

Flicks to see during post-spring break depression

'Past Midnight' and 'Thunderheart' give mainstream movies an intelligent shot in the arm

by Daniel W. Duffy

With an overabundance of thrillers currently on the market, *Past Midnight*, offers an astute and picturesque alternative. Set in the rain of the Pacific Northwest, *Midnight* is the story of a social worker (Natasha Richardson) who's latest client (Rutger Hauer) is out of jail after doing 15 hard years in the joint for killing his wife and unborn child.

After investigating the case, Richardson believes Hauer just may be innocent and is strangely drawn to him. Following a tryst with Hauer, she learns all the information clearing his name might have been a bunch of hogwash. The rest of the film is a roller-coaster ride that concludes with a jarring resolution.

Hauer is especially chilling as the distraught ex-con, fighting to make a new life for him-

MOVIE REVIEWS

Past Midnight

(★★★½)

Starring Rutger Hauer and Natasha Richardson. Directed by Jan Eliasberg.

Thunderheart

(★★★★)

Starring Val Kilmer, Sam Shepard and Graham Greene. Directed by Michael Apted.

self while dodging the shadows of his past. Richardson is also exceptional as a social worker who won't be bullied into conforming to traditional societal mores. *Past Midnight* is a film of hidden accents as both Hauer and Richardson hail from Europe and both handle their American accents quite well.

First-time director Jan Eliasberg graduates from TV to film with honors in her stylish debut. With a minimal budget, Eliasberg turned the rain of Washington into a "third character," encompassing the film with a brooding tenseness that nothing is quite as it should be.

Thunderheart offers a suspenseful, thought-provoking

story of a murder on an Indian reservation.

Val Kilmer (Mr. Mojo Risin in *The Doors*) stars as ambitious FBI agent Raymond Levoi, sent to a reservation in the Badlands of South Dakota to investigate the murder of a Native American political activist.

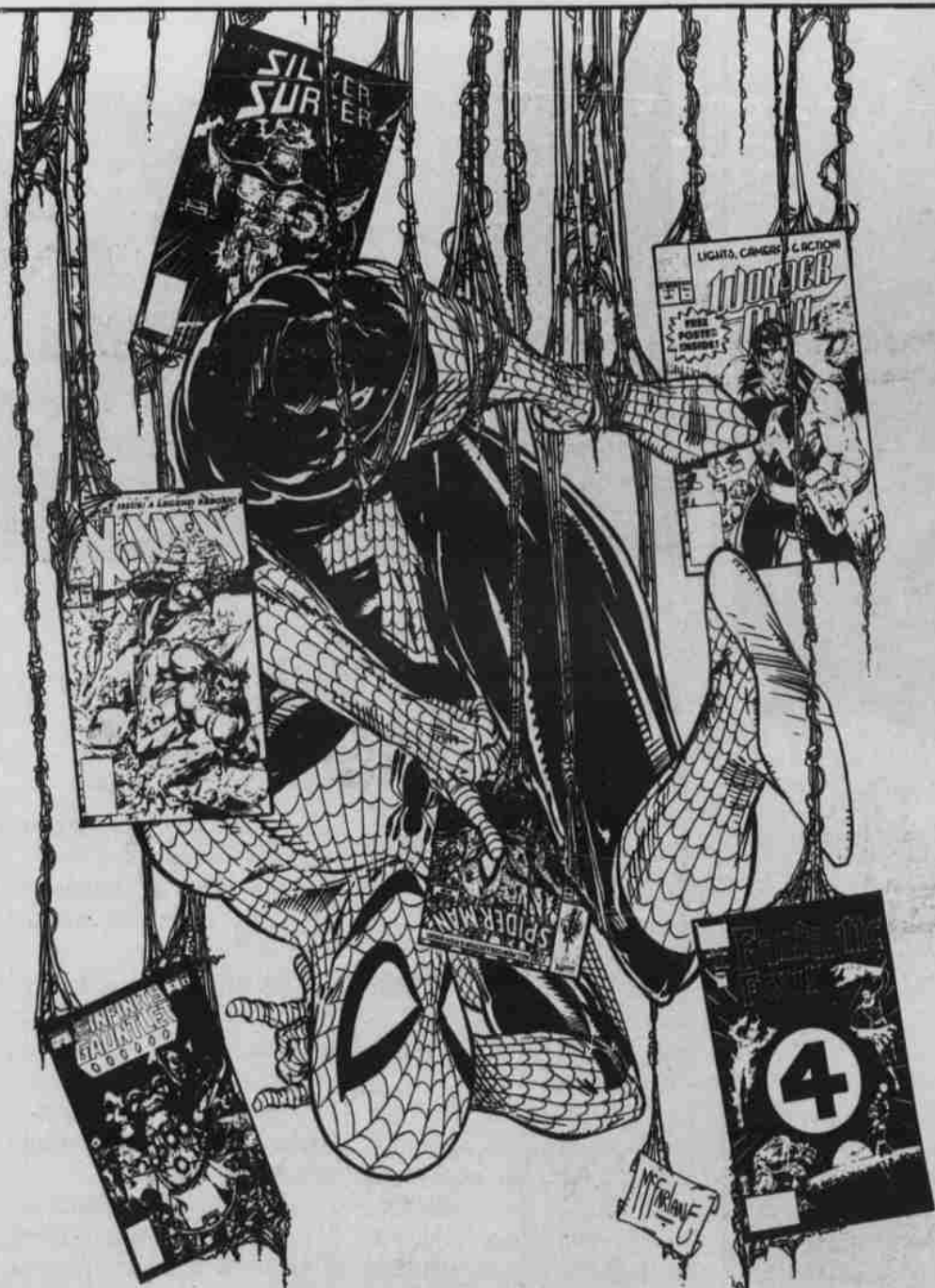
On the reservation, Kilmer encounters all sorts of wrongdoings and innuendo and doesn't quite know which side he's on. He also discovers his own ancestry (being one-quarter Sioux) and must listen to his own apparitions to solve the murder case.

The dry and bland Badlands are magnificently captured in director Michael Apted's *Thunderheart*, leaving audiences running for the drinking fountain.

The film shows how American Indians have been mistreated in the past, and are now left to live in poverty in rickety shanty-towns. *Thunderheart* looks at how Indian traditions and culture is still broken down today by outsiders who don't understand or respect their rituals or way of life.



Finally a suspense thriller where the central character's (Natasha Richardson) isn't full of rocks and acts in an intelligent manner. Rutger Hauer also shines as a potentially batty ex-con in the new film *Past Midnight*.



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