

— MOVIE REVIEW —

'Nine Yards' will isolate some, please others

By Samuel McKewon
Senior editor



"The Whole Nine Yards" is bound to get derisive reviews because it is so adamant about being a straight-faced comedy — it refuses to say it's funny. Characters in this movie live and breathe as if this, somehow, is how certain people really might carry on.

We are, of course, certain the movie, which stars Bruce Willis as a retired hitman and Matthew Perry as his nervous ninny of a neighbor, is pure, unqualified fiction. But director Jonathan Lynn does not stop to nudge or wink once. This movie intends to carry out its story line like a secretary filling out an order for pencils.

There were some people in the theater who just loved it from start to finish, howling every time Perry bobbed his martini or Willis shifted his hat. Me? I hated it. Can't say I laughed in the movie's final hour.

I actually went the other way, fairly appalled at the black humor "The Whole Nine Yards" had to offer in the way it treated the murder of entirely innocent folks. At the point when a dead cop becomes a key player in a barbecue (you'll find out), I figured there was something seriously wrong.

But the screenplay, written by newcomer Mitchell Kapner, does not. After all, Willis' character is killer Jimmy Tudeski, or "Jimmy the Tulip," and he has no problem offing any mobsters who might want to kill him after he snitched on the big boss.

Jimmy refuses witness protection and moves to Montreal, Quebec, where Perry, a dentist named Nick Ozaransky, notices him right away. And the plot takes off from there.

Really, it's useless spoiling or even hinting at the plot, because the movie changes every 20 minutes. More and more characters keep piling in, and their roles get more and more complicated. It's fitting that the characters

themselves occasionally are surprised at what unfolds before them.

There's a trip to Chicago, Jimmy's wife (Natasha Henstridge), Jimmy's rival (Michael Clarke Duncan), the big boss' son (Kevin Pollak), Nick's wife (Rosanna Arquette, sporting a French accent) and so on and so on to deal with. Double crosses, triple crosses, you name it.

"The Whole Nine Yards" is also one of the only movies I've ever seen where a bit part, played by Amanda Peet as Perry's dental assistant, turns into the movie's scene-stealer, in ways too long to describe here.

Willis, whose brother co-produced this movie, looks like he didn't bother to act in the role of Jimmy. Notice how in a majority of scenes he is either sitting down or laying down, preferably with a cocktail or gun in his hand.

His character, outside of the fact that he's played by Bruce Willis, is so unlikable — he's a snitch, a killer, a double-crosser and certainly not afraid to off his wife — that I wanted to see him dead. The movie would have ended much sooner if he had been dead.

Perry is given a few funny lines to get him going before he turns into a clump who trips over couches and runs into glass doors.

The rest of the cast has little to work with, but God decided to give Pollak, who can be a decent actor in the right role, a Hungarian accent that

The Whole Nine Yards

STARRING: Bruce Willis, Matthew Perry
DIRECTOR: Jonathan Lynn
RATED: R (accidental murder, intended murder, surprise murder and hired murder. Language and nudity, too.)
GRADE: D
FIVE WORDS: See it - judge for yourself.

plays upon one of the stupidest stereotypes in history? Think Dracula and you're on the right track.

"The Whole Nine Yards" had me kicking and screaming inside, but it won a little admiration, too. Here is a script that simply is determined to play its hand, to be either liked or disliked, and not budge one inch on its characters. Jimmy the Tulip is, yes, really a killer — sort of like Robert DeNiro in "Analyze This."

It's also determined to tie up every loose end in the bag, going about 25 minutes beyond its actual climax. There is a clear ending for everyone involved, and not all of them live. "The Whole Nine Yards" is no morality play (It sort of champions the business of contract killing,) and doesn't pretend to be one. I found it to be just awful.

But not everyone will.

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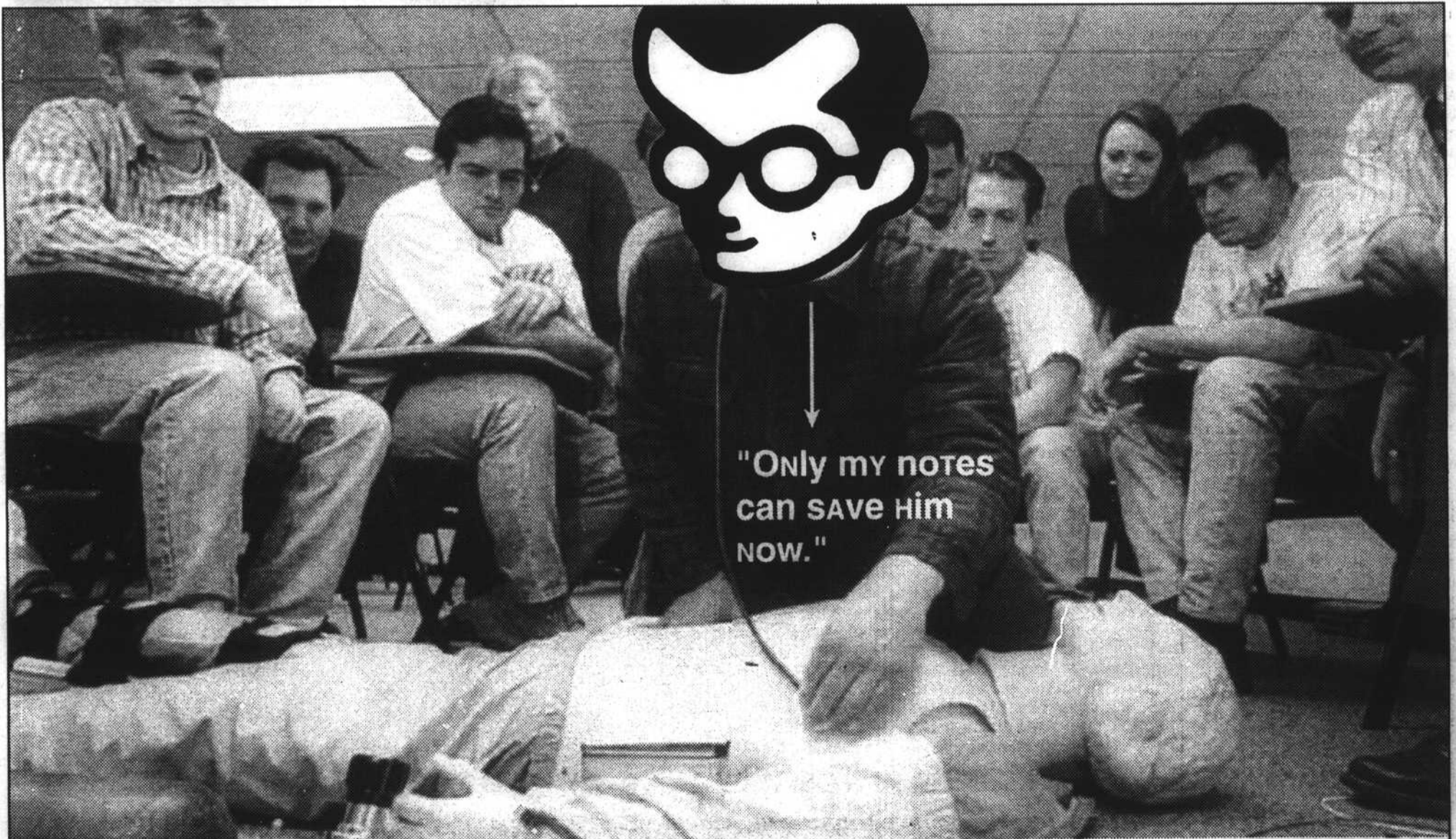
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