

'Uncommon Valor' fast-paced, gory

By Toger Swanson

Uncommon Valor is a typical gore-filled, action-packed motion picture. It has a predictable plot, played out by stock characters who are motivated by a sense of duty and loyalty, a la John Wayne. These men are willing to leave their safe civilian lives for the dangerous yet addictive world of combat, in order to rescue their comrades still being held in Southeast Asia.

Gene Hackman heads the cast as the retired colonel obsessed with finding his son, lost for 10 years and presumed dead. Robert Stack is his mili-

Not so Uncommon

Uncommon Valor, directed by Ted Kotcheff; screenplay by Joe Gayton; produced by John Millus and Buzz Teitshans for Paramount. At the East Park 3, 60th and O streets. Rated R.

Rhodes Gene Hackman
MacGregor Robert Stack
Mr. Scott Patrick Swayze
Blaster Reb Brown

Film Review

onaire friend who bankrolls the project in the hope that his son also may be alive in a prisoner of war camp.

The rest of the cast consists of an infantry squad that responds to Hackman's plea for brotherhood and loyalty. They agree to go, not because of their country and its "cause" — they've had enough rejection at home to believe in that—but rather a sense of debt to the friends they left behind.

The most interesting character of the film is not a battle-hardened veteran, but a young Marine, played by Patrick Swayze. Swayze is hired to lend technical expertise to the mission, but his job is more than just instructing the ill-mannered crew. He also must gain their respect.

Only through the horrors of combat does the Marine gain this admiration. However, he also gains something more vital: confidence in himself by withstanding the terror of war and still believing in his mission. This is the most involved and intriguing transformation of the film.

The remaining characters are stiff and static. Their personalities are very predictable: the grieving fathers, the happy-go-lucky brawlers, the loners, the dedicated friends and the ambitious young professionals. The movie goes too quickly to give the characters any depth beyond these stereotypes.

The group displays the courage and camaraderie that life-threatening situations bring about, at first excluding the Marine and finally accepting him as one of them. The film pulls no punches about war: People die. There is no happy ending for everyone, no tearful reunion for all.

Lovers of action will enjoy this film purely for its pyrotechnic excesses. It's amazing that so few people could cause so much destruction.

One distasteful moment was when the Marine matter-of-factly reads Hackman a list of lost equipment during the funeral of a fellow soldier. It seemed the real loss was being overlooked and that machine guns and grenade launchers were all that really mattered. The fact that four people died so four could be rescued is an accurate assessment of the true costs of war.

The climatic rescue is exciting and fast-paced — fans of blazing machine guns and roaring land mines will be satisfied. For the rest of us, the movie is a standard story of men and not politics, of friendship rather than orders. People die no matter what the reason for conflict. *Uncommon Valor* does a fine job of illustrating this fact, but not everyone will want to be reminded.

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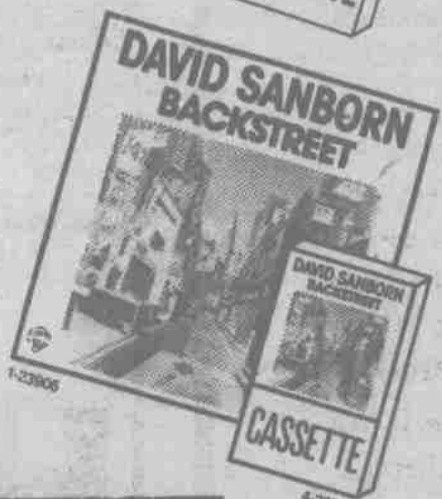
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