

## 'The Professional' Delivers, But at a Price

Having rather high expectations for this film, I was somewhat disappointed by *The Professional's* commercial adulteration.

It has been said that director Luc Besson has been heavily influenced by American cinema, and it is quite evident in *The Professional*. Besson's *La Femme Nikita* was stylishly shot, but with less of the painfully obvious display of cinematic artistry.

Fortunately, the blatant display of camera techniques settles down somewhat, and the hook has been established. *The Professional*, until proven to me otherwise, is your typical run-of-the-mill action flick.

Eric Serra's score seemed a bit confused at times, and protruded somewhat in various scenes. In any case, clichés are many in Besson's American film debut.

In the opening scene, the viewer gets an establishing shot of New York City. Tony (Danny Aiello), a bar owner/fixer, holds a conversation with Leon the Cleaner, played by Jean Reno

(not Janet Reno).

Tony explains that a man has crossed him the wrong way, so Leon is sent in to have a little talk with him. Swiftly 'cleaning out' five men, Leon reforms the offender at knife-point. With the passing of his knife, Leon gracefully fades out into the shadows.

Enter Mathilda, played by Natalie Portman: an abused twelve-year-old girl, who admires Leon. As the shady Leon enters his apartment, he passes by Mathilda, who lives nearby. The viewer is introduced to Leon's personal life, as we discover some humorous idiosyncrasies of an assassin, such as Leon's penchant for milk and a well maintained plant.

The central plot begins when it is revealed that Mathilda's father has misplaced some cocaine. Stansfield (Gary Oldman), a deranged cop who deals in narcotics, literally sniffs Mathilda's father all over and tells him to find the missing quantity of dope before noon the next day.

The grisly murder of Mathilda's family perpetuates the ensuing relationship between Leon and Mathilda, who develop a special relationship along the lines of a father and daughter.

Mathilda is somewhat inclined to avenge the death of her family, so she asks Leon to aid her. Leon turns her down, but later agrees to have Mathilda work, while teaching her the basics of 'cleaning.' As the film goes on, the crossing of paths between Stansfield, Mathilda, and Leon occurs in a climatic fashion.

Jean Reno does a great job of using body movements to display his 'professionalism.' However, I found myself often having to act impressed by his ridiculously vast arsenal of weapons (reminiscent of the *Last Action Hero*).

*The Professional* actually tries to incorporate some laughs into the violent story-line, which are pleasantly done. Natalie Portman, making a sparkling debut, provides a frank and sensitive character in Mathilda. At times,

she makes rather provocative gestures for a thirteen-year-old, but contrary to the early critical presumption of pedophilia, they are playful and within the context of the film.

The relationship between Mathilda and Leon is rather original, which could have been further developed. On the other hand, Gary Oldman plays a character which has been far too commonly emulated in recent films.

Oldman pales in comparison to Dennis Hopper's Lyle, from *Red Rock West*, and is more along the lines of a James Woods, from *The Specialist*. Barring Stansfield, or rewriting his character might have been the best solution for this film. Not once do we actually see Stansfield get any respect during the film as a cop, which furthered my belief that he was no more than a thug.

*The Professional* was not a bad film by any stretch of the imagination. It was enjoyable, but much too often, I found myself laughing at lines and moments that I have already laughed at



BY DANNY KIM

*The Professional*  
(1994, 113 minutes)

Cast

Jean Reno  
Natalie Portman  
Gary Oldman  
Danny Aiello  
Directed by Luc Besson

Cinematography: 7

Special FX: 7

Acting: 7

Character Development: 7

Musical Score & Soundtrack: 7

Sound FX: 8

Overall Rating: 78%

before. My ratings should reflect this, all of which are nearly uniform. The winding and falling shot at the end of the picture bumps up the cinematography one full point.

## 'MOAB' Premieres in Black Box

BY SHARON GERRIE  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

*MOAB*, by Christopher Kyle, premiered in the Black Box Theatre on Thursday night. The reason: *MOAB* was the winner of the Morton R. Sarett Award for playwriting.

The award, held biennially, was established at UNLV by Gwyneth and Robert C. Weiss as a memorial to playwright and author Morton R. Sarett. Christopher Kyle received the award along with a cash prize from Mrs. Morton Sarett. In appreciation for their continued support of the arts, Mr. and Mrs. Weiss received a tribute from the UNLV theatre department.

*MOAB* is the story of people validating themselves. Moab, Utah, the location of the play, is any-town USA, and the five characters are any-people, looking for a little warmth in life. Everyone in the play is searching for something, just like in life. Maybe. Then again, maybe we didn't see the same play.

The story line follows a young woman, Sadie, who has come into a mom-and-pop diner. There she meets Marion, the crusty waitress whose trust she earns by confiding that she's looking for a lost husband.

As Marion buys deeper and deeper into Sadie, Harry enters. Harry is a magazine salesman, who has the gift of gab that comes from spending too much time alone. He also carries a flask of bourbon, which makes for an instant friendship with Sadie. Toward the close of the first act, we meet Darrel and Benny, the local law. They announce that there's been a murder, so nobody had better leave town. From there, the rest of the play unfolds, finally solving the murder at the end.

The problems with *MOAB* seem to be split between the writing and the acting. Writing for real people means writing conversational dialogue. When the words are stilted, the characters are one-dimensional. The play doesn't seem to know if it's simply representational of small towns and the people who live there or if it's a real slice of life. It goes back and forth. Until that problem is solved, we can't care



Sadie (Lisa Bawden) and Harry (David Shamburger) comfort each other in the award-winning murder-mystery *MOAB*.

about the characters or wonder what they are going to do next.

The actors aren't helping the script much either. They have all been given stereotypes to play. Instead of finding something unique about the character and playing it, we have a rehash of people we have seen countless times on TV and in the movies. Just anticipating the next beat would help all the character immensely. One of the best moments in the play is when Harry finds his missing tie under Sadie's bed. Without dialogue, he takes us through the significance of that find in waves of realization.

All in all, *MOAB* is still an interesting property and a play worth seeing. It's problems are that of a first time production of an original work. The kinds of things that can be corrected easily as audiences, the final judges, give their input to the play.

*MOAB* was performed by Kathryn Ambler as Marion, Lisa Bawden as Sadie, Jason Johnson as Darrel, Glenn Peters as Ben-

ny and David Shamburger as Harry. Direction was by guest director Phil Hubbard, set design by Yale Yeandel, costumes by Molly Hood, lighting design by Larry Stahl and sound by Nate Santucci.

The Sarett Award, like many others across the country, is designed to support new playwrights and help develop new plays. As the expense of mounting new, professional productions steadily increases, new dramatic literature might never come to the surface without subsidies of this kind.

The long and short of it is, without arenas for new plays and playwrights, professional theatre seasons would be doomed to still more productions of *My Fair Lady*. So the Sarett Award is a good thing and congratulations go to Kyle for winning it.

*MOAB* will play Nov. 17-19 at 8 p.m. and on Nov. 20 at 2:00 p.m. in the Black Box Theatre, located inside the Alta Ham Fine Arts Building.

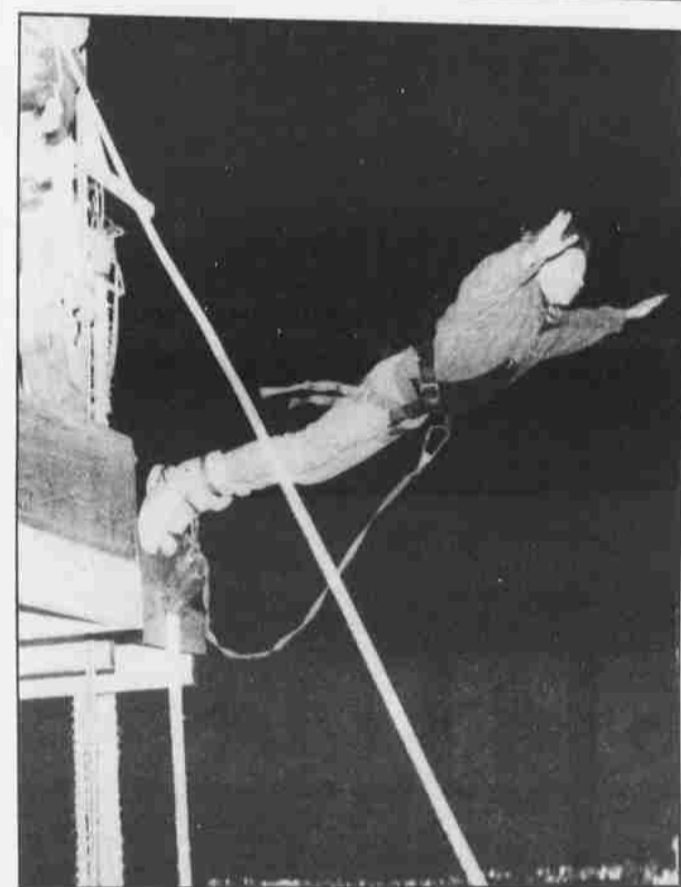


PHOTO BY LESLIE LITCHFIELD

Freshman Aaron Eggers shows how it's done by taking one of his daily dives at AJ Hackett Bungy Company.

## Bombs Away

BY TODD RODGERS  
STAFF WRITER

BUNGY: "The challenge and excitement of throwing one's self off a bridge or platform suspended high above the ground, one's legs attached to the launching zone by a single rubber cord".

That word can quicken the pulse and stir the imagination. It is what the AJ Hackett Bungy Company specializes in every day.

I recently interviewed Steve, a film major here at UNLV, after his first experience with bungee jumping. He visited the newest site of the AJ Hackett Bungy Company, located just across from Circus Circus. "This was my first bungee jump ever," Steve said after completing the jump. "It was intense, horrific, and if you're not fully aware you're

alive, you will be after this."

Steve is not alone. Over half a million people have jumped from one of the AJ Hackett sites, located in New Zealand, Australia, France, United Kingdom, Kissimmee, and Las Vegas. December marks an eighth site in Bali.

Exhibition stunts for the Las Vegas Flash Roller Hockey team and a feature for ESPN have been done. Surely, with this many people jumping, there must have been an accident sometime, right? Wrong. Rick Meyner, the operations manager at the Las Vegas site said that there has never been a serious incident in AJ Hackett's history.

If you're a little nervous and want some company, you can jump with up to four people (maximum 550 pounds) at a

Please see Bungy—9