

## STAG

(CANADIAN — DRAMA — COLOR)

A Cinepix Film Properties/Rampage Entertainment production. (International sales: CFP Intl., Montreal.) Produced by John Dunning, Michael Paseornek. Executive producers, Gabrielle Kelly, Jeff Sackman, Andre Link. Co-producers, Evan Tylor, Gavin Wilding.

Directed by Gavin Wilding. Screenplay, Evan Tylor; Pat Bermel, based on a story by Jason Schombing. Camera (color), Maryse Alberti; editor, Mark Sanders; music, Paul J. Zaza; production design, Phyllis Codar; costumes, Ane Crabtree; casting, Tom McSweeney; associate producer, Lauren McLaughlin. Reviewed at the Astral screening room, Montreal, April 30, 1997. In Cannes market. Running time: 92 MIN.

Peter.....Andrew McCarthy  
Victor.....John Stockwell  
Dan.....Kevin Dillon  
Serena.....Taylor Dayne  
Michael.....Mario Van Peebles  
Frank.....Ben Gazzara

With: Mark Blum, Gerald Anthony, William McNamara, John Henson, Gregalan Williams, Jennifer Miller, William Prael, Jerry Stiller.

**S**tag" is an efficient psychological thriller about a stag bash gone terribly wrong. With the help of a couple of strong perfs, director Gavin Wilding manages to keep the tension bubbling along at a good pace throughout. This tale of what happens when a group of drunken guys accidentally kill a stripper becomes a tad predictable along the way, however, and it is likely to do better on the small screen than in theaters in most territories.

"Stag," which was produced by Montreal-based Cinepix Film Properties, will have its preem on HBO in June and then CFP Distribution plans to take the pic out theatrically across North America in the fall.

Story kicks off with Victor Mallick (John Stockwell) and his buddy and business partner Michael (Mario Van Peebles) arriving at a suburban



**PARTY GONE SOUR:** Taylor Dayne and Kevin Dillon star in "Stag."

house. Michael has thrown together a surprise pre-wedding stag party for Victor, and the crowd on hand includes Victor's new fairly well-to-do colleagues and a number of older friends, who are a more motley lot. His old pals include Dan (Kevin Dillon), a somewhat disturbed Gulf War veteran, and Peter (Andrew McCarthy), a very seedy character who deals drugs for a living.

The party moves into overdrive when a couple of strippers arrive disguised as cops and, soon enough, most of the inebriated revelers are feeling pretty hot and bothered. But the erotic charge wilts quickly when several of the guys start tossing one of the strippers up in the air and end up dropping her head-first on the floor. When the strippers' male escort sees that she's not breathing, he pulls a gun and, during an ensuing scuffle, the guy from the stripper service is shot dead.

A couple of the guys suggest calling the cops, but others, most notably drug merchant Peter, strenuously argue that bringing in the police will only ensure that everyone present will end up

doing some serious time in the crowbar motel. They then tie up the remaining stripper Serena (Taylor Dayne) while they try to figure out how to deal with the mess they've created.

This leads to no small amount of conflict between the very different friends and colleagues of Victor, and the friction just keeps getting worse as the night wears on. Peter, who is anything but a nice fellow, is the nastiest of the bunch and he keeps pushing for a bloody, violent end to the quandary. Soon enough, they have all turned on each other and they're no nearer to coming up with a feasible way to keep the cops out of the picture.

It is standard-issue dramatic material, but Wilding knows which buttons to push to keep viewers interested, and there is rarely a dull moment. McCarthy delivers a memorable turn as the slimebag drug-dealer, and Dillon is also strong as the testy, unhinged Gulf War vet.

All of the lensing is within tight interiors and the punchy soundtrack is packed with upbeat rock numbers belted out by everyone from Tom Jones to Golden Earring. —Brendan Kelly