

Arts & Entertainment

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Andy Manhart/Daily Nebraskan

A gift for anyone at any price in Lincoln

By Micki Haller
Staff Reporter

Santa's bag of goodies is mixed this year, Lincoln merchants say. Gifts range from toy soldiers to junior science kits to gold ingots.

Suitcase Science is a top seller at London Bridge Toy Shoppe in Sutter Place Mall, said owner Jeanette Rasmussen.

"It's a best-selling gift for nephews," she said.

Rasmussen said she has about 15 different kits that sell for \$6.95. They aren't chemistry sets, she said, but they create scientific toys, such as a kaleidoscope, robot, microscope or land rover.

People who don't know what to get for their nephews seem to think this is the thing, she said.

Rasmussen said she has sold almost 60 of the kits.

Another popular toy is a carton construc-

tion kit, she said.

The \$13.49 kit, featured in the November issue of Parents magazine, shows kids how to make toys out of cardboard boxes.

It comes with plastic connectors for a box and the accessories to turn a box into a car or a cooking stove.

The cardboard box is not included.

Rasmussen said plastic tea sets and toy soldiers are also selling well.

At the Toy Room at East Park Plaza, salesclerk Lori Kathe said play guns are selling well.

She said the guns start at \$3, but go up to \$25 for an Uzi squirt gun. She said the price depends on the ammunition and what the gun is made of.

Kathe said radio-controlled cars, priced from \$59.99 to \$129.99, are also big sellers.

Ant farms are also selling well, she said. She's sold 12 since mid-

November. The farms come with a year's supply of ant food, a liquid feeder, California sand and an ant watcher's hand-

book. Kathe said the ants are not included, but can be ordered from the company by mail.

The gift of the season, however, is a word game called Pictionary, she said.

"We've really sold a lot," Kathe said.

About 25 have been sold since mid-November, she said.

At Thingsville, the most popular gifts are lamps and potpourri pots, salesclerk Peggy Westphall said.

Touch lamps, which turn on by a touch at the base, have sold by the dozens, she said. The lamps cost \$29.95 and up, she said.

Fiber-optic lamps sell just as well, she said. The fiber-optic lamps begin at \$18.95.

Westphall said most of the customers are adults shopping for other adults.

For the more affluent, Abraham's Corner, 2708 Y St., is selling gold and silver ingots.

Owner Bill Cloran said the one-ounce ingots are put in plastic holders. Some are limited editions, while others are just bul-

lion, he said.

Cloran said he sells several hundred ounces of silver in a week.

"I never know what's going to sell," he said.

The silver ingots range from \$8 to \$36. "Of course, the more wealthy are buying gold," he said.

Cloran said business isn't as good as last year. He said last year the government allowed people to start buying gold and silver for the first time. This year, the novelty has started to wear off, he said.

"[Business] has been good," Cloran said. "I can't complain."

Cloran said most customers are between 25 and 60 years old, but he's also had a 17-year-old paper carrier buy ingots.

The stock market crash has also helped business, he said, because the ingots have more lasting value than other gifts, and their value can increase.

"It's hard metal, real money," he said. "They seem to be a good gift."

Hughes' latest comedy fails to get laughs

Comedians funny but aren't enough to carry the movie

By Kevin Cowan
Senior Reporter

John Hughes likes himself. He likes the way he writes, he adores his comic wit and he is obviously impressed with his taste in music.

If this condition of self-efficacy wasn't apparent in his prior films ("Breakfast Club," "Pretty in Pink," etc.) then it comes raging forward in "Planes, Trains and Automobiles." He can't break away from psychoanalytic comedy.

Here's your average Park Avenue guy, played by Steve Martin, trying to catch a flight from New York to Chicago with visions of Thanksgiving

pervading over the advertising at hand.

Now to catch the cliché cab during a Big Apple rush hour, when he meets up with Kevin Bacon, from "Footloose."

They race to a cab two blocks away. Martin runs in his clumsy normal form and Bacon looks good as usual.

Movie Review

Martin manages to stay ahead, but almost to the cab, he trips and falls over the steamer trunk of Del Griffith (John Candy), and loses the race.

The collision with the trunk is the first point in a fateful circle — a path of irony leading to adventurous lunacy. It's the kind of insanity that results from not being able to get home and being trapped with a person from your closet of anxieties.

Writer, director and music producer Hughes wants to make his own version of "After Hours." The movie is a black comedy of a yuppie from East Side Manhattan who gets trapped in Southampton and can't get home to save his soul no matter how hard he tries.

The problem is that Hughes is too afraid to get seriously fanatic. He uses fate to cross Martin and Candy, throws them back in each other's faces and creates a scenario in which Martin cannot escape the shower-ring salesman.

To make matters worse, he's trapped in Wichita with pig farmers and taxi drivers educated at the school of rural etiquette.

There's loads of options that could have a normal immobile American audience cringing in fear for its safety and wanting to leave the theater to go home, kiss the family and make sure the cars are still in the garage and the money is still in the bank account.

But that's not the case. Hughes relies on the slapstick antics of Martin and Candy to make the film surreal and hysterical. The two veteran comedians are funny, but the laughs are short-lived.

It's not the scene, the shot or the dialogue that are funny, but the audience's predisposed knowledge of how funny "ramblin' guy" Martin and fat man Candy are.

But what if Hughes is not trying to make a funny movie?

There is an argument, a serious undertone throughout, that quells the laughter, and there is that superficial dramatic ending.

Hughes is notorious for mixing comedy with adolescent self-exploration and analysis. And just when the insanity might climax, Hughes stops and lets in barrels full of pop psychology.

Hughes continues the insanity. He runs out of ideas at the end and simply lets them get back home, just in time

for Thanksgiving. Nothing is lost except time and money. Martin accepts Candy for his faults, and they return to Chicago unopposed.

If Hughes had managed the gump-tion to expose the duo to more than rural mentality, "Planes, Trains and Automobiles" would succeed. But for anyone accustomed to Midwestern oddity, it's more of a slap to the mid-section than anything else.

If the audience consists of people whose mother used to walk them to school every day or people who've never left the city except for a two-day vacation to Worlds of Fun, it may be hard put to find the movie the inertia nightmare that it tries to be.

Or, if the humor put forth in the past by Martin and Candy is liked, a matinee will be worthwhile. But if unadulterated and inescapable insanity is liked, "Planes, Trains and Automobiles" will be less exhilarating than a weekend road trip to a small town.