

Arts & Entertainment

'Firestarter' script bland

By Mark Holt

Presenting the latest addition to the Stephen King horror film family, ladies and gentlemen, I give you "Firestarter." Unfortunately, "Firestarter" turns out to be no ball of fire and is worthy of no such introductions.

The story revolves around Charlie McGee (Drew Barrymore) and her career as an aspiring young pyrokinetic. Her unique gift is the result of the union between Andy and Vicki McGee (David Keith and Heather Locklear), who were both participants in a bizarre and not-so-ethical drug experiment during their college days. The drug has some unexpected qualities, though, and a few neat side effects show up; Vicki becomes telepathic and Andy a mind controller.

So everything is just swell in the McGee household; Charlie discovers her ability and after a few booboos learns to control it instead of setting fire to everything and having a potentially fun childhood. But the Shop, the agency responsible for the experiments, soon catches wind of Charlie's talents and decides she's a hot prospect (ick!) for research and dissection. The chase is on.

Many miles and a few charred bodies later, Andy and Charlie, minus a kayo'd Vicki, find themselves in the Shop's evil clutches. After a hundred thwarted attempts to buy Charlie's services with toys, the leader of the Shop, Martin Sheen, employs John Rainbird, played by George C. Scott, to pose as an

orderly and win her confidence. He does, and eventually persuades her to show her wares to the research department. Boy, can that girl torch stuff.

Meanwhile, Andy, who's kept sedated in another wing, finagles a way out and sets up a rendezvous with his daughter. They meet at the appointed hour, and the pyrokinetic fun begins. I don't want to give away the conclusion, but the fire technicians have a field day.

This reviewer is a devoted King fan, and although I wasn't expecting great things, I was mildly excited about this newest installment. But "Firestarter," like most other King movies, doesn't make the transition to the screen very well. The storyline is there, but the chemistry is lacking. The good characterizations that fill the book make few appearances in the film, and the viewer ends up not caring who lives, who dies, who makes it or who combusts.

If Charlie would have ignited the writer of the mashed potatoes-bland screenplay it would have made a better ending.

There was one good performance, though. George C. Scott was perfect as John Rainbird, the one-eyed Indian vet who does the company dirty work and kills just for laughs. Martin Sheen was competent but should probably save himself for less nondescript roles. Darling little Drew Barrymore, who was sorta cute in "E.T." is only little this time, and comes off as flat as does David Keith, maybe moreso because she's forced to recite some very stupid lines. Oh, well.

See "Firestarter" if you have to, King fans, but drink lots of coffee first.

All power to the corporate people; this ain't rock and roll, this is TV

Black Flag is booming "TV Party Tonite" at the usual pain level as the set warms up. Billy idly scans USA Today while Pat frantically tries to reach his bookie.

Billy Shaffer

"Get this — Lou Reed is going to sing the national anthem at the Democratic Convention."

"Yeah, I think he was a big Reuben Askew man. Oops, we just missed a sex joke on 'Three's Company.'"

"Not to worry, there'll be another one in before the next commercial. What a

night of viewing. Magnum, the NBA and Bill Murray on Letterman. Can your heart stand it?"

"My welfare check came in today so we can party like it's 1999. Pass the Romilar."

"Watch it with that stuff. That's what got Belushi."

"Alright Magnum's having a Nam flashback, always a sign of a good episode."

"Magnum is cooler than the Clash."

"Granted, but he's not up in Paul Shaffer's league."

After a moment of sober reflection on the merits of cultural heroes, Billy moans in disbelief as a commercial interrupts.

"Good God. Isn't that Devo shilling for Honda scooters? On prime-time network TV, no less?"

"Hey that's just the Devo corporate anthem put into practice. Can you believe they were considered avant-garde just a few years ago?"

"That's history. There is no cultural 'underground' anymore unless you count the crazed youth who hang out at the Brickyard."

"Culture is more easily consumed than a six-pack of Atomic Dogs. Look at Breakdancing. Only a year ago it was limited to the South Bronx. Now they're breakin' on soaps to Grandmaster Flash."

"Big deal. The real excitement is tomorrow on MTV when they debut the Devo video for Reagan."

"Didn't Warhol direct it? Should be a big hit. They're doing 'Freedom of Choice.'"

"Speaking of freedom of choice, who do you hate more, the Lakers or the Celtics? Give me the Sixers or give me death."

"What?? Is that Adam Ant and Grace Jones..."

On Radio

• On KZUM (sounds like Kay-Zoom) 99.3 FM, tonight at 10 p.m., the Bel-Airs bop the blues in an *Alive in Lincoln* broadcast. The show was taped live at the Zoo Bar.

On Television

• Good old Bill Shakespeare's earliest romance, "Pericles," airs Monday at 9 p.m. on "The Shakespeare Plays" program on NETV. This production of "Pericles" is directed by David Jones of the Royal Shakespeare Company. It is a tale of the virtuous Prince of Tyre's (Pericles) quest for a wife, a tale fraught with complications entwined in love, jealousy, incest, famine, resurrection and joy.

On Stage

• Two struggling writers must deal with obnoxious roommates in two one-act plays at the Lincoln Community Playhouse Gallery Theatre, 8 p.m. tonight and Saturday and 2:30 p.m. Sunday.

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