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Mercury Rising by Bostin Christopher

April 9-15, 1998 / Vol. 7, Ed. 14

Action films aren't covering much new ground these days. So it's refreshing to see a film like *Mercury Rising*, which attempts to take one of Hollywood's biggest action stars and put him in an action movie that also attempts to mean something. Too bad it doesn't work, as is the case with *Mercury Rising*.

Bruce Willis plays Art Jeffries, a down-on-his-luck FBI agent who gets relegated to wiretap duty. He then gets assigned to check into a missing boy. What he doesn't know, but we do, is that this boy is an autistic savant and has cracked the government supercode, called Mercury. Willis is good in this role. He plays it with honesty and integrity.

Alec Baldwin plays the officer in charge of Mercury's development. It's hard to figure out why Baldwin took this role, which holds little acting challenge. It could be his relationship with director Harold Becker, who directed Baldwin in *Malice*, or perhaps the prospect that this was going to be a blockbuster of a film. Baldwin is a good actor and I hope his role selection gets better than in recent memory.

This film looks great under Becker's direction. The scenes are well shot, the dialogue isn't as hokey as most action thrillers, and it was easy to enjoy this film for the first 30 minutes. But the film slows during the second hour, becoming increasingly agonizing as the plot falls flat and simple: Boy cracks code, evildoers want to kill the boy, and chase scenes ensue as our hero learns to relate to the boy and figures out why the bad guys want him dead.

The scenes with Willis and Simon, the boy (played by Miko Hughes), just aren't interesting. It is a tough challenge for Hughes, or any boy really, to play an autistic savant. Here, it just isn't believable.

Mercury Rising is a simple action movie that tries to have some heart and fails. The film contains good performances and everything seems to be in place. Everything but a great story to compel us. Wait for video on this one.

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