

Latest films range from superficial to substantial

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

'Bye Bye, Love'

(20th Century Fox) Sputtering comic misfire as three divorced dads (Matthew Modine, Randy Quaid and Paul Reiser) spend a weekend with their offspring of various ages, spar with their ex-wives and make fools of themselves with other women. Directed by Sam Weisman, the episodic script jumbles together a series of skits, of which only Quaid's blind date with a loony Janeane Garofalo has some amusing moments, mainly sugarcoating the pain of divorce with artificial sentimentality revolving around their children. Sexual situations and innuendo, a youngster driving while drinking, occasional profanity and an instance of rough language. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

'Circle of Friends'

(Savoy) Irish coming-of-age tale set in 1957 Dublin focuses on a young Catholic couple (Minnie Driver and Chris O'Donnell), who are struggling with abstaining from premarital sex and on the



Director Pat O'Connor (left), actors Minnie Driver (seated left), Saffron Burrows (center), Geraldine O'Rawe (right) and best-selling author Maeve Binchy (seated right) on the set of 'Circle of Friends.'

girl's scheming friend (Saffron Burrows), whose affair with a wealthy Protestant (Colin Firth) leads not to the marriage proposal she expected but to deceit and betrayal. Based on Maeve Binchy's novel and directed by Pat O'Connor, the visually pretty movie focuses on the sudsy upheavals of first love complicated by matters of conscience that in this story are only superficially resolved. Brief bedroom scene and a few profanities. 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.

'Lamb'

(Capitol) Distraught over his father's death and the punitive atmosphere at the Irish school for troubled boys where he teaches, a Christian Brother (Liam Neeson) flees to England with a 10-year-old student (Hugh O'Connor) he wants to help, but is unprepared to deal with the boy's debilitating epileptic seizures. Director Colin Gregg's frail story summons up much sympathy for the vulnerable boy and the plight of the well-intended brother whose initial mistake of kidnapping the child ultimately has tragic consequences. Brief violence borne of despair and some rough language. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. Not rated by the Motion Picture Association of America.

'Dolores Claiborne'

(Columbia) Absorbing psychological

melodrama from the Stephen King novel in which an emotionally brittle New York journalist (Jennifer Jason Leigh) reluctantly returns to a remote Maine village to help her estranged mother (Kathy Bates), who years earlier was suspected of murdering her husband (David Strathairn) and now stands accused of killing her elderly employer (Judy Parfitt). Director Taylor Hackford gets exceptional performances from the principals while building suspense through a series of flashbacks gingerly unwrapping secrets of the damaged mother-daughter relationship. Fleeting, restrained violence, references to sexual abuse and intermittent rough language. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

'Funny Bones'

(Hollywood) Disjointed tale in which a failed Las Vegas comic (Oliver Platt) hopes to get some inspiration from visiting the seaside English town where his fabulously successful comedian father (Jerry Lewis) got his start, but learns instead that his father stole his comic routines from others and left behind a troubled illegitimate son (Lee Evans). Director Peter Chelsom awkwardly tosses intense family conflicts and eccentric humor together in a busy but ultimately pointless narrative whose characters remain unfocused while showing brief flashes of whimsical humor. Brief violence, sexual references and several instances of rough language. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

Sudanese plight outlined in richly detailed volume

"Requiem for the Sudan: War, Drought, and Disaster Relief on the Nile," by J. Millard Burr and Robert O. Collins; Westview Press (Boulder, Colo., and Oxford, England, 1995); 385 pp., \$19.95.

Reviewed by Charles Desnoyers
Catholic News Service

For many of us in the Philadelphia area, the primary association we make with Sudan is with Manute Bol, the gangly seven-and-a-half foot former center of professional basketball's Philadelphia '76ers. Less publicized, though not unknown to sports fans, is his involvement with famine relief in the confusing, continuous and intensely bitter civil war in his homeland.

For most of us, however, this conflict blends seamlessly into the tragic melange of human misery that has afflicted the Sahel and East Africa for the past two decades. For just this reason, "Requiem for the Sudan" ought to be required reading.

Like many African conflicts, the roots of Sudan's current troubles may be found in the confinement of mutually antagonistic linguistic, ethnic, and religious groups within borders based on colonial convenience rather than national kinship. Thus, the country's recent history has been conditioned largely by the drive for domination by the northern Arabic-speaking Muslim elites over the darker English-speaking Christian and animist peoples of the South. In four decades of independence there have been only nine years without civil war — and those nine could hardly be described as tranquil.

However, the conflict intensified following the founding of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, or SPLA, in 1983, and the country's agony was further compounded by the ongoing drought and famine of the mid-1980s. The volatile mix of Islamic fundamentalism, anti-Western rhetoric and the drive to suppress the "communist" SPLA — led by the charismatic, American-ed-



BOOK REVIEW

ucated John de Mabior Garang — led to the ouster of the government of Jaafar Numayri in 1989, and the installation of a military junta ideologically dominated by the fundamentalist National Islamic Front.

It is against this background that the story of mass starvation, of the deaths of more than 1.6 million people and of the reduction of millions more to refugee status takes place. The international effort to ease their plight — "the biggest emergency relief operation of its kind in the world," according to the United Nations — was Operation Lifeline Sudan headed by co-author J. Millard Burr.

It is this effort's saga that is the centerpiece of the book, and it contains the full range of nobility, mendacity, bureaucratic dissimulation, genocidal horror and ultimate frustration that has marked our tragic century. At once scholarly and accessible, "Requiem for the Sudan" navigates effectively through a bewildering array of groups, organizations, political parties and individuals, all of whose acronyms are listed in the extensive tables and sources — many of which have not been accessible to outsiders before.

In lean, jargon-free prose, developing its tragic force by the steady accumulation of detail rather than by polemic, the book becomes a powerful brief against those who would use food as a weapon in the name of ideology or religion.

Charles Desnoyers teaches Third World history and is director of Asian studies at La Salle University in Philadelphia.

Available at your bookstore or order prepaid from Westview Press Inc., 5500 Central Avenue, Boulder, Colo. 80301. Please add \$2 for shipping and handling.

Please patronize
our advertisers.

Budget cuts for the poor cause state bishops grave concern

On our lenten journey,
our Christian duty to care for the least among us should
touch us deeply. Can any of us imagine being a silent
witness to the suffering and death of Christ?

Can we then stay silent as:

- Proposed cutbacks in funding for adult day care, personal care and home health care may force elderly persons, many of whom are visited by our Eucharistic Ministers, into institutions?
- The rural poor, young and old alike, many of whom are now served by our Catholic hospitals, may lose access to critical health services like dental care, clinic and outreach programs
- Women and children, many of whom we serve through our food bank, emergency assistance and Catholic Charities programs, may face even more difficult economic choices because of proposed cutbacks in State funding of AFDC.



The Diocesan Public Policy Committee encourages
our Catholic Community to be a voice for and with
the vulnerable during this Holy Season.

Contact Governor George Pataki, Executive Chamber, Capital Building, Albany, NY 12224, and your local State Senator and State Assembly representative, urging:

Restoration of

- Funding for adult day care, home health care and personal care
- Medicaid funding for hospitals and nursing homes
- Proposed State cuts in the AFDC program