

Like Father, Like Son

A REVIEW BY ROLAND F. PALMER

Victor Salva (*Powder*, *The Nature of the Beast*) brings us deep into the realm of the dysfunctional Farraday family in *Rites of Passage*, his new film just released on video. At the family's secluded mountain retreat, a father and his two sons unexpectedly come together, and are forced to deal with issues that have kept them apart. Add in a couple of prison escapees, and you have an utterly engrossing and richly layered thriller.

Dean Stockwell plays Del Farraday, father of D.J. (Keith) and Campbell (Behr). At a hotel, D.J. catches his father with his much younger female lover. Feeling the need to explain, Del and D.J. decide to have a father-son weekend at the family's mountain retreat. They arrive to find Campbell already there — quite an unexpected and emotional surprise. After

some initial family fireworks, the three men decide to stay the weekend to try to work things out.

One of the best scenes in the film occurs the first evening around the dinner table, when Del tries to explain his cheating "lifestyle" to his sons. The scene is amazingly well-written and acted, as it appears that Del is basically "coming out" about his secret life to a gay son he rejected for doing the same years ago. As the anger inside each of these three men boils to the surface, we learn more about the family's past. It becomes clear that Del's homophobia has been a huge part of why Campbell has been away. D.J. tends to play the mediator role but also exhibits some anger and frustration that adds even more tension to this whole mix. The film then moves on to explore why Campbell is at the family retreat in the first place, and it is a non-stop ride for the remainder of the film.

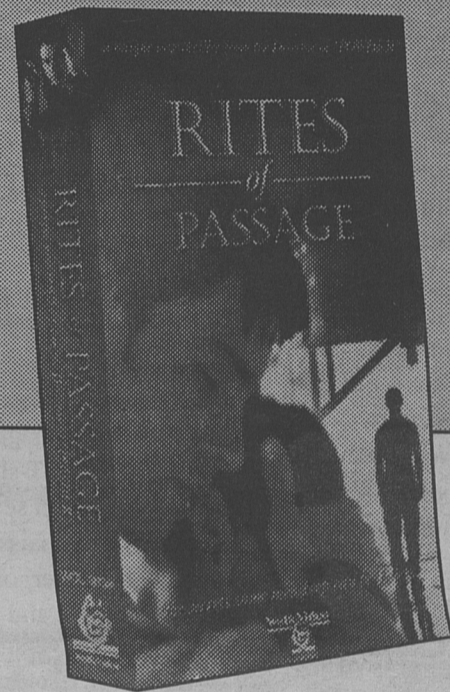
Salva has expertly crafted this multi-layered film. From the disjointed beginning to the clarity of the ending, the viewer is absolutely on edge for the entire film. Salva uses his characters to demonstrate both "in-your-face" homoerotic tension and deep-seated anger, which makes this film edgy and captivating. It is interesting to note that Salva used some parallels from his relationship with his stepfather as the basis for this story. Jason Behr (who was not the actor originally picked for the role) does an amazing job as the rejected gay son. The two escaped convicts, Frank Dabbo (Remar) and Red Tenney (Woolvett), add depth and intrigue to this film while giving performances that send chills down your spine.

Rites of Passage is one of the best thrillers I've seen this year. Move this film to the top of your must-rent list. ▼

Rites of Passage

Written and directed by
Victor Salva

Starring Dean Stockwell,
Jaimz Woolvett, James Remar,
Robert Keith, Jason Behr



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