

Film lacks solid script, strong direction

By Mark Georgeff
Staff Reporter

In Ketan Mehta's "Spices," theme is savored. In fact, it's more than glorified by over-competent acting, artful cinematography and any sort of adept direction. The result is a largely hit-and-miss script.

movie REVIEW

Set during the 1940's British occupation of India, "Spices" follows the sexual discrimination and violence leveled against the women of one particular town.

The women are allowed neither schooling nor any expression of anger toward their husbands, who are taking mistresses. The women are locked into sexual, as well as social, classes.

Societal and personal greed, not to mention the fear of the local tax collector Subedar (Naseeruddin Shah), keep the weak-kneed, overtly chauvinistic townsmen from their consciences.

Such chauvinistic acts are brought about by town beauty Sonbai's (Smita Patil) public denouncement of Subedar, who threatens that either Sonbai visit his tent or he will destroy the town.

Only the local teacher, a devout Gandhi follower, and the town's chile

factory guard, Abu Mian (Om Puri), stake their honor and lives to save Sonbai.

Town chieftain Mukhi (Suresh Oberoi) won't help Sonbai, whose whining husband left her for the big city. Even the townswomen would prefer that Sonbai endure a one-night stand rather than put their village at risk.

At this point, viewers might expect Clint Eastwood's "High Plains Drifter" character to ride in at the last minute squinting, salivating and shooting his way to victory, because the entire movie heads along that route. Even the soundtrack reminds one of spaghetti westerns.

In all honesty, "Spices" isn't a whole movie. Its themes of freedom from physical abuse and sexual discrimination amidst a caste system obviously are evident and desperately portrayed in the movie.

The actors are stiff, in fact they are cardboard cut-outs of every male chauvinistic pig to slob across the silver screen, devoid of any emotional depth.

The women in the movie don't stand by Sonbai, save for Mukhi's wife, Sarasvati (Deepti Naval). Her private and public humiliation at the hands of Mukhi lead her to a stronger, inner need for freedom, and thus, she is willing to help Sonbai.

Film direction and cinematogra-



Smita Patil plays Sonbai, a persecuted young woman in Ketan Mehta's "Spices."

Courtesy Sheldon Film Theater

phy rarely solidified the storyline with the surrounding desert wasteland, which film director David Lean and his crew knew how to embellish in "Lawrence of Arabia" and "A Passage to India."

But without a solid script, strong direction and a few more good performances, the thematic merits of "Spices" can't be saved.

"Spices" is showing at the Sheldon Film Theater tonight through

Sunday and July 19-22 at 7 and 9:15 p.m. Matinees are at 12:45 and 3 p.m. Saturdays, 2:30 and 4:45 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are \$4.50 and \$3 for students who present their UNL I.D. cards.

Action flicks earn high marks

By John Payne
Senior Editor

Time for another blockbuster report card, kiddos. With a host of others earning only average marks, "Total Recall" is still the best movie of the summer. There are, however, two other action flicks that stand out:

"Days of Thunder" (Douglas 3, Edgewood 3). Yet another vocational film for Tom Cruise, who should be qualified for nearly any job should he

give up acting. ("I see by your application, Mr. Cruise, that you have previous experience as a jet pilot and



a professional pool player, and you mix a mean daiquiri as well. Yes, I believe that we can find something

for you.")

As predictable as "Top Gun," "Days of Thunder" follows the standard Cruise routine: Cocky but gifted young rebel stirs things up in his new profession (this time as a stock car driver) to the chagrin of his older, wiser mentor. Cocky but gifted young rebel meets beautiful girl, loses girl, but eventually gets girl back while mastering his new profession.

But what "Days of Thunder" has that many of Cruise's others have lacked is several good supporting roles, including Robert Duvall's good-ole-boy driving coach. As far as Cruise is concerned, this flick is, shall we say, no ordinary vehicle. (Grade:B)

"Die Hard 2: Die Harder" (Stuart). Bruce Willis tempers this thriller with the kind of clever quips that have caused many to compare "Die Harder" with the early James Bond movies. And rightly so. This follow-up to 1988's enormously successful "Die Hard" wastes no time getting to the action.

As a sophisticated army of mercenaries holds an entire airport hostage--pending the release of a Central American drug lord with whom they are politically aligned--America's most unlucky cop gets caught in middle. Spectacular stunts and a compelling storylin help this movie a great deal, as do several humorous references to the first movie. (Grade:B)



Courtesy 20th Century Fox

Bruce Willis gives another exhausting performance in "Die Hard 2: Die Harder."

'And A Nightingale Sang' refreshing, well-performed

By Chris Schneider
Staff Reporter

In an age when family life is pictured as something between the Cosby's and the Simpson's, Nebraska Repertory Theatre's "And A Nightingale Sang" gives a refreshing, endearing look at comical family life in Britain.

theater REVIEW

The talented cast, which includes both locals and those who have acted in New York City and on television, are placed in the heat of World War II with German bombs dropping all around them.

The location just adds to the chaos that already exists in the family, where everything happens, from a surprise pregnancy to two members of the family joining the Communist Party.

However, the real bombs do not drop on the family until after the war has ended.

The main and most appealing character in the show is Helen, played masterfully by Leigh Dillon. Her narrations add sentimentality to the otherwise simple char-

acters of the play. In addition, she captures the audience's heart with her perpetual smile and unbreakable positive attitude.

Much of the cast has direct ties with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, including Lori Ann Edwards, a sophomore theater major who plays the naive but sexy daughter Joyce. Others include William Rhea Morgan, a former UNL professor, as the philosophical grandfather Andy, and Gary Sullivan as the irresponsible soldier Eric.

Although it takes a little while to get used to the watered-down British accents and to hear the voices over some of the loud sound effects, the play is very well performed and is quite an enjoyable way to spend an evening. Director John Pynchon Holms has put together one of the best Lincoln plays of the summer.

"And A Nightingale Sang" is playing at the Johnny Carson Theater on 11th and Q streets tonight, Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m., and Sunday at 3 p.m. It also will run July 17-21 at 8 p.m.

Tickets, available at the box office, are \$15 on Friday and Saturday nights. All other performances are \$12.00.