

'Midnight Run' absorbing, fun



By Charles Lieurance
Senior Editor

Martin Brest's "Midnight Run" takes over where his "Beverly Hills Cop" left off in pumping tired cop films so full of adrenaline that even the crucial genre cliches seem inventive.

"Midnight Run" is an exhilarating, intelligent and very funny buddy/action film, that has all the makings of a big overblown, sweaty summer dog that dies in its tracks from hyperbole. But Brest loads the film with saving nuances and its two lead stars, Robert DeNiro and Charles Grodin, can't lose.

The plot of "Midnight Run" involves bounty hunter Jack Walsh (DeNiro) chasing down a whiny mob accountant (Grodin) who embezzled \$15 million from the mafia coffers and gave it to charity. The capture is simple, but the delivery of Grodin to the Los Angeles bondsman who employed DeNiro is treacherous. Grodin is being pursued by the mob, the FBI and yet another bounty hunter, played with primitive aplomb by "Beverly Hills Cop" 's John Ash-

Like "Planes, Trains and Automobiles," "Midnight Run" is a male bonding film and its concerns are predominantly male. But where the former film began to drip and moan from its sentimentality by the final frames, "Midnight Run" stays tough and unflinching throughout. It has grit to spare.

When sentiment does wheel around in the film, DeNiro and Grodin handle it with minimal virtuosity. One scene, in which DeNiro faces his young daughter after a five-year absence is a completely genuine moment of pain and loss. The developing camaraderie between Grodin and DeNiro is paced believably, so that when they come to terms with the fact they like one another it doesn't feel contrived.

The balance of comedy and suspense in "Midnight Run" keeps things

at Brest's usual breathless pace, giving the viewer very little time to question often gigantic leaps in the film's internal logic. Brest is an expert at making the viewer feel inside the action instead of like a voyeur, so often the steady, tense pacing obscures less believable elements of "Midnight Run." Many close calls are just too close and many chases are just too colossal. Still, while watching the movie one gets so caught up in the intricacies and nuances of each moment that it becomes difficult to sort things out in a logical manner.

It helps that DeNiro is such a formidable talent and that Grodin is probably one of the most sturdy and dependable second bananas a buddy picture ever had. Watching DeNiro relax into a role where you know he's not about to smack innocent women and children with a baseball bat is

sheer pleasure. The storm that always brews just under the surface of a DeNiro character is channeled heroically for a change. And Grodin's natural whininess is comical here instead of annoying (a charge made against him often).

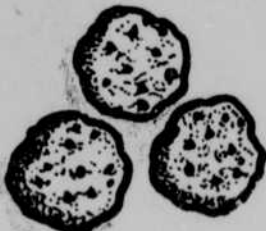
The rest of the characters who populate the violent cross country gauntlet being run by DeNiro and Grodin provide ample room to breathe for the two main characters. Dennis Farina, the cop turned actor who starred in one of the best and most unfairly ignored television series' in recent memory, "Crime Story," plays the mob lord out to kill Grodin. His calm, remorseless evil is, in some scenes, riveting.

As mafioso portrayals go, this ranks perhaps a few notches under DeNiro or Brando and several million

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'Stocking' plot fits admirably



Courtesy of Simon and Schuster
By William Rudolph
Staff Reviewer

Elizabeth Gage "A Glimpse of Stocking" Simon and Schuster

I thought Elizabeth Gage's "A Glimpse of Stocking" would be pure trash. After all, it had all the requirements: it was about the dark secrets shared by Annie Havilland, Hollywood's newest young screen goddess, and Christine, New York's top-rated dominatrix. The back cover copy teased that "There's nothing so sexy as A Glimpse of Stocking." And it was edited by Michael Korda, Jackie Collins' mentor and author of the very sleek novel "Queenie" that spawned a glittering miniseries.

With all this in mind, I began

reading, expecting nothing more than an enjoyable wallow.

I was wrong. "A Glimpse of Stocking," which takes its name from a refrain of Cole Porter's "Anything Goes" ("Used to be a glimpse of stocking/was considered something shocking"), is anything but predictable. Instead, it's a tightly plotted, almost unbearably suspenseful novel that, yes, has quite a lot of kinky sex, not to mention three very compelling women at its center in addition to a host of other complex supporting characters.

"Stocking" tells the story of Annie, the impossibly beautiful young innocent who comes to Hollywood to make her fortune, only to cross paths with the evil presence of International Pictures C.E.O. Harmon Kurth. And it also concerns Christine, the highly intelligent and coolly relentless call girl searching for her destiny in the dark secrets of the past . . . a past overshadowed by the malevolent presence of her mother Alethea, the completely amoral woman who taught her the tricks of the trade and seems intent to destroy any happiness she encounters.

But little do any of them realize that Alethea's web also includes Annie . . . and that the buried past can explode into the present with

devastating consequences on all their lives.

Gage is an obviously intelligent writer up on her Proust and confident about her novel's subject matter of the Hollywood movie scene and the netherworld lurking beneath it. Under her skilled direction, "A Glimpse of Stocking" races along at a mesmerizing pace, even while a chilling story within the story unfolds with disturbing fascination.

Ever-present throughout "Stocking" is the grim reminder that the past is always there and no matter how hard one tries to escape, it will eventually become the future.

What sets this novel apart from the rest of the competition is the amount of care Gage has put into her characters and story. The women are presented to us head-on, with both good and bad qualities revealed. More importantly, every detail of the story has its place and fits together at the end. Clever and authoritative, and extremely hard to put down, "Stocking" builds to an almost unbearably suspenseful climax as the destinies of Annie, Christine and Alethea converge with devastating repercussions. It truly is "something shocking." And worth reading.



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