



UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Reba McIntire and Michael Gross are survivalists Heather and Burt Gummer who mean to snuff out those danged worms if it's the last thing they do.

★ ★ ★ **Tremors**
Oaks 6 East, Plaza

Films can be very educational. If a homicidal maniac ever does escape from a mental institution, he'll be stopped dead in his tracks by people who've seen *Friday the 13th* parts I through VIII and know exactly what to do. (For example, don't hide in a closet; carry several automatic weapons; and never have sex until the coast is clear.)

Likewise, if aliens try to quietly infiltrate our society, they'll have

a hard time outwitting the average moviegoer, who understands that someone with a slow, monotonous voice and a taste for anti-freeze is not to be trusted.

So, no one watching *Tremors* should be surprised by the reaction of its characters when giant worms begin to attack. The fine people of Perfection, Nevada (population 14 and counting . . . down) don't go into hysterics or worry too much about where the

monsters came from. They just grab every weapon they can find and calmly try to figure out a way to blast the suckers out of the ground.

The worms are long, ugly critters that smell bad and have a nasty habit of dragging animals, people and even cars underneath the ground. They look like second cousins of the sand worms in *Dune* and, worst of all, they're smart.

They have to be, because *Tremors* may be silly and dumb, but it is *not* stupid. Half the fun of this very fun flick is watching the people outwit the worms, then seeing the worms get the upper hand and so on, back and forth until the slimy, smelly finale.

If the giant worms start to catch victims by bursting up through the floorboards of homes, then the people climb onto their roofs. This ploy works for a little while, until the worms begin attacking the foundations of buildings, demolishing little ones such as mobile homes and nearly toppling the general store.

If the worms shrug off most bullets like pesky flies, then someone is bound to rig up a highly explosive grenade and send worm parts flying everywhere. That works great — until the worms start to spit the bombs back at their attackers.

But you get the idea. Everything about *Tremors* is just right. The actors, led by Kevin Bacon, know enough to take the worms seriously, but not themselves. The low budget was barely enough to create scary and believable monsters, leaving the rest of the movie looking tacky and thrown-together — which is exactly how it should look.

All of this makes *Tremors* a witty and delightful surprise. If it is any sign of things to come, the '90s are off to a good start.

BY MICHAEL GILTZ