

# Plot prevents climb of 'Jacob's Ladder'

By John Payne  
Senior Reporter

Director Adrian Lyne has a reputation for making very stylish movies that often are equally empty-headed. The semi-erotic "9 1/2 Weeks," or even the ditzzy "Flashdance" sure

## movie

seemed enticing at first, but proved to be real yawners. His best effort, "Fatal Attraction," worked not only because of its taut script, but also because Lyne held his usually heavy-handed direction in check.

Lyne's latest endeavor, "Jacob's Ladder," aspires to be a riveting psychological thriller about death and the afterlife. And once again, the trailers for this one sure get your attention. But the problems that plague this movie — and there are a lot of them — go beyond Lyne's standard directorial overkill. "Jacob's Ladder" is a hopelessly muddled flick that manages to be more confusing than compelling.

The "Jacob" in question is a New York City mailman, named Jacob Singer (Tim Robbins). Jacob is convinced that the angels of death are

calling him. He is nearly run over by a subway train and cars filled with faceless ghosts. Old acquaintances disappear. Higher forces seem to be erasing his life little by little.

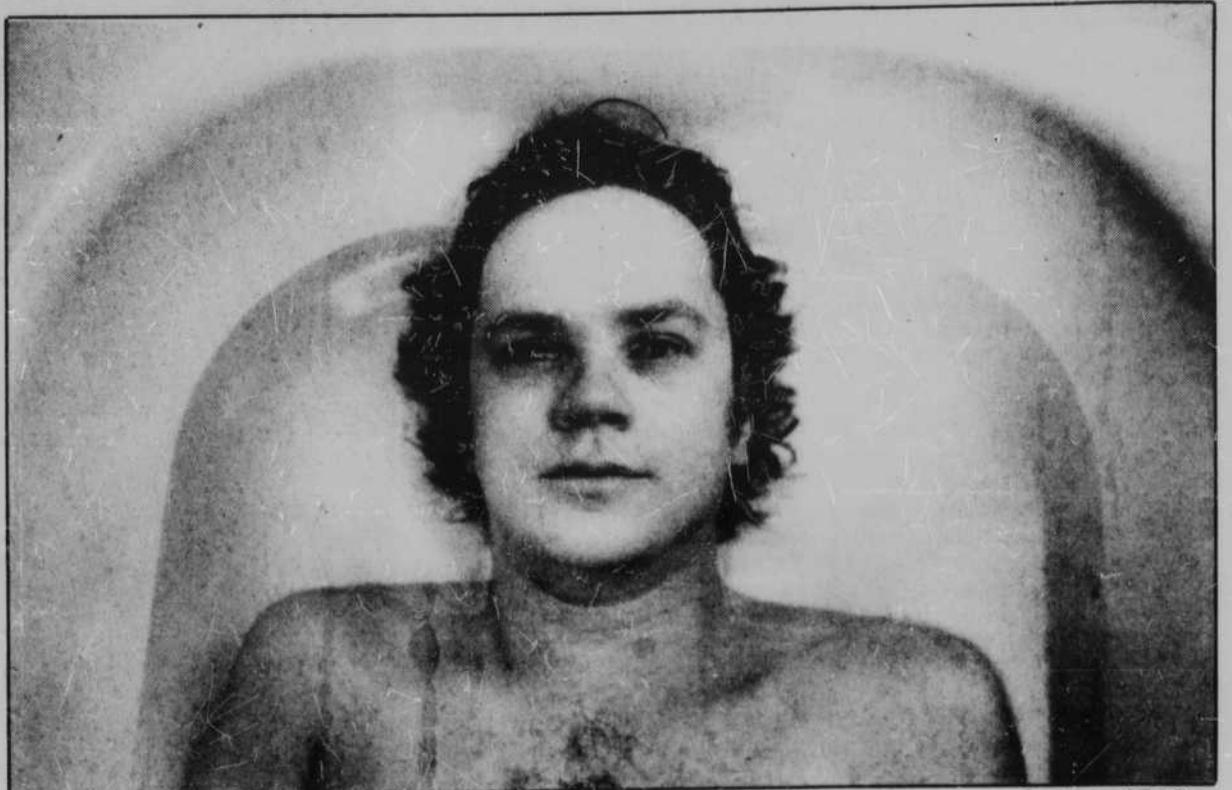
He is troubled by recurring nightmares about his experiences in Vietnam, and when daytime hallucinations set in, Jacob begins to question his sanity. Is he losing his mind? Are these bizarre visions reality or illusion?

There are several possibilities that he considers, the most likely of which is — are you ready for this? — a batch of potent LSD whipped up by the U.S. military and injected into the food supply of American soldiers to attain peak fighting performance in the Vietnam War. The experimental drug, we are told, was used as an experiment on Jacob's platoon prior to a big Army offensive.

None of the surviving platoon members (they all live in Jacob's neighborhood, of course) can remember the events of "that night" when they unknowingly took the drug. But one thing's for sure — they're all having the same residual effects.

The big shift from the spirit world to the Pentagon comes from out of the

See JACOB on 15



Courtesy of Tri-Star

Jacob Singer (Tim Robbins) wigs out in a bathtub in "Jacob's Ladder."

## The one that ate L.A.?

# Big earthquake exaggerations exist in upcoming NBC disaster series

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Buy extra water, hoard some groceries and dive under your desk. NBC is about to ravage the nation's second-largest city in an upcoming mini-series, "The Big One: The Great Los Angeles Earthquake."

