

Three Kings strikes gold

BY MARK EVANS

Three Kings strives not only to take chances, but mix together two genres that are typically polar opposites. The film's success on almost all counts is a testament to both the quality of David O. Russell's direction and impressive acting by the leads. Depending on box office results, this is a film that may be remembered when they hand out Academy Award nominations.

The setting is basic. It's 1991 and the Gulf war has just ended. We are abruptly introduced to four very different characters. Archie Gates (George Clooney) is a Special Forces member with two weeks until retirement, Troy Barlow (Mark Wahlberg) is a private with a wife waiting back home, Chief Elgin (Ice Cube) is both religious and sensible, and Conrad Vig (Spike Jonze) is a redneck who makes Forrest Gump look like a Rhodes scholar.

These four come across a map (how they do this is best left as a surprise) listing bunkers that

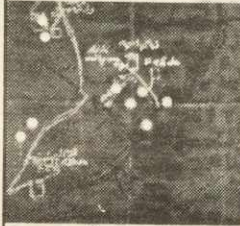
Gates insists are filled with gold bullion stolen by Saddam from the Kuwaiti government. They quickly develop a plan to ensure themselves an early retirement when they return home to the USA.

In the beginning *Three Kings* looks like a particularly warped and twisted comedy, and there are liberal doses of humor throughout. Just as in *Twister*, a cow manages to steal the show in the movie's most disturbingly hilarious scene.

However, just when the film could sink into a ridiculous *MASH*-esque scenario, with Americans attempting to out-sleaze each other for two hours, the film starts to insert serious parts amidst all the comedy. Anybody who still thinks U.S. involvement in the Gulf was more about Kuwait than oil is going to find this movie a true eye opener.

Acting in the film is top notch. This is Clooney's first lead role since under-appreciated *Out of Sight* and he's two for two with this movie under his belt. Sur-

More than a shoot-em-up action flick



The map: from a dark hole in a dark place.

The unquiet Americans: Director Russell focuses on the dark, crazy comedy of humanity through the lense of the Gulf War.

prisingly, Mark Wahlberg and Ice Cube fill their parts effectively. It is a tribute to the power of this film that it could change my opinion of Mark Wahlberg. Spike Jonze arguably plays the most impressive character, starting off as a cliché, but developing into a full-fledged human being.

There is a problem with *Three Kings*; the climax goes in

exactly the wrong direction. The film ends well, and it does leave one rather amusing question open, but it looks like the ending has been changed. The plot teeters towards a realistic and downbeat ending, yet opts for something more crowd-pleasing instead. While this is not necessarily a problem, the impact as a whole is somewhat lessened. A different

finale would have better enforced the point the film is driving home.

Bottom line: *Three Kings* is a great movie well worth the money, ending and all. It aims to unveil the intensity of war with some graphic scenes amidst the comedic parts. If you can stomach it, the film is utterly deserving of your time. Three and a half stars out of four.

New local theater company takes a stab at Julius Caesar

BY JANET FRENCH

Exodus Theater, a new Nova Scotian performance troupe, kicks off their first season this week with an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

The classic play is performed in the round, as many of Shakespeare's plays were done originally. However, with four actors portraying twenty characters in the play, Exodus presents *Julius Caesar* like you have never seen it before.

In a brief synopsis of the play, Brutus and Casius, two trusted senators, lead a conspiracy against the dictator, Julius Caesar. They kill him, then suffer the consequences. Director and actor David Matheson says that the inspiration to perform the classic came to him 10 years ago, during the upheaval of Russian politics.

Matheson said watching newly appointed president Boris Yeltsin deliver his first speech to the Russian public, shielded by bulletproof glass and soldiers, triggered parallels to the play which he wanted to explore.

Exodus Theater was born in the spring of 1999, and describe themselves as "a new professional touring company that specializes in classical adaptations." With five members thus far, Exodus members have their hopes set high.

"Our goal is to have a successful tour in Nova Scotia [with *Julius Caesar*], get the word out about us, and do a really good show. But we have larger goals. We want to be a touring company, eventually nationwide, or worldwide," said Matheson.

Exodus was kind enough to give a sneak preview of the play, and it is a pleasure to report that this Shakespearean adaptation is

user-friendly. The adaptation allows four actors to play 20 characters by the use of masks. The constant changes of costumes make it clear when actors are assuming new roles. Better yet, all costume changes and sound effects are performed directly on stage.

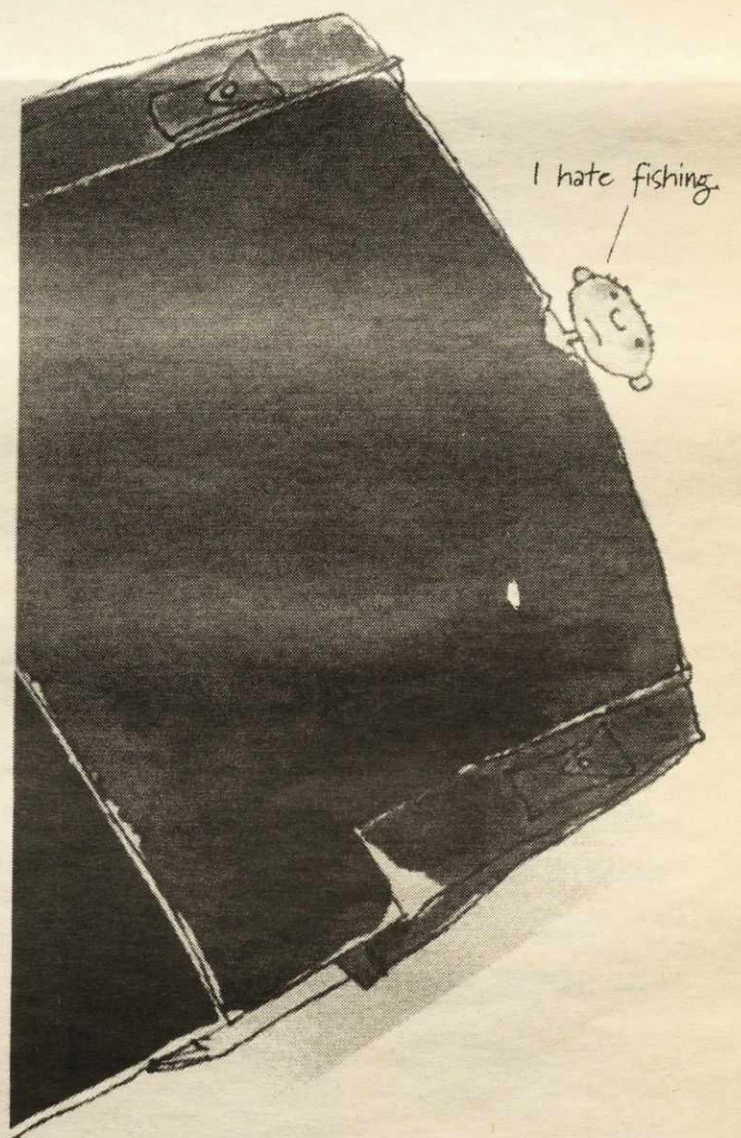
Performing *Julius Caesar* in the round creates an intimate setting, and the interaction between performers and audience members is intense. The crowd is surrounded by actors and stage space, immersing you in the fast-paced bustle and deeply passionate moments of this highly organized production.

Fanciful and sharp, Exodus' *Julius Caesar* is a must see for classics-buffs and Shakespeare-dummies alike. The play runs October 7-9 and 14-16, 8 p.m., at St. Mathew's Church, 1479 Barrington Street.



Unmasked: new troupe Exodus Theatre want the world to know about them.

Mr. Pinhead on the internet...



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