

LEISURE

Coen black comedy bests competition

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

'Fargo'

A debt-ridden Minnesota car dealer (William H. Macy) hires two thugs to kidnap his wife and split the ransom her wealthy father would pay, but all goes horribly awry, resulting in several murders doggedly investigated by a small-town chief of police (Frances McDormand). Finding black comedy in this loosely fact-based tragedy, filmmakers Joel and Ethan Coen chillingly depict earnest small-towners caught up in violence, although justice eventually prevails in the unlikely form of a folksy, very pregnant police officer. Recurring gory violence and much rough language. The USCC classification is A-IV — adults, with reservations. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

'If Lucy Fell'

Vapid romantic comedy about two socially inept roommates (Sarah Jessica Parker and Eric Schaeffer) who have made a pact to kill themselves if they haven't found true love by age 30. Also written and directed by Schaeffer, the premise is embarrassingly dumb but the charmless characters are dumber still, with some crude humor making matters even worse. Sexual innuendo, vulgarity, profanity and rough language. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

'Carried Away'

Pretentious tale of a middle-aged country schoolteacher (Dennis Hopper) who throws himself into an affair with a 17-year-old student (Amy Locane) to the consternation of his friends and the widow (Amy Irving) who wants to marry him. Director Bruno Barreto captures the gritty reality of the rural Texas setting and characters but turns the story into romanticized claptrap portraying the teacher's affair with a dangerously mixed-up teenager as a minor indiscretion which supposedly reawakens his passion for the widow. Graphic sex scenes, frontal nudity and occasional profanity and rough language. The USCC classification is O — morally offensive. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.



Julia Roberts stars as the meek and mousy Irish maid in "Mary Reilly," a remake of the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde story.

'Mary Reilly'

Dour treatment of the Jekyll-Hyde tale in which a timorous chambermaid (Julia Roberts) who was abused as a child finds safety working for kindly Dr. Jekyll (John Malkovich in the dual role) until his murderous assistant Hyde turns up, provoking in her both dread and an unwanted attraction. Director Stephen Frears delivers a drawn-out and relentlessly gloomy look at the duality of good and evil and Victorian sexual repression. Gruesome violence and recurring sexual innuendo. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

'Happy Gilmore'

Desperately unfunny comedy about an inept hockey player (Adam Sandler) who earns big bucks by turning his slap shot into power drives on the pro golf tour. Directed by Dennis Dugan, the feeble proceedings are as unamusing as the violent antics of the ill-tempered boor of the title. Slapstick violence, sexual innuendo and coarse 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.

'Diabolique'

Drawn-out remake of the 1955 French film in which the wife (Isabelle Adjani) and mistress (Sharon Stone) of a Catholic boarding school headmaster (Chazz Palminteri) conspire to murder him, only to have the body disappear and a nosy private detective (Kathy Bates) inch closer to the truth. Director Jeremiah Chechik's heavy-handed treatment of the

nasty thriller robs it of suspense and overplays the irony of a religious setting in which evil thrives. Brief adulterous sex scene, implied lesbian relationship, fleeting full nudity, murderous violence, recurring rough language and profanity. The USCC classification is O — morally offensive. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

'Ed'

Flat baseball-themed comedy about the friendship between a minor league rookie (Matt LeBlanc) who chokes at the bat and a chimp who is promoted from team mascot to third base player and inspires the rookie to loosen up. Director Bill Couturie barely patches together predictable monkey antics to form a tired underdog-triumphant plot. Fleeting violence, frequent scatological humor and an instance of profanity. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

'Executive Decision'

Unbeknownst to the terrorist (David Suchet) holding 400 passengers hostage on a jumbo jet headed to Washington a hostage rescue team (led by Kurt Russell) is in the freight deck desperately trying to defuse a bomb attached to enough nerve gas to decimate the East Coast upon landing. Director Stuart Baird's action thriller offers several unexpected plot twists, but is overlong and overly complicated, weakening it in the suspense department. Some violence, recurring profanity and an instance of rough language. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

Author enjoys Catholic faith

The Joy of Being Catholic, by Mitch Finley, Crossroad (New York, 1996), 144 pp., \$16.95

Reviewed by Msgr. Charles Dollen
Catholic News Service

Too often, books about the Catholic faith are written by men who live in an ivory tower. They give an objective overview of the faith, but miss its application to "real life."

Not so Mitch Finley. A happily married layman who enjoys his faith, Finley in *The Joy of Being Catholic* shares the joys of daily Catholic living. What is



BOOK
REVIEW

Catholic joy? It's the difference between living a life that is a sentence ending with a period, or living it as a song that goes on and on.

"Catholics believe, quietly and in all humility, that Catholicism carries the deepest potential for Christian joy," he writes. In a world that craves fun and thrills, Catholicism offers something much deeper and lasting — joy.

In 10 chapters, Finley helps us recognize where that joy can be found, from full sacramental living, through the Scriptures, with the saints and even in the joy of sex.

In the sacraments the Catholic goes out to meet Christ as an old friend with whom we have so much in common. We externalize and demonstrate that friendship and, in some like the Eucharist, we do it over and over again.

This book offers several pages on each of the sacraments that will speak to the heart of the reader. In backing up his conclusions, Finley quotes carefully from modern popes and theologians, and frequently touches base with the ancient saintly writers.

The book could have been strengthened by even more quotes from the church fathers, but this is a minor thing for a book that is so satisfying and, yes, joyful.

In the introduction to his work, Finley aptly quotes Evelyn Waugh:

"Where e'er a Catholic sun does shine

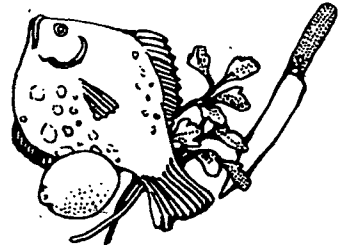
"There's music and laughter and good red wine.

"At least I've always found it so.

"Benedicamus Domino!"

Msgr. Dollen is a pastor in Southern California and book review editor for *The Priest* magazine.

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