

Strange, but true: twisted twins kill for kicks

The Krays

Gary Kemp, Martin Kemp, Billie Whitelaw and Kate Hardie

directed by Peter Medak

Varsity
967-8665

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Again with the gangster movies! First we had *Goodfellas*, then *Miller's Crossing*, and soon *The Godfather, Part III* will loom on the horizon. But this time director Peter Medak

CHIP SUDDERTH

Movies

offers us twin sabre-toting sadists: Ronnie and Reggie Kray, played by Spandau Ballet's Gary and Martin Kemp, in *The Krays*, a bleak, violent film with undercurrents of absolute family devotion and love. Those undercurrents seem off-center and disturbing because, make no mistake, the Kray brothers are two demonic, twisted kids.

But the really interesting thing about *The Krays* is that it's a true story. The Krays were honest-to-God underworld figures in the 1960s, two of the most infamous criminals in Brit-

ish history. Ronald and Reginald took their East End protection racket and built it into "the Firm," which bullied and extorted its way into owning a large chunk of the British club scene. Their unusually high profiles as underworld figures kept them on the front pages — and their rivals' hit lists.

The Krays' docudrama status itself adds a new dimension to the film; while the scenes of graphic and psychological violence are no more spectacular than any other mobster flick's, knowing that the events really happened adds a harsher edge. Seeing Gary Kemp "mutilate" someone has twice the impact because you know Ronnie Kray sliced up a living, breathing man the same way.

The first quarter of the movie fo-

cus on the twins' growth from birth through adolescence. "Tightly-knit" doesn't even begin to describe how compartmentalized the Kray family is in the beginning. They all lionize the twins, showering them with gifts and affection. However, the first hints of Reggie and Ronnie's dark souls emerge when they take to heart their mother Violet's (Billie Whitelaw) admonitions: stick together forever, fight hard and fight to win.

Gary and Martin Kemp are menace personified. Martin Kemp's Reginald Kray stalks coldly through the picture, displaying the Krays' characteristic attitudes of superiority and contempt. He gets more interesting, though, when he drops his shields briefly and gets close to Frances Shay (Kate Hardie). Gary Kemp, on the

other hand, is out of his gourd. Completely. Off-the-edge schizophrenic, and far more scary than his sibling. The roles of the Kray twins call for actors who can credibly portray brothers who have shared their entire lives together; who better than two real-life twins, good actors in their own right?

There's nothing too spectacular about *The Krays*; no images that will linger forever, no cosmic revelations. But the depth of emotion between the members of the Kray family contrasts interestingly with the matter-of-fact malice displayed by the Kray brothers. That emotional depth and the real-life aspects of this docudrama are the only things that set *The Krays* apart from the rest of the gangster pack.

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Wow! A cartoon with nothing to sell!

During the Christmas season, most animation is chock full of images of commercial turtles, flying reindeer and talking snowmen. Artistic quality is overlooked to gain ratings points or sell an extra toy.

Fortunately, movie-goers this year have a refreshing alternative to the

BRYAN TUCKER

Movies

usual bombardment of Christmas cartoons. The XXII *Tournee of Animation* gives viewers almost two hours

of short, individual films that remind us animation has more aesthetic merit than just bulging eyes and plummeting refrigerators.

For example, *The Cow*, a Greek film done entirely in charcoal drawings, is a tender story about a boy who grows up with a cow that sacrifices everything for the boy's family. Not the stuff one might find on Saturday morning, but the beauty of the serene and detailed pictures keep the whole audience, including many children, enthralled.

However, *Tournee* is not entirely without fun. Bill Plympton lends his Plymptoons to the movie for some of the biggest laughs of the production. If you haven't seen Plympton's quick, silly shorts on MTV, it may be worth going just to see his work. Pieces such as *The Mob*, *The Early Years* and *Furniture Love* are bizarre enough to have everyone laughing out loud.

Many of the shorts are not drawn, utilizing claymation and stop-motion photography instead. In *Balance*, a

German film that won the 1989 Academy Award for Best Animated Short, expressionless figures interact with each other on top of an unstable plane in what appears to be a metaphor for a power struggle. Sounds complicated, but the simplicity of it

XXII Tournee of Animation

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helps viewers to understand. Wait for the ending of this one.

Two films are set to music. The first is a series of vibrant paintings illustrating a Beastie Boys concert. A carefully prepared series of colors, combined with the booming sound of the Beasties, gives the viewer an innovative feel for the atmosphere of a rap concert. The other film, *Warm Reception in L.A.*, uses an original composition to show the troubles of a poor screenwriter.

The stop-motion shorts include a Canadian film that depicts a dance of cockroach characters and a film about a man made entirely of wire. In another metaphor, the wire man disables his loved ones while trying to keep other things away from them.

All the shorts in the XXII *Tournee of Animation* are original and independent. The movie showcases all forms of animation, using films by professional and student animators as well as international artists. It's not exactly *Wile E. Coyote*, but it shows us how the creativity of animation can give life to a film.

THE RATINGS

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