

TOP TEN FILMS

Figures indicate total gross

1. **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**
\$25.4 million, 1 week
2. **Pretty Woman**
\$28.3 million, 2 weeks
3. **The Hunt for Red October**
\$76.6 million, 5 weeks
4. **Driving Miss Daisy**
\$82.1 million, 16 weeks
5. **Opportunity Knocks**
\$3.5 million, 1 week
6. **Joe vs. the Volcano**
\$30.8 million, 4 weeks
7. **Nuns on the Run**
\$4.2 million, 3 weeks
8. **House Party**
\$16.4 million, 4 weeks
9. **My Left Foot**
\$10.7 million, 21 weeks
10. **Lord of the Flies**
\$10.6 million, 3 weeks

Cowabunga! It's one shell of a flick

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

directed by Steve Barron

Ram Triple
967-8284
|||| 1/2

I laughed. I cried. It became a part of me. I'm talking about *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* — *The Movie*.

No kidding. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* is an awesome movie.

Not that it's an incredibly deep, complex film — it's a dumb movie. Four big turtles and a huge rat kicking a bunch of guys in black pajamas isn't exactly Oscar material. But taken for what it's worth, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* is an excellent film.

In case you've been out of touch with reality and don't know what a *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle* is, a



quick explanation: the Turtles were created in 1983 by Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird in comic book form and became a big success. A line of action figures and other toys came out, followed by a Saturday morning cartoon that was eventually expanded to air five days a week. And now, there is a live-action feature film, part of which was filmed in Wilmington.

There are four turtles, distinguished by the color of their headbands. Leonardo wears blue; Raphael, red; Donatello, purple; and Michaelangelo, orange. The Turtles' sensei (or ninja teacher) is a giant rat named Splinter. All five of these creatures were once normal animals until they walked through some radioactive ooze. Splinter had been the pet of a ninja master, so he knew the art and taught the Turtles. One very important character trait — the Turtles love pizza.

The plot of the film is simple. New York City is being besieged by a crime wave seemingly caused by silent, invisible perpetrators. Crack TV investigative reporter April O'Neil (Judith Hoag) is investigating the crimes when she almost falls victim to one, but she is mysteriously saved. Of course, the Turtles saved her. After the scuffle, April finds a dagger which belongs to Raphael, who takes to the streets to try to recover it. He is confronted by street vigilante Casey Jones (Elias Koteas), who uses sports equipment

as weapons. The two fight, not realizing that they are on the same side.

Meanwhile, April gets a lead and announces on TV that a group of ninja thieves known as the Foot Clan are responsible for the crimes. The Foot attack April in a subway station, but luckily, Raphael has been following her to try and get his dagger back. He defeats the Foot and takes April to the Turtles' lair in the sewer. But a lone Foot soldier follows them, and while the Turtles go to April's for pizza, the Foot ratnaps Splinter. The Turtles must now muster their strength to save their master. They enlist April and Casey Jones to help them rescue Splinter. But the Turtles must fight alone when they face the leader of the Foot Clan, the evil Shredder.

Let's get one thing straight: this is not a kiddie movie — it's violent for a PG movie and most of the jokes will sail far over the heads of children. I'm sure that there are even some adults who wouldn't understand a joke comparing the Foot Clan to a podiatrist's club. The Turtles use some mild profanity, so it may not be a good idea for a Turtle-worshipping youngster to view the film. Also, there is a small love subplot between April and Casey that may confuse some younger children.

Kudos all around to those involved in the production of the film. Hoag and Koteas do good jobs in the lead human roles, but a star who gets no screen time is Corey Feldman, the voice of Donatello. As mentioned earlier, the plot isn't really complicated, but the screenplay by Todd Langen and Bobby Herbeck does a good job of explaining the origin of the Turtles and an excellent job of giving the four turtles distinct personalities. The script is also full of great, snappy dialogue. Credit must

be given to director Steve Barron, whose past works include Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean" video and Dire Straits' "Money for Nothing," — he transcends the boundaries of MTV. His New York is a dark place, with a sense of mystery. He also does a good job of keeping the fight scenes from becoming confusing.

These are all good things, but the real stars of the film are the Turtles themselves. The Turtle costumes were created by Jim Henson's Creature Shop (Henson, of course, is the father of the Muppets) and represent a new high in animatronic technology. Animatronics are remote-controlled facial features used in mechanical masks. The masks are capable of achieving hundreds of facial expressions, and this makes the Turtles exceptionally lifelike. You don't think of them as guys in 75-pound suits. The Splinter puppet is impressive, but it resembles your basic Muppet — he's a little too cute to be taken as seriously as the Turtles. It's too bad they can't be nominated for an Oscar, since the Academy decided that masks don't count as makeup.

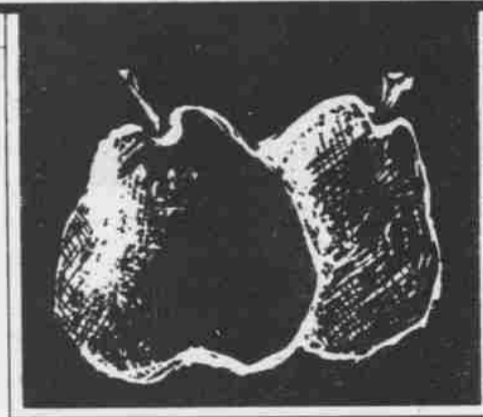
Where I was a small-time follower before, I have now been converted into a full-fledged *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle* junkie. The Turtles are no longer a cult fad. With this motion picture, they have proven themselves to be an original force to be reckoned with. They truly are "Heroes in a Halfshell."

MIKE'S RATINGS

- a grave mistake
- it left me cold
- worth undertaking
- of course, I recommend it
- people will be dying to see it

A look at things to come.

OMNIBUS.
Thursday.



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NCNB PLAZA

Starts TOMORROW!

Like a lost 'Three's Company' episode ... it has its moments

Nuns on the Run

Eric Idle and Robert Coltrane

directed by Jonathan Lynn

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Before *Nuns on the Run* started, I overheard two people talking in front of me.

"Yeah, this is the movie with Eric Idle, the guy from Monty Python."

"So the movie will be like Monty Python, right?"

Wrong. *Nuns on the Run* has its share of laughs, but if you're expecting Monty Python, go rent *Life of Brian*.

BRYAN TUCKER

Movies

Instead, Idle and his partner, Robert Coltrane, play lovable gangsters, Brian and Charlie, who are tired of their jobs, but afraid to leave them. The pair decide to quit the gangster business and fly to Rio, but not until they steal a huge amount of money from a rival gang.

Their plans go astray, and Brian and Charlie end up taking refuge in the local nunnery disguised as, well, nuns. Along the way, Brian meets the film's ditz-but-cute love interest, Faith (played by Janet Suzman), with whom he falls in love. After getting shot, Faith ends up in the nunnery as well.

Then the wackiness begins.

Brian and Charlie must maintain their identities as nuns while planning their escape from the rival gang, their own old gang, the police and even the real nuns at the nunnery. All the mix-ups and mistaken identities make *Nuns on the Run* look less like Monty Python and more like a lost *Three's Company* episode.

However, the movie does have its moments. The best parts come from Coltrane (who has most of the funny lines) as he tries to explain the paradoxes and idiocy of the Catholic church to Idle. "It makes no sense to anyone," says Coltrane, "That's why you have to believe it."

Director Jonathan Lynn has done the best he could do with his own predictable screenplay by using off-angle camera shots and the integration of catchy music by Yello. It comes off as funny, but not with the uniqueness we expect from Idle.