Just remember, it's sweeps time. In the quest for big ratings, television's magnitude-8 seismic disaster is far more catastrophic than the real "big one" that the government says is at least 60 percent likely to rock Southern California within 30 years.

Modern skyscrapers are flattened. Death and destruction are rampant, even though scientists and officials expect most of the city and its residents will survive the real great earthquake.

The two-part series airs at 8 p.m. CST Sunday and Monday.

"I don't think we will ever see the devastation they depicted in the movie," said Paul Flores, director of the Southern California Earthquake Preparedness Project, part of the state Office of Emergency Services.

"The concern is that it's difficult to sell preparedness when people are shown that level of devastation. It leads to fatalism. The public will ask, 'How do you prepare for something like that?'"

Lucy Jones, a seismologist at the U.S. Geological Survey in Pasadena, served as a technical adviser for the mini-series and also as a model for its heroine: crusading, quake-predicting USGS seismologist Claire Winslow, played by Joanna Kerns of "Growing Pains."

"The damage from the earthquake is awfully extreme. They've gone for the worst possible earthquake," Jones said. "It gives the image that in an earthquake, you're likely to die."

"The truth is that even in the worst-case scenarios, with 10,000 or 20,000 people dead, that's one-tenth of 1 percent of the people in the affected area. Even in a bad disaster, chances are you're not going to die."

Jones persuaded the mini-series' makers to tone down some exaggerations, but said many of her objections were met by the response, "That's too bad, we need that for the dramatic effect."

Unfortunately, the movie often lacks enough drama. It takes all of part one to reach the brink of disaster. And the plot is mucked up by a political assassination attempt, a soap opera involving Winslow's mother and sister, and what Jones calls "gratuitous sex" between Winslow and her husband, portrayed by Dan Lauria of ABC's

"The Wonder Years."

"The Big One" does have some redeeming social value.

It emphasizes the need for citizens to prepare themselves by learning how to shut off natural gas lines to their homes and to assemble quake supplies such as water, food, batteries and flashlights.

Damage to lifelines such as electricity, water lines, phones and transportation links is depicted fairly accurately.

The movie also illustrates possible shortcomings of locating Los Angeles' emergency operations center four levels underground and correctly shows how most citizens must fend for themselves after a big quake.

But seismologist Claire Winslow displays absolutely unrealistic certainty in predicting the big quake is imminent. And an Office of Emergency Services official, played by Joe Spano of "Hill Street Blues," is unrealistically portrayed as a political hack trying to muzzle Winslow to protect a wealthy developer.

Such drawbacks seriously hurt and oversimplify the depiction of the dilemma facing officials who must decide whether to warn the public about very uncertain signs that seismic disaster might be imminent.

## Fiend

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Cambridge, Mass. Fiend unveiled 10 original paintings taken from his 30-piece exhibition "Diary of a Lunatic," which was shown earlier this year at The Powerhaus in London and at Ground Zero in Boston.

Fiend creates all Alien Sex Fiend record jacket art, and his first oil painting for "IT: The Album" was shown in various galleries in the United Kingdom.

Alien Sex Fiend was born eight years ago in a scummy London nightclub called The Batcave. This was the first performance of the collective monster. Mad scientists Nik Fiend and Mrs. Fiend emerged with the purpose of annihilating modern music. In the tradition of gothic horror, the two brought a nasty combination of The Munnsters, The Cramps, The Misfits and Alice Cooper, which culminated in the most enjoyable nightmare.

Alien Sex Fiend has constantly mutated through each of its 11 albums. The band is a force of contrasts; using experimental sound, members offer a danceable music by cranking heavy, guttural guitars and hair-splitting synthesizers to a syncopated beat. Industrial, pop, rock, psycho-synthesis — all terms describe the ugly beauty of their sound.

A few facts about Alien Sex Fiend:

- Independently released 11 albums, 17 singles and four feature videos.

- Attained Top 10 Independent Chart status for each United Kingdom release; infiltrated the National Charts as well as international alternative, dance and college charts.

- Toured 15 countries, playing to a total exceeding 400,000 people.

- Became first independent band to tour Japan in 1982.

- Received personal invitation from Alice Cooper to support his "The Nightmare Returns" British tour in 1986.

- Outsold Echo and the Bunnymen and L.L. Cool J. two to one in Germany in November of 1987.

- Contributed material for Granada Television's newest production "How to be Cool," in which Nik Fiend made his celebrated screen debut opposite Roger Daltrey (The Who) and Garry Glitter.

Tickets for Alien Sex Fiend are the cheapest of any venue on the tour. They are being sold in Ames and Sioux City, Iowa, as well as at Drastic Plastic and Homer's in Omaha, and at Project Import and Pickles in Lincoln. Advance tickets are \$10. Tickets at the door will be \$11. Only 250 tickets will be sold.

Nobody will be opening for Alien Sex Fiend. Nobody dares.



Courtesy of Xena Media Manipulations

## DON PASQUALE



Don't miss this light, comic opera done in the style of the *commedia dell'arte*, sung in English and perfect for first-time opera goers. Written by Donizetti and presented by The UNL School of Music.

Friday, Nov. 9th, 8:00 p.m.,  
Saturday, Nov. 10th, 8:00 p.m. &  
Sunday, Nov. 11th, 3:00 p.m.  
Kimball Recital Hall.

Tickets are \$10/\$8, (students half-price), and are available at the Lied Box Office or by calling 472-4747.