

# Costner Hollywood's leading man

by Matthew Rainnie

When one mentions the "new age" of Hollywood leading men, the name Kevin Costner should come to mind. With such diverse credits as *The Untouchables*, *No Way Out*, and *Bull Durham*, Costner has truly made an impression on the film world.

Costner was born on Jan. 18, 1955. He grew up in the Los Angeles area and attended California State University. His desire to act became a dream after he graduated from university and got married. He quit his marketing job to pursue an acting career.

*Shadows Run Black and Sizzle Beach, USA*, both released in 1981, featured Costner in small roles. *Night Shift*, with Henry Winkler and Michael Keaton, gave Costner another very small role as a college boy at a morgue party. His role as Alex, the suicide victim in *The Big Chill*, was eliminated from the final cut of the film. Starring roles in two failed films, *Fandango* and *American Flyers*, did nothing to boost his career.

Director Lawrence Kasdan (*The Big Chill*), however, remembered Costner and cast him in the western, *Silverado*, as Scott Glenn's crazy brother.

Successive roles in two popular action films, *The Untouchables* and *No Way Out*, thrust Costner into stardom. He followed these films with *Bull Durham*, a sexy

comedy set around minor league baseball. This film solidified Costner's star status.

*Field of Dreams*. Costner's latest effort to be released to video, is also a baseball movie, but it is a far cry from the spicy comedy of *Bull Durham*.

Ray Kinsella (Costner) and his wife Annie (played by Amy Madigan) are a young couple living with their daughter on an Iowa farm. They're normal people living a normal life. Then, one day when Ray is working in the corn field, he hears a voice telling him, "If you build it, he will come." Nobody is around. He dismisses the voice until he hears it again, saying the exact same thing. Then he sees a vision of a baseball field and realizes the voice is telling him to build a baseball diamond in his corn field. Ray believes that if he builds this diamond, Shoeless Joe Jackson, from the controversial 1919 Chicago Black Sox, will come and play on it.

Ray builds the field and waits. He begins to doubt himself when Shoeless Joe doesn't show. Then, on a clear night, Ray's daughter tells him there is a man on the baseball diamond.

If you haven't seen this film you may be thinking that this is a strange concept on which to base a motion picture. Yet, when you are actually watching the film, you, like Ray, are drawn in by that deep voice from the skies.

The building of this field is only one facet of the motion picture. Not wanting to reveal the mysteries of the plot, I will just say that the "voice" gives Ray the directions and Ray dutifully follows them. These directions involve a reclusive 60s novelist who lives in Boston (James Earl Jones) and a kindly old town doctor (Burt Lancaster).

The miraculous events of this

film build up to a masterpiece of an ending. The true nature of Ray's quest is revealed and all the questions posed throughout the film are answered beautifully.

Costner's performance as Ray is central to the film. Ray is an ordinary guy, but he is a dreamer, a man following "voices" only he hears. The part could very easily be overplayed but Costner is totally credible. The supporting performances are equally well

handled. James Earl Jones is a standout in his role as Terrence Mann.

*Field of Dreams* did excellent business at the box office and is nominated for best picture at the Academy Awards. If you didn't see it at the theatre, rent it now. It's for anyone who loves playing or watching baseball. It's for anyone who has ever played catch with their Dad. It's for anyone who has ever followed a dream.

## Civil War is Glory-fied

by Gurn Blansen

There has finally been a great film made about the American Civil War.

Of all the previous attempts only two flawed works remain in memory, and they were both made over 30 years ago. The first, *Gone With The Wind*, certainly did not qualify as an accurate portrayal. The second was John Huston's *The Red Badge of Courage*, and it was butchered to half its original length by the studio, against Huston's wishes.

Finally, in 1990, director Ed

Zwick (*thirtysomething*, *About Last Night*) has made *Glory*, a movie about the Civil War that shows both the people and the spectacle of the most horrible and gut-wrenching war ever fought by Americans.

It's as if the famous pictures of Matthew Arnold have been brought to life in living colour. All of the filth and brutality of the war unnervingly portrayed. The battles scenes are brilliant montages of the chaos and anarchy that prevailed on the battlefields of the day. Huge billowing clouds of smoke surround the

bloody fighting and in one horrible moment a soldier's head explodes like a ripe melon when it is hit by cannon fire.

It is on this stained and tattered canvas that Zwick paints the picture of the first black Northern regiment. These liberated slaves turned soldiers were said by Lincoln to have turned the tide of the war. They were led by a young white officer named Robert Gould Shaw and it is his diaries that form the basis of the film.

The fact that the hero is white does not deter Zwick from his emphasis on the black characters, to whom he pays special attention by giving each a complete and plausible personality; there are no *Stepin Fetchits* here.

The acting is uniformly superlative. Matthew Broderick delivers a fine performance as Shaw. He is totally believable as the determined yet slightly unsure officer. Denzel Washington (nominated for an Oscar) turns in yet another brilliant performance as one of the soldiers. He is one of the most underappreciated actors living today. In fact, the same can be said for Morgan Freeman (nominated this year for *Driving Miss Daisy*), who also appears as a grave digger turned soldier. This film greatly benefits from its perfect casting.

The story of the first black Northern regiment is a relatively unknown one. Even the black cast members admitted their ignorance concerning its existence. It is therefore only just that the story finally be told. Director Ed Zwick has done this and he has done it well. Not only has he provided a valuable history lesson but he created a beautiful and entertaining film as well. *Glory* is a masterpiece that has been a long time coming and one that is greatly welcomed.

## Connery refreshing in Hunt

by Geeta Narang

Based on Tom Clancy's best seller, *The Hunt for Red October* is good entertainment.

The set up is as follows: Ramius (Sean Connery), a respected Russian naval officer, is made the captain of a new high-tech nuclear submarine, "Red October." It has the special feature of being undetectable by any sonar system, Russian or American. Thus, when Ramius decides to use the sub for his own unknown ploy, no one is able to decisively determine his goal. Nuclear warfare or defection? What follows is an intricate plot full of erratic twists and turns.

The Americans are faced with the task of deducing Ramius's goal from what little information they have. Simultaneously, both superpowers are attempting to reach the sub gone astray. The hunt is on. Time and tactics are the key factors. The undetectability of the sub adds a myriad of problems to their search. This combination of action and intrigue is enough to merit the movie the label "great."

But *The Hunt for Red October* is not just a high-tech thriller; it also has heart. It has what everyone loves: good people set against seemingly impossible odds. A CIA historian has insight as to the aim of Ramius, a hunch; but is doubted by the conservatives of the tightly knit system of governmental bureaucracies. The leap from theory to practice proves to be a hard one, but he fares well, experiencing the expected problems to which one can easily relate. He finally manages to board an American attack sub in the vicinity of Red October.

The hardships of his journey remind us of the isolation of the entire plot. Although the events of the movie occur in the depths of the Atlantic, they have potentially disastrous implications for the rest of the world who is living in induced ignorance. Intermittent reminders of this and other facts give the movie a 'deeper meaning.' Stiff looking military men, too, have minds of their own. (Although Ramius is a colossal military figure, he shows a few short 'outbursts of humanity,' which are refreshing.)

Any skepticism that Sean Connery could not portray the Russian character well is quickly dispelled at his first appearance. His infamous Scottish accent is barely noticeable. He is convincing due to great acting and well planned shots which give him a sombre air of dignity. Sam Neil plays the executive officer of the Red October and Scott Glenn the commander of the nearby American sub. The three men fit the characters well. All are endowed with strong older faces full of character. Experience is etched in their wrinkles; their faces command respect. The complex characters are not ones easy to portray—cold yet warm, military yet human, tied to rules yet bound by hope.

In fact, all casting and acting is superb. Alec Baldwin (CIA scholar) brings the needed freshness to his character, but at the same time he maintains an academic stature.

Good casting combined with appropriate cinematography provide for a good movie. The bulk of the action occurs in the confinement of the subs and

behind closed doors - mysterious, unknown places. The isolated settings not only add to the movie's mystique, but also emphasize the fact that the military is really in a world of its own. Ironically, they are the segment of government which could have the most impact on us all. However, every now and then there are shots of the sub's exterior in the infinitely big sea. Although there has been some criticism that these pictures are amateurish and that they do not accurately reflect real submarines, to the viewer whose military knowledge is limited (such as I), they convey an appropriate feeling of enormity.

Mace Neufeld, the movie's producer, claims that in making *The Hunt for Red October* "We had decided to deal with the adventure story and not with any sort of political questions." When presenting a story about international defense, political questions inevitably arise. With gunfight scenes in the midst of enough nuclear warheads to destroy the world, one cannot help but start to ask questions.