

The Completely Mental Misadventures of Martin Short

By Michael Giltz

It used to be so simple. Movie stars sometimes spent their waning years on television (see also, "Rock Hudson"), TV stars were

always considered too small to fill up the big screen and never the twain would meet.

But John Travolta and *Saturday Night Live* changed all that. Nowadays, TV stars appear on the silver screen, movie stars would kill to get their own weekly series and they'd all love to develop a cable special for that cute little idea their cousin in Reno had.

The rules changed just in time for Martin Short. His new film, *Three Fugitives*, opens Friday, marking the latest chapter in a

convoluted career that could only occur in the '80s.

Short has gone from — take a deep breath — network television (*The Associates*) to syndicated TV (SCTV Comedy Network) to late night comedy (*Saturday Night Live*) to the movies (*Innerspace*, *Three Amigos*) to Saturday morning cartoons (*The Completely Mental Misadventures of Ed Grimley*) to cable specials (*Martin Short's Hollywood*) and, presumably, back to the movies.

Obviously, while some make the jump to the big screen and never look back, Short isn't one of them. "I think the mistake that some people going from television to film make is that they don't realize how great TV is and keep doing it," he explained in an interview to promote his new movie.

Called *Three Fugitives*, it pairs Short with Nick Nolte in a comedy about an inept bank robber (Short) who is stealing to pay for his daughter's medical bills. He accidentally implicates a seasoned professional just released from jail (Nolte) and the two are thrown together as they flee the police.

Directed by Francis (*La Cage Aux Folles*) Veber, it is a typical Touchstone comedy — low on convincing characters and high on broad, slapstick humor.

Of course, slapstick humor is Martin Short's specialty. Prancing deliriously around the set of *SNL* as Ed Grimley, Short exhibited

Short, Sarah Rowland and Nolte: an unlikely family of fugitives thrown together in a half-baked bank robbery plan.



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that pliable characteristic that causes director Veber to pronounce him "rubber."

This bounciness must be part of the reason he stays busy in so many different mediums. The critically praised *The Completely Mental Misadventures of Ed Grimley* is a bright light on Saturday morning. However, most children's shows are so bad that anything remotely intelligent would stand out. But *Grimley* is actually good and Short is rightly proud of his work on it.

In the beginning, though, he was less than pleased. "When I first saw the animation, I went,

'Agghhhh, I'm off this soon. Now we're on show 10 and I love it.'

While his first episodic series — *The Associates* — didn't even last a season on ABC, *Grimley* appears to be settling in for a lengthy run. Short feels the show is just starting to hit its stride.

"Whether it's an animation series or Shakespeare-By-The-Week," he said, "the first year is just learning."

Short's education in Hollywood has continued for much longer than that. He co-starred in the bomb *Three Amigos* with Steve Martin and Chevy Chase, and the relatively respectable hit, *The*



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Short and Nolte elude the police in their new Touchstone film *Three Fugitives* that opens Friday at Oaks East Six Theater.

nerspace, with Dennis Quaid.

But it was years after he had entered the big time before Short learned his hardest lesson about the vagaries of Tinseltown. *Cross My Heart* marked his debut as a lead — and in a romantic role, no less. A mature comedy produced by Lawrence (The Big Chill) Kasdan, the movie was never given more than a token release by its studio.

Short insists that he never expected any more. "I don't think one person involved in that film — (which was about) two people on a date talking about their relationship — expected it to be any more than it was, which was gen-

erally well-reviewed and doing well in rental.

"It's not a high-budget film," he said. "You don't expect *Top Gun* results."

Commercial potential is the last thing on his mind when choosing a movie, Short said. "All I say is, 'Who's directing it, who's in it, who's writing it, who's editing it?'"

"The whole thing is the experience," he continued. "The work

that I do in these films involves months of involvement, decisions and meetings. You work and grow as an actor; you experience relationships with people.

"And if you work as hard and intensely as you can, you're *always* better, whether (or not) the film got distributed correctly. (Box office success) has nothing to do with it. You just have to let that go or you'd go crazy."

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Short has played Ed Grimley (left) in *SCTV, Saturday Night Live* and in *The Completely Mental Misadventures of Ed Grimley*.

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