Australian film entertains with gadgets and charm

MALCOLM
Directed by Nadia Tass.
Screenplay by David Parker.
Starring Colin Friels.
Opening today at Gapley Place.

By JULIAN WEST

This movie is another splendid example of the fine art of Australian filmmaking. Unfortunately, I don't know what to say to make you go and see it. This tale of a mechanical wizard and social misfit is a comedy but not an uproarious one, although the film's climactic bank robbery verges on hilarity. It has a lot of electronic gadgetry, but if the gadgets are far more realistic than James Bond devices, they are somewhat less exciting. You cannot, therefore, expect either many thrills or very many laughs.

What you can expect is a pretty film, and a rather interesting psychological study of three very different people. The central character, Malcolm (Colin Friels), is an extraordinarily shy young man who has always been looked out for: first by his mother, then by the local shopkeepers after his death. But despite his social ineptness, he is an inventive genius with a passion for machinery and model trains. Malcolm was based loosely on director Tass's brother, who was considered "slow." Tass helped her husband, David Parker, to write a screenplay which she calls "not only entertaining, but with some value in terms of social comment."

Malcolm's lodger and partner in crime, the convicted robber Frank, is treated with similar compassion. Crime, which for Malcolm is quite literally a game, is a hard fact of life for Frank. It is easy to think of Frank as a lazy, good for nothing thug until you go and see it. This tale of a mechanical wizard and social misfit is a comedy but not an uproarious one, although the film's climactic bank robbery verges on hilarity. It has a lot of electronic gadgetry, but if the gadgets are far more realistic than James Bond devices, they are somewhat less exciting. You cannot, therefore, expect either many thrills or very many laughs.

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