholic just because he or she attended a Catholic high school; that role goes to the family." And "Religion classes will have an impact if the child comes from a family that lives its faith every day, in the normal course of events." Such optimism regarding the family's power may seem naive to parents who have raised children through adolescence and beyond.

Unfortunately, this book looks backward, not forward, inward, not outward. Finley does not like current liturgies, but offers no suggestions for change. He reflects on the wisdom he found in his study of theology, but scarcely mentions feminist theology, liberation theology or any of the questions disturbing and exciting the church today.

Most disturbing is the author's inward focus. He observes, wisely, that the chief benefit of Catholic schools is not the lessons or doctrine that is taught but the experience of living in a faith community. However, to follow effectively the teachings of Jesus, faith communities, whether the family, the school or the parish, must reach out beyond themselves to the wider world. The author shows no such interest in reaching out.

If you are still having difficulty adjusting to the changes in the church since Vatican II, you might find this book helpful. However, if you are more concerned about the church in the '90s and beyond, you need to read elsewhere.

Kenny is co-author of the CNS column "Family Talk."

Available at your bookstore or order prepaid from The Crossroad Publishing Co., 370 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017. Please add \$2 for shipping and handling.

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