

DEPARDIEU

IS

CYRANO

D E B E R G E R A C



— Coming this Christmas —

Two different movies. Two different European stars. And two different stories that take place hundreds of years apart in far-flung parts of the world.

Yet there is an echo that reverberates between **Cyrano De Bergerac** and **Lionheart**. Each of the new movies tells the story of a French soldier who fights for those he loves and happens to be virtually unbeatable at his particular mode of attack.

In **Cyrano De Bergerac**, the hero is a soldier in the French army of the 17th century whose preferred weapon is not bare knuckles but the rapier — both sword and wit. A lavish, monumental French film adaptation of Edmond Rostand's popular stage play, **Cyrano** is less an adventure story than a bittersweet romance.

Cyrano (Gérard Depardieu) is a dashing swordsman and poetic spirit who fails to find true love. The catch is Cyrano's nose — an oversized, overlong appendage that long ago doomed him to bachelorhood.

However, when Roxane (Anne Brochet), the young Parisienne he has fallen in love with, herself falls in love with Christian, the most handsome soldier in Cyrano's company, Cyrano gets a chance for love once removed. The literate Roxane appreciates a man with a poetic turn of mind, Christian — though handsome — is tongue-tied, and Cyrano is the solution: He will write the words with which Christian courts Roxane.

In **Lionheart**, the soldier is Lyon Gaultier (Jean-Claude Van Damme), a member of the modern French Foreign Legion stationed at a remote North African outpost. When word arrives that his brother in Los Angeles has been seriously injured, Lyon requests emergency leave but is denied. He deserts, and the heart of the movie is the story of his perilous trek to California, pursued by two Legionnaires determined to retrieve him.

Along the way, Lyon is seduced into a bare-knuckles, underground New York wrestling circuit run by a woman (Deborah Rennard) with a voracious appetite for art-deco furniture, high-fashion clothes and men.

Lionheart and **Cyrano** clearly

feature very different kinds of central characters — as, indeed, are the two leading men who play them.

Jean-Claude Van Damme, a former European karate champion, emerged as an international star four years ago playing the villainous alien opposite Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Predator*, then went on to sudden fame as the kick-boxing hero of the 1987 martial-arts extravaganza, *Bloodsport*.

Born and raised in Brussels, Belgium, Van Damme began studying martial arts when he was 11 years old, eventually earning his black belt in Shotokan (Japanese karate style) and a European middleweight championship. He parlayed his notoriety into a successful gymnasium business, but in 1983 sold the business, hopped a plane to Los Angeles and promptly discovered that, despite his physique, dexterity, enthusiasm and good looks, it wasn't going to be easy breaking into show business.

For three years Van Damme supported himself at a variety of odd jobs — limo driver, bouncer,

carpet layer — before getting his first role, as a minor villain in the independent movie, *No Retreat, No Surrender*.

Gérard Depardieu, probably France's most popular leading man at the moment, also led another life prior to becoming an actor. The third of six children of an illiterate sheet-metal worker, Depardieu dropped out of school at 12 and became a *loubard*, a young vagabond. He worked as a crewman on a boat, a beachboy on the Riviera and eventually landed briefly in jail.

A prison psychologist prescribed drama classes, and a couple of years later Depardieu made his film debut in Roger Leenhardt's *Le Beatnik et le Minet*. He has since appeared in over 60 feature films, among them *Get Out Your Handkerchiefs*, *Mon Oncle D'Amerique*, *Jean de Florette* and, most recently, *Too Beautiful for You*.

As **Cyrano** and **Lionheart** suggest, it's a safe bet neither Depardieu nor Van Damme will return to their old jobs.

— Lyle Slack

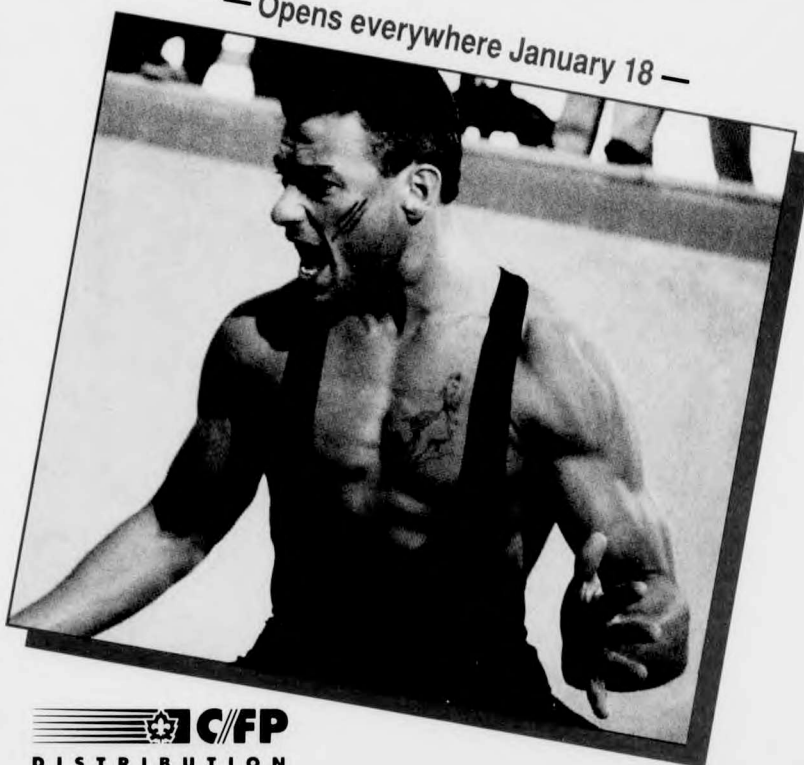


VAN DAMME

IS

LIONHEART

— Opens everywhere January 18 —



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