

## Badham's American Flyers

David Grant is David Sommers and Devin Costner his brother Marcus. Separated after the loss of their father, they undertake a cross-country journey together to rekindle their relationship. Reunited, they share the challenge of a grueling three day bicycle race—which promises a reward far greater than winning the race itself.

"The focus of the film is the brothers' relationship set against the toughest bicycle race in America," says director John Badham. "It's a nice mixture of action and character."

Warner Bros. presents "American Flyers," directed by John Badham from a screenplay by Oscar winner Steve Tesich. Gregg Champion is associate producer. Rae Dawn Chong also stars, along with Alexandra Paul, John Amos, and Janice Rule.

The amalgam of these dramatic elements lets the director combine the sensibilities of his varied movie career. Badham has filmed such hard action pictures as "Blue Thunder", gentle character dramas such as "Whose Life Is It Anyway?" and high energy youth sagas like "Saturday Night Fever." He feels that "American Flyers" is about relationships, not about hardware," Badham explains. "And that's a welcome change for me."

"Some people who saw my last two movies said 'Oh, Badham? Yeah, he does those action pictures.' Yet many of my previous films have concentrated on relationships. 'Saturday Night Fever' is much more about relationships than about disco dancing. 'Whose Life' is certainly a quiet character piece."

The primary relationship in "American Flyers" is of the two brothers—differing in age by about ten years; in accomplishments, by a lifetime.

"The older brother has a medical degree and is involved in sports research. He's also been a champion cyclist," the director notes. "In a two-fold effort to get his brother to grow up a little bit, and also to achieve something of importance to himself, he starts training him and enters him in this race."

"Marcus (the older brother) doesn't really expect David to do much more than to relate to other people. But he does know that he has a great athletic ability which, properly nurtured, could really turn into something."

"Later, there is a reaffirmation of the love between these two brothers which has been laying fallow for so many years" says producer Gareth Wigan.

"I think there are elements of identification and with fulfillment in the film's relationships" he continues. "I became emotionally involved with the physical and emotional courage the first time I read the story. I suspect audiences will feel the same way."

"American Flyers' is about going beyond a certain point where we're all urged to stop," says screenwriter Tesich. "That point is called 'good enough.' The film is about discovering exactly what you're capable of doing, ignoring the advice that says, 'you've done it. That's fine.'"

"That's the credo of the 'stage racer.' You can't just say, well, today I did it. You're never done. You do it today and tomorrow and the next day. And that's what it means to have a life."

Tesich, who spent the past two years writing plays after receiving wide critical praise for his 1982 adaptation of John Irving's best-selling novel "The World According to Garp," had been wanting to write a big scale cycling picture for quite some time.

"I love the sport," explains Tesich who is also a former competitive rider. "I always knew that after 'Breaking Away,' which introduced the American public to the sport on a small scale, that I could do something that showed cycling in a much bigger, more visually spectacular setting. But I needed a very 'hard' story to support it."

Tesich won the Oscar for "Breaking Away," his first produced screenplay, which was directed by his close friend Peter Yates. The story of a group of boys growing up in Indiana utilized Indiana University's "Little 500" bicycle race for its dramatic climax. It was a race which Tesich himself had entered and won when he was a student there.

"American Flyers" uses for its backdrop the largest, most prestigious race in the U.S.—the Coors International Bicycle Classic, which in 1984 hosted Olympic teams from over thirty nations. Most of the America's Olympic cycling medalists competed in the early stages of this ten day race.

"The Coors race presented us with number of technical challenges," producer Wigan says, "and I can't think of any other picture where so many crucial character scenes take place during the course of sports action. Badham had to combine that hard action with deliberate character shadings."



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