COPS AND ROBBERS

Directed by Michael Ritchie
Starring Chevy Chase, Jack Palance

The Ref

By Kamal Swamidoss

Jerry Chase and Jack Palance are the perfect father-son team in The Ref, directed by Michael Ritchie. Chase plays Norman Rocke-ter, a middle-aged office worker from Dullsville, Suburbia who gets an opportunity to live the adventure of his life. Jack Palance is Jake Stone, an ex-cop police detective on a trail of a counterfeiter who happens to live next door to the Robbersons. When Chase and Palance cross paths, they create a good balance of comedy and adventure.

Early in the film, we see what Norman real-ly wants—pizzazz. He is a clumsy, somewhat obscure bit of trivia from a forgotten television series. When his superior asks him if the police can use his house to catch the counterfeiter, Norman has the perfect answer before the man can even finish asking the question. Norman reads the penal code like a master. At the video store, he tells the clerk that the last 11 seconds have been cutted out of the police movie that he rented. Norman Rocke-ter wants to be a cop.

He gets close to realizing his dream when Stone asks him if the police can use his house for a stake-out. Norman is at first hesitant, because he’s worried about the safety of his family, but after a speech by Stone about love and men being the heroes who keep society from lawlessness (this speech tells a lot about both characters, but decide to let them use the house. Although he isn’t supposed to get involved, he manages to almost both the whole operation.

To Stone’s surprise, Norman schems his way into the family. He is a consistent partner in crime and his every move is calculated. Once inside, he sneaks upstairs when the family is asleep and searches their telephone. The film’s director, Michael Ritchie, does a good job here of making shot transitions.

The film’s director, Michael Ritchie, does a good job here of making shot transitions. First, the camera shows Norman snooping around in the bedrooms. Next, we see his expression change when he finds Johnny (Christopher Lloyd) with his eye. The camera then focuses on the object of his intrigue: the mattress. The scene reveals its humor as Nor-man’s bedroom matters open in seconds. Response is nonexistent, leaving seemingly uncon-sciousness. The audience evidence that he was there is the bed’s funny angle and the direction helps communicate the humor.

A comparison between Jake stone and Curly, Palance’s character in City Slickers, is inevitable. In both films, Palance’s character is a wise man who plays a key role in changing the life of the main character. However, Stone’s role is different from the supporting roles played by Curly and his father Guisepe (an excellent Pete Postlethwaite) to carry the film’s mes-sage of hope and redemption. Director Jon Serhienko’s pre-ironic has a predictable affectation of England’s tendency to make Ireland a scapegoat for the IRA’s actions. And Emma Thompson gives a solid performance as the lawyer who struggles to make ends meet in Ireland. Quite simply, it ranks as one of the best films of 1993. —Scott Delinker. Loews Copaay Place

The Ref

It isn’t The Fugitive, but The Ref does okay in its own right. Dennis Leary plays a lawyer who is trying to earn his living by taking time off from his legal practice to act as his own attorney, representing himself in a case involving a suspect in a murder.”

Sending a resume to us at:

Unisys Technologies, Inc.
Attn: Employment
80 Birmingham Parkway
Brighton, MA 02135

You are cordially invited to meet

Murray Gel-Mann
Winner of the 1969 Nobel Prize in Physics
Professor Emeritus of Theoretical Physics
California Institute of Technology
Professor of the Santa Fe Institute
A Director of the MacArthur Foundation
The Quark and the Jaguar Adventures in the Simple and the Complex (W.H. Freeman and Company, Publishers — $23.95)

at the Museum of Science, Science Park, Boston
at noon on

Wednesday, April 27, 1994