

Home Alone Reviewed

by Kwame Dawes

There is nothing especially fascinating about John Hughes' new film Home Alone. It is a cute Christmas story; as cute as the little child who plays the lead, but it never transcends the easy plain of simplistic moralistic pastiche.

After the show, people could be overheard declaring the merits of the show: "It was hilarious!" "What a riot!" and so on. In a small cafe downtown a gentleman commented that those who were not impressed with the film did not have children and so, would not appreciate the humour inherent in the situation that the film describes.

Home Alone is about a young boy who is accidentally left at home by his family when they decide to take a trip to Paris for the Christmas. They are a wealthy family, obviously, and they live on a street in which all the families are wealthy enough to leave the city for the holidays. The manner in which the kid is left at home is believable; no mean achievement for a film that borders on the incredible while seeking to maintain a semblance of credibility.

Left alone, the kid develops an independence of spirit, does the groceries, makes his meals, explores all the secrets of his older brother's room and generally has a riot. This is so until he begins to regret the departure of his family and further, begins to appreciate even more the values of family life. His growth is so complete that he is able to give sound mature advice to a man at least eight times his age concerning family matters: a little child shall lead them.

In the meantime, the mother tries to get a flight back from Paris and ends up travelling with a very funny John Candy who plays a musician in a travelling Polka band. On the home front, two burglars decide to make a clean sweep of the neighbourhood. They call themselves the Wet Bandits. (I will allow you to discover why) They are your typical blundering idiots whose capacity for slapstick buffoonery is quite good. The kid effectively foils their attempts to rob his home and virtually captures these bandits.

His manner of undoing the

bandits is apparently ingenious even if unbelievable. Toys, slippery concrete steps, tarred stairs, nails in the floor, booby traps that would kill most people. It is all there, really. And at times you can't help but smile at the joke of it all.

That is the film. The family comes home and they live happily ever after. Oh, the old guy takes the kid's advice and guess what? I won't spoil the pleasure for you.

Films about children are often excused because there is a false notion that children are lesser actors. This is why Home Alone survives. The young eleven year old who plays the lead is not especially intelligent as child actors go. If compared with the sophisticated innocence of child actors in films like Le Grand Chemin from France and My Life as a Dog from the Netherlands, the antics of this young boy are unimpressive. The potential for piece that reflects the truth of childhood and not simply the fantasy world that adults like to think is childhood is there in this film, but it somehow fails because



Oh no! They're letting Kwame do the review!

the writer-director seems more intent on reducing the story to the most banal of cliches.

Home Alone is by no means a great film. A sequel will be painful. It is entertaining in a forgettable sort of way and if the

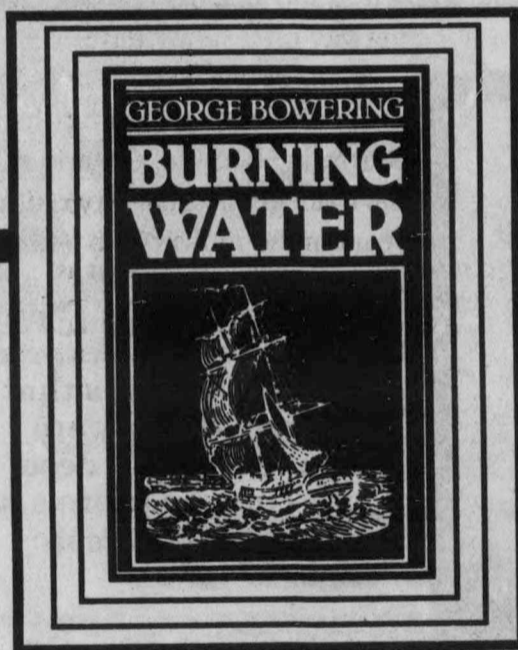
masses enjoy it, that is only because it reinforces a series of stereotypes that are extremely comforting. I will watch this film again when my child is eleven or older. Maybe I will see the beauty of the piece then.

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by Chris Campbell

As winter seems to have finally arrived with a vengeance, why not forgo those healthy outdoor activities like shovelling, skiing, and skating and sit in a dark room for a few hours over the weekend. You could sit in a dark room at home, but that could get somewhat boring, so why not get out of the house and see some of the great alternative films that are playing over the weekend.

The weekend starts off with a "BANG"!!! with the quirky Canadian documentary *Comic Book Confidential*, directed by Ron Mann. The world of comic books and the people who draw them are the focus of this entertaining look at a popular art form. Some of the 22 artists featured in the film are the biggest names in the comic world: Frank Miller (*The Dark Knight*), Stan Lee (*Spiderman* and many other Marvel superheroes), Shari Flenniken (*Trots and Bonnie*), and

Jack Kirby (*The Silver Surfer*) to name but a few of the talented folks who appear in the film. *Comic Book Confidential* is third in Ron Mann's trilogy whose other parts are *Imagine The Sound* (a look at Jazz) and *Poetry in Motion* (a look at performance poets). Each of the films examine part of North American culture and the people who produce those cultural artifacts. The UNB Film Society is proudly presenting this film on Friday and Saturday night at 8:00 p.m. in Tilley Hall 102. Come out and see this great film!

The Sunday Cinema program got off to a wild start a few weeks ago with the bizarre David Lynch film *Wild at Heart* and settles down the relatively more conventional *Avalon* this Sunday at 2:00 p.m. at the Plaza Cinemas. *Avalon* is directed by Barry Levinson whose previous films include *Diner*, *Tin Men*, *Good Morning Vietnam*, and *Rain Man*. Levinson returns to his home-town of Baltimore with this

visually stunning film that tells the story of an immigrant family who opens a shop selling television sets. The incredible photography was directed by Vittorio Storaro who won an Academy Award for his work on *The Last Emperor*. The film is only playing once at 2:00 p.m., so don't miss it.

Rounding out the week-end is the Academy Award winning (I think as Best Foreign-Language Film) *Camille Claudel* on Monday night at 8:00 p.m. at the Centre Communautaire Ste. Anne as the Capital Film Society's presentation. Isabel Adjani gives an incredible (and Oscar-nominated performance as a talented artist whose work is unappreciated by the men surrounding her (including Gerard Depardieu).

A whole long-weekend of film fun awaits, so don't stay out in the cold — come in to a nice warm theatre and enjoy yourself!

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