

Entertainment Outlook



FILMETER

What's new in movies and video
Robert DiMatteo

By Robert DiMatteo

In Movie Theaters

RUNNING ON EMPTY (PG-13) Sidney Lumet is a meat-and-potatoes filmmaker. Others may bring a dazzling signature style to their work, Lumet's best films ("Prince of the City," "Serpico," "Dog Day Afternoon") tell powerful stories with a conviction that overrides any stylistic shortcomings.

Working from a thoughtful script by Naomi Foner, Lumet presents a generational father-son conflict in this study of '60s-style radicalism forced to stay underground in the '80s. Its protagonists are a family of four perpetually on the lam. The father (Judd Hirsch) and mother (Christine Lahti) made the FBI's 10 Most Wanted List 15 years earlier for taking part in the bombing of a government-sponsored napalm factory. Determined to keep the family together, the parents move from place to place with their two sons, constantly changing identities to elude the authorities.

Now the older son, Danny (River Phoenix), wants to go to Juilliard to study piano. To his dad, this is heresy. It will break up the family and initiate Danny into the elitist bourgeois culture that the family has always opposed.

True to erratic form, Lumet lets some scenes drag and others misfire. And he fails to convince us that Danny's gifts as a pianist are really as prodigious as others say. Yet the movie resonates. A post-birthday-dinner scene of the family dancing to James Taylor's "Fire and Rain" is more tonic and touching in a '60s-meets-'80s way than it has any right to be.

Lumet handles the younger members of the cast with special subtlety. As the precocious daughter of Danny's music teacher, and Danny's subsequent girlfriend, Martha Plimpton is a fetching blend of flirt and rebel. River Phoenix continues to show that he is the most instinctual of young actors. Meanwhile, Lahti shines in an

achingly poignant scene where she is reunited with her estranged father over lunch in a posh Manhattan restaurant. **GRADE: ★★★**

MOON OVER PARADOR (PG-13) Paul Mazursky may be our most charming movie satirist — witness "Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice" and "Down and Out in Beverly Hills." But Mazursky has had his follies, like "Tempest," and like this comedy about role-playing — a subject he previously handled with quiet wit in "Next Stop, Greenwich Village."

Watching this fanciful portrait of a struggling, ambitious New York actor (Richard Dreyfuss) who fulfills himself when he is hired to impersonate a recently deceased Latin American dictator, one is never in doubt that the picture is the product of talent. Yet the comedy doesn't blossom, and the actors seem stranded on the screen; their hard work looks suspiciously like mugging.

Like "Tempest," the movie