

Talented cast *Prayer's* saving grace

A Prayer for the Dying
A Cineplex Odeon film
Cinemas 6

review by Carole Amerongen

There'll be no more killing," says Martin Fallon. He and fellow terrorists, when meaning to blow up a few military troop carriers, have mistakenly exploded a bus full of school children. The setting of this scene in *A Prayer for the Dying* is North Ireland and the terrorist organization resembles the I.R.A., though that term is never explicitly stated.

After such an exciting first scene, you are led to believe that you are in for some excellent entertainment. This show falls somewhere short of that mark. The tension produced by a gripping introduction is never recreated to the same extent. *A Prayer for the Dying's* saving grace comes from the solid performances of a talented cast.

Fallon does not have the nerve to murder a Catholic priest

After his involvement in the school children's deaths, Fallon (Mickey Rourke) rejects his commitment to a cause that utilizes endless violence. Unfortunately, Fallon's new-found morality does not last long, at least not if it interferes with his escape to the safety of the United States. He must do the unthinkable to obtain a passport — murder one sleazy criminal for another, named Jack Meehan (Alan Bates).

Fallon can serve time, be killed (by other fellow terrorists who fear his departure means bargaining with the other side) or

murder just one more human being. The apparently not-so-reformed Martin Fallon chooses the third option.

A small problem arises in the form of a witness named Father Da Costa (Bob Hoskins). Fallon does not have the nerve to murder a Catholic priest. Instead, he finds a non-violent way to silence Da Costa during one of a series of visits to Da Costa's church.

Fallon's subsequent visits serve a different purpose. He wants Da Costa's help to search for meaning in a life made hollow by the excesses of senseless violence. Fallon can see no purpose to a life without forgiveness, and, worse still, cannot conceive God's ability to be all-forgiving.

Of course, Da Costa can only refer to Fallon as a "hypocrite" since he so recently saw the young Irishman kill in cold-blood. When it is revealed that the priest, once a military man, has experienced situations similar to Fallon's, his subsequent interest in Fallon's salvation is no surprise. Da Costa, unwelcoming towards Fallon at first, becomes concerned with his struggle.

Mickey Rourke is good as Martin Fallon. His disheveled red hair, pale skin, and smooth gestures are perfect for the role. His Irish accent is only fair but it is probably one of those things you are overly-conscious of because you know he is not a native Irishman.

Playing a priest seems quite a departure for Bob Hoskins from his previous big role as a man who briefly tangles with underworld characters in *Mona Lisa*. In both of these movies, however, Hoskins plays the type who uses past experience as a guide to good judgement in the present. This is not to say that Hoskins is not versatile; rather, he is completely convincing in that type of role, and, as usual, fascinating to watch.

Also fun to watch is Alan Bates as the criminal Jack Meehan, who is reminiscent of Hitler. Mr. Meehan and his perverted little brother, Billy, put on a front as hard-working funeral home directors who also have sincere philanthropic interests. Nothing could be further from the truth. Bates' character is not

just evil, he is sick, so sick that he hardly sees the difference between what he appears to be and what he really is.

Sammi Davis, who can also be seen in *Hope and Glory*, is convincing as Da Costa's blind niece (also Fallon's love interest), but her character is sometimes unbelievable. It is usually the case that one develops better hearing to compensate for the loss of sight, but does that imply an improved ability to judge character? Da Costa's niece is far too omniscient. After only a few brief meetings, the young woman delivers a dead-on description of Fallon's personality. Of course this is not Davis' fault, it is part of the script.

Aussie band's great fun

Highlights of a Dangerous Life
The Johnny's
Enigma Records

review by Colin Green

I'm not really sure if the Johnny's sound like the Hoodoo Gurus, or if the Hoodoo Gurus sound like the Johnny's. That isn't really all that surprising, since both bands are Australian, and they both fall more easily into the cowpunk/rockabilly/new-wave roots-rock category than anywhere else. Oh yeah, their respective lead singers sound like each other a lot too.

Don't think I'm calling either (or both) of these bands plagiarists, since the actual music is not that similar. The Johnny's are much truer to their country roots, even if these are limited to American television reruns of Gunsmoke or Davy Crockett or something. Songs like "The Day Marty Robbins Died" and a cover of Hoyt Axton's redneck anthem "Green Back Dollar" give some indication of this, with a great stripped down sound and some tasty harp by an uncredited player.

This is what music is supposed to be. Raw and unpolished! Maybe. Fun! Most definitely. If "Way of the West", and "Deadmen

Another problem you may find with *A Prayer for the Dying* is the use, or perhaps abuse, of symbolism. The symbolic representation of Fallon's struggle for faith in God is often too obvious. Clinging to a larger-than-life crucifix to avoid a fall to certain death might be taking things a bit far.

As well, the editing causes difficulty. Scene changes occur too frequently, occasionally after scenes containing only a few lines.

A Prayer for the Dying may not be a great movie but it is entertaining enough to check out. If you are interested in any of the actors, you probably won't be disappointed. This movie features some good performances, especially by Hoskins and Bates. Besides, it's worth seeing Rourke do Fallon the infallible, cigarette hanging from his lip, fresh corpse over his shoulder.

From Boothill" don't set your toes to doing what comes natural, then, well I don't know, something's wrong with you. It may not be country, but it sure's good, and it's a relief to finally hear from a band that isn't compelled to politicize their songs all the time. The lyrics may sound like the ravings of a sun-crazed desert madman, and the music might remind you of the soundtrack to that really bad spaghetti western you saw on the late show — but somehow, it all comes together.

The production is very clean, with none of the polish that can bury a song, so the energy of the band comes through in most of the songs, especially "Move It", and the already noted "Deadmen From Boothill". These guys would be a blast in a bar, or a concert — like Dwight Yoakam on bad acid.

I must admit that at first I thought this was a Guru ripoff, but the more I listen, the more I like it. The next big stadium rockers they're not, and they'll never topple any governments or cause you to donate your life savings to some worthy cause or other, but they are a lot of fun. If you like your music sans message, and you think the Blasters are great and The Cramps are where it's at, then you'll like the Johnny's. So go out and get it. Give it a listen.



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