

Conway-Knotts movie opens statewide

The Prize Fighter, a comedy starring Tim Conway and Don Knotts, has opened in theatres throughout the state during late February and March.

The film is significant since it shows what an independent production company can do in a time when most hit films are produced by the major film studios.

Variety, the major movie industry publication, said "The Prize Fighter" was "bucking the giants" during the recent November to January holiday season. Produced by TriStar Pictures and distributed by New World Pictures, the film was the only independent production cited in Daily Variety's wrapup of the top box office grossing films of the holiday season.

"The Prize Fighter" is the first time Tim Conway and Don Knotts have paired for anyone except Disney. In the film, Don Knotts manages a beaten and battered Conway as he attempts to get into the ring with the world boxing champion.

The fight sequences and stunts were coached by the same stunt coordinators who did "Smokey and the Bandit" and "The Hulk." The film's director is a veteran of "Six Million Dollar Man" and "Bionic Woman."

In addition to Conway and Knotts, the film gains considerable strength from David Wayne. He portrays the owner of a boxing gym located on property the underworld wants. He hopes to keep the gym so he can support a youngster whose father died in the ring.

Conway and Knotts, too, are moved by the plight of the innocent kid, and join in the battle to save the gym. Unknowingly conned by the underworld, Conway is victorious over numerous fighters and eventually finds himself in the fight for the world championship in a rigged match.

TriStar Pictures said it wanted to make people laugh while giving the public a tender story and actors everyone can identify with. Its success is another example of the popularity of the "underdog makes good" film.

TriStar picked two of the most hilarious actors ever to appear in movies or on TV. Conway was a major hit on the "Carol Burnett Show," and Knotts remains a TV draw on "Three's Company." And when the two get together, it's hard to keep a straight face for long.

"The Prize Fighter" is set in the 1930s, and the authentic wardrobe, cars and buildings take the audience on a fantasy ride to another time and place. Audiences have been known to shout, clap and cheer during many of Conway's boxing scenes. TriStar is planning another Conway-Knotts film for later this year, set in the 1940s.

New World Pictures, headed by Roger Corman, recently celebrated its tenth anniversary. It is distributing this year's Academy-award nominee "The Tin Drum." New World and TriStar plan future joint films.

In addition to being perhaps the major independent film of the year, "The Prize Fighter" has another twist. One of the two producers is a woman, Wanda Dell, and the film is a credit to the increasing role of women in the nation's film industry. The other producer is Lang Elliott, nephew of the revered cowboy star, "Wild Bill" Elliott. This is Elliott's third film starring Tim Conway.

TIM CONWAY DON KNOTT'S
IN
THE PRIZE FIGHTER
A Knockout Comedy!
A Tri Star Pictures Production
A New World Pictures Release
PG

A "Haunting Experience" in Weatherly

by Jane Bolish
I'm from a small town. Weatherly has a population of only about 3,000 people. It's a quiet town, but it's a nice little town. I was raised there, went to school there, and I made my friends there. But as far as excitement goes, if you're from Weatherly and looking for a little diversion, one of the most exciting things you can do is to get in your car and drive someplace, else. So you can see why I seem a little disconcerted when I meet a dorm student or some other type of non-Weatherly person and they invariably ask me where I'm from. I reply, "Oh, you've probably never heard of the place. I'm from Weatherly." Usually I get the expected reaction, "Yeh, you're right. I haven't." But now and then I get this, "Weatherly! Oh, Wow! You're from Weatherly! Hey, do you know how to get to the Haunted Cemetery? Wow! This is really neat!"

Huh.
Well, maybe I am exaggerating

a little, but it is true that when people find out I'm from Weatherly, they often bring up the topic of the Haunted Cemetery. Well, I have been there and maybe it is pretty neat, but I wouldn't get too excited about it. Let me give you some background on the subject.

The cemetery, which is well over 100 years old, belonged to the very small Roman Catholic church of St. Joseph's which is on Buck Mountain near Weatherly. Several years ago, the church was burned down by vandals. How the cemetery ever got to be haunted, or why it became so well-known, remains a cloudy subject. But if you could see it during a cold, damp, moonlit night, maybe you'd understand why so many people think it's haunted.

The cemetery is situated in a dark hollow with woods on all sides. Weeds and vines have crept through the corroded iron grating which surrounds the cemetery. Dingy green tombstones, discolored through the years and decayed with growths of moss and lichens, are staggered throughout. Few remain upright, most slant toward the ground, and others have already sunk to the damp earth below. The terrain of the cemetery is not smooth and clean-cut anymore. Overgrown with weeds and scrawny bushes, the sunken

graves form little hills and valleys, making walking there on a dark night uncertain and a bit treacherous.

If this atmosphere isn't enough to make you a little jumpy, there are a few rumors to go along with it. There is a tombstone in the cemetery of a man who cursed himself in life and was subsequently damned to hell. If you find his tombstone and put your hand on it, it will feel warm. If you go to the cemetery on certain occasions, particularly nights with a full moon, the charred foundation of the old church will glow. There must be a dozen rumors like these and when we residents of Weatherly hear them from other people, we seem to be amused. This is not because we find these rumors uninteresting ourselves, but because we really find it amazing that other people find something in Weatherly that is interesting. I'm not sure why, but it could be that most people always look to places far away for better things, and they often don't realize what they have in their own backyards. "The grass is greener . . .", as they say.

In any case, if you do happen to go to the Haunted Cemetery, and really are impressed by it, wait until you hear about this old stone bench that's really close to the cemetery. It's supposed to have a curse on it, and if you sit there . . .

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