

## Continuing

**\*THE ADVENTURES OF PRISCILLA QUEEN OF THE DESERT** Do not believe for a second that this wonderfully wacky musical is too cool for you. *Priscilla's* fun is infectious. This musical-comedy wears an old-fashioned heart on its gold-sequined sleeve. Surprisingly, the film promotes gentle themes of family and romance. But in true nineties fashion, these protagonists dress in drag. (Rated R; at Showcase Cincinnati.)

**\*CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER** Some critics refer to Harrison Ford as the thinking man's Arnold Schwarzenegger. Ford deserves better kudos than that. *Clear and Present Danger* brings some unexpected substance to a normally flimsy genre. Canadian actor Henry Czerny excels in his role as Jack Ryan's nemesis. This movie is for those who like a little brain with their brawn. (Rated PG-13; at Showcase Theaters.)

**\*EAT DRINK MAN WOMAN** Director Ang Lee finishes his "father trilogy" on a dramatic tour de force. Master Chef Chu faces respectful employees at work and rebellious daughters at home. With a knowing skill for melodrama, Lee extracts a series of rich subplots and brings them together in a grand finale. All the promise that Lee has shown in *Pushing Hands* and *The Wedding Banquet* comes to fruition here. (Rated PG-13; at the Esquire Theater.)

**THE FLINTSTONES** Yabba dabba duh! Hollywood lets all the air out of a moronically funny cartoon and ends up with just plain moronic. This horrendous script leaves no prisoners. Only the film's funky sets warrant any attention. (Rated PG; at Norwood, Turfway, Forest Fair, Eastgate and Carousel.)

**\*FORREST GUMP** Most of America can be wrong. However, this time the masses are correct in singing the

praises of *Forrest Gump*. Hanks combines the right amount of syrupy pathos with humor. Those people who complain about the movie's glorification of the retarded are forcing politics where it does not belong. (Rated PG-13; at Loews/Sony Theaters.)

**\*FRESH** This movie appears to be a typical black gangster film. Its looks deceive. Beneath the violent veneer lies a refreshing tale of hope and justice. Sean Nelson shines as the 11-year-old drug dealer Fresh who wants out of these violent streets. On the basis of this great first effort, director Boaz Yakin becomes an up and comer. (Rated R; at Loews/Sony Theaters.)

**\*THE MASK** In this special-effects-laden comedy, Jim Carrey's performance resembles a Tex Avery cartoon. Still, his manic contortions remain true to the spirit of the film. Of all the summer fluff, *The Mask* possesses any originality. Carrey has become Hollywood's latest million-dollar baby. Pundits question whether his lunacy will strike gold again. (Rated PG-13; at Showcase Cinemas.)

**\*NATURAL BORN KILLERS** Director Oliver Stone pushes his cinematic skills to new heights. As a result, *NBK* may be the most daring studio release of this year. Stone's script is based on an original story by Hollywood hot man Quentin Tarantino. What the film lacks in substance, it makes up with hypnotic visuals. (Rated R; at Showcase Theaters.)

**TIMECOP** JeanClaude Van Damme desperately wants to be another Sylvester Stallone. To his frustration, goals once considered easy quickly turn difficult. *Timecop* pales in comparison to Sly's earlier take on sci-fi *Demolition Man*. Looks like the Muscles of Brussels may be doomed for being an action genre second banana forever. (Rated R; at Showcase Theaters.)

## Just Among Friends

With *Sleep with Me*, Eric Stoltz and his buds set out to explore falling in love and the well-intentioned but bad advice that follows

INTERVIEW BY STEVE RAMOS

Half a world away in Scotland, Eric Stoltz is talking on the phone about a small project among his friends which has grown into a major studio release. Stoltz has developed a reputation of the nice-boy-next-door variety. He turns 33 this month. His relationship with girlfriend Bridget Fonda has reached four years. Now, he and his friends talk about weddings. Such chit chat led to the film *Sleep with Me*.

"I wanted to work with friends that I enjoy being around," says Stoltz. With his friends Mike Steinberg, Rory Kelly and Roger Hedding, Stoltz was hanging out a bar. Their talk focused on relationships. They began playing a game thinking up titles of movies they would like to see made. "Sleep with Me" won.

Hedding and a group of friends would each script a scene involving the same characters. Subsequent writers would continue each scene. Kelly suggested making a movie. Inside his fridge were stolen cans of 16mm film.

"We were going to make a film in black and white for about \$10,000," says Stoltz. "It was a goof. We wanted to make a film about falling in love and the bad advice your friends can give you and how funny it all is."

Somehow actress Meg Tilly agreed to do the film. Financing people made an offer: Make the movie on color stock and 35mm film, then they will finance the movie. Soon after, MGM bought the film's rights.

"I have been making films for 14 years, and it has never happened in this chaotic way," Stoltz says.

Chaotic describes Stoltz's experience as an actor-producer on *Sleep with Me*. The actor now faced more responsibility as a producer. "You have 15-hour days. You squeeze in a few phone calls and fall asleep. It taught me a lot, but it also gave me a great deal of tension."

*Sleep with Me* could serve as an analogy for his career. Stoltz does not have any plans. Stoltz has no idea what he will be doing in the next few months.

Stoltz met Steinberg and Neal Jimenez on *The Waterdance*. He worked with Steinberg again on *Bodies, Rest and Motion*, where he also met Hedden and Joe Castleberg. All joined to make *Sleep with Me*. "With *Sleep with Me*, all of us were in charge. We could make up a scene without having to send out memos."

Stoltz enjoys the opportunity of working with first-time directors, evident in recent films *The Waterdance*; *Bodies, Rest and Motion*; *Naked in New York*; *Killing Zoe* and now *Sleep with Me*. For Stoltz, the results are both exhilarating and exhausting.

"It is energizing because first-time directors are so passionate. They are excited to be there on the set with their actors, their script and their camera. That energy is fun to be around. On the other hand, it is exhausting because they have so much energy. They have worked their whole lives to get to this point so that they tend to overwork you."

Movies are not Stoltz's first love. He earned a Tony

nomination for his portrayal of George Gibbs in the Broadway revival of *Our Town*. "If we got the financial rewards for theater that we did for film, no one would be making films," Stoltz says. "(Theater) is more dangerous. That creates a palpable energy between the audience and the actors which is really quite exciting."

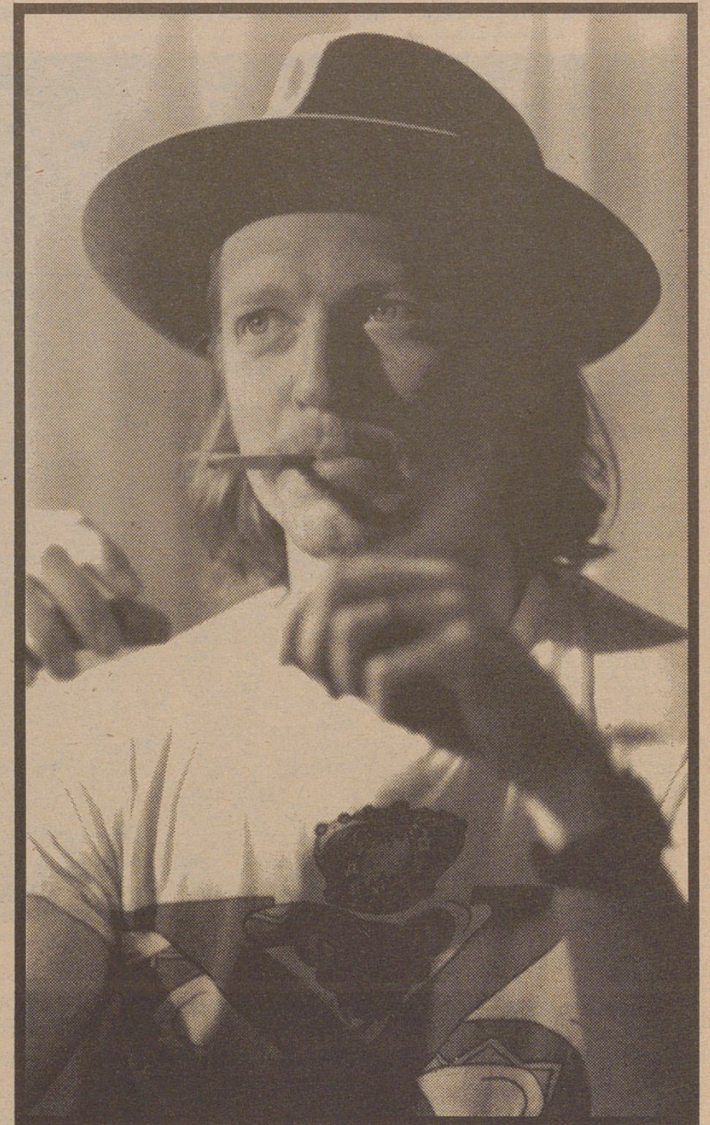


PHOTO: ROBERT ZUCKERMAN/MGM

For the romantic comedy *Sleep With Me*, Eric Stoltz was both actor and producer.

Still, Stoltz has spent the past year consistently in front of cameras. Some of his roles may shatter any public persona that Stoltz only plays nice guys. He gets nasty in both *Killing Zoe* and Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*. He also gets to dress up in historical garb for Gillian Armstrong's production of *Little Women*.

For Eric Stoltz, the here and now takes priority. "I don't really look back at what I have done," he says. "I try not to make any future plans at all. I am fairly consumed with what is going on in my life today. I feel like I am juggling so many balls in the air that to turn around would make me drop what I am doing. I am trying to just keep them all in the air." ©

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