

# Entertainment Outlook



## FILMETER

What's new in movies and video  
Robert DiMatteo

### In Movie Theaters

**THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK (R)** Improbably, this comedy of the sexes from a John Updike novel is turning out to be a good-sized hit — surprising many critics who have noted its very real deficiencies.

The movie is a mess. Whatever Updike was playfully saying about contemporary men, women and witchcraft becomes murky in this film directed by George Miller ("The Road Warrior") that favors stylized action and occasional vomit-spewing. But it's also moderately entertaining — a warm-weather jest for adults starved for a picture with some smartness, an amusing take on sex and attractive and talented stars.

Jack Nicholson offers ham with relish as enigmatic millionaire Daryl Van Horne — a devil of a guy who arrives in a New England town and proceeds to seduce three desirable female citizens.

The women in question are hardly your typical suburban ex-wives and mothers. As played by the raventressed Cher, the flaming-redhead Susan Sarandon and the coolly blond Michele Pfeiffer, these post-modern pinups make a dreamy threesome. A sneaky, power-hungry male chauvinist like Van Horne can only regard them as the ultimate challenge. But, alas, Daryl fails to take into account the trio's own powers as witches.

A handful of scenes transcend the genial chaos of much of the film. Foremost are Nicholson's seduction of ladylike cellist Sarandon to the comic-orgasmic crescendo of classical music and his climactic tirade in the local church.

Ironically, the three leading actresses don't have much to do other than look ravishing. But they do create the texture of a credible friendship. People who detect misogyny in Updike's book may regard the movie as a triumph of pandering to half-resolved sexist prejudices in the audience. Let's assume viewers are more savvy than that and simply in the mood for a lightweight frolic on the battle of the sexes. **GRADE: ★★½**

**SPACEBALLS (PG)** Mel Brooks returns to directing and co-writing film comedy with this parody of the "Star Wars" movies. The result is terribly disappointing, especially to those of us who have missed Brooks's down-and-dirty low-comedy humor the past several years.

With its punning jokes about the Ford Galaxy and Drush princesses, "Spaceballs" may sound better than it plays. Certainly, seeing funnymen

John Candy, Rick Moranis and Brooks himself (in a dual role) on the screen, enacting deliberately clunky variations on the George Lucas films, one is primed for bellylaughs. Yet the movie is flat, even dead — exuding an air of throwaway jokiness and desperation.

As they gleefully ransacked pop culture and old Saturday-afternoon movie serials, the "Star Wars" pictures were already halfway to parody. That was part of their charm. Brooks and company are stuck laboriously debunking a genre that never took itself very seriously to begin with. And their job has already been done better. In 1978, the San Francisco-

based independent film-maker Ernie Fosselius skewered the Lucas film in the witty parody "Hardware Wars." And Fosselius' film was only 10 minutes long! **GRADE: ★½**

### New Home Video

**CRIMES OF THE HEART (PG-13)** Lorimar Home Video, \$89.95. A slow-starting, but soon lively, movie of Beth Henley's Pulitzer Prize play about three eccentric sisters in Hazel-

hurst, Miss. Each sister is, in her own way, deeply frazzled.

The movie's three stars form a juicy ensemble. Jessica Lange is terrifically earthy; Diane Keaton is mesmerizingly high-strung; and Sissy Spacek — as the sister who puts a bullet in her husband and then calmly makes a pitcher of lemonade — is zestfully dizzy. It's like a Southern Gothic sitcom with a saving measure of lyricism. **GRADE: ★★★**

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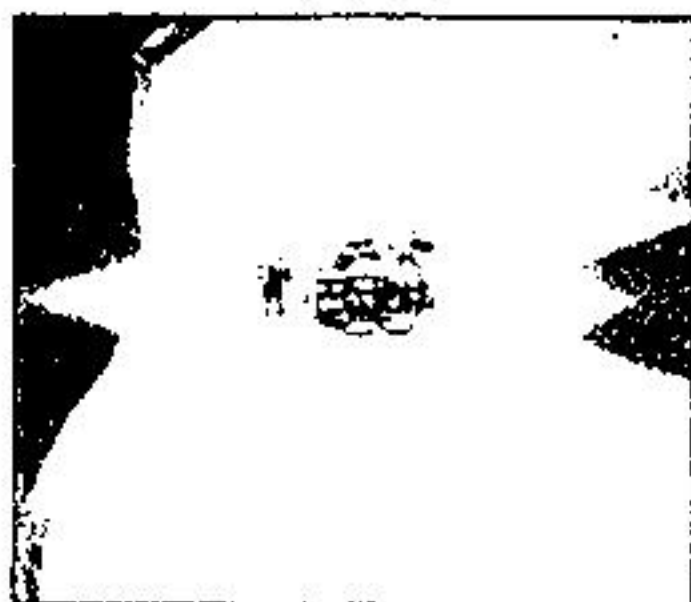


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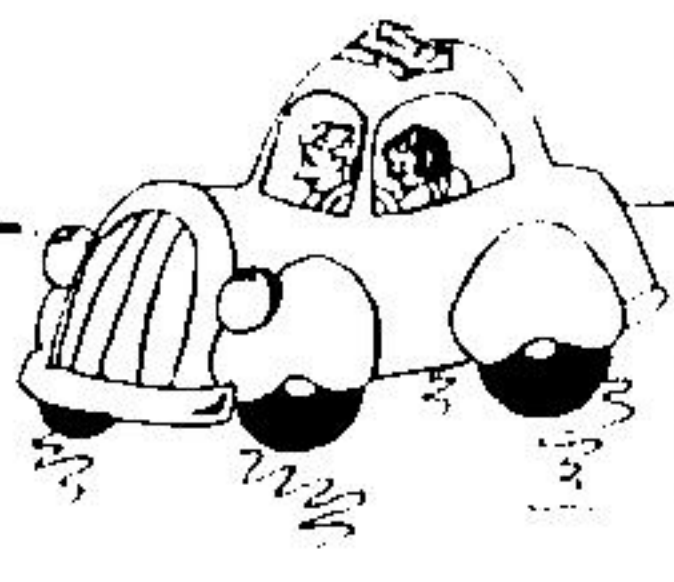
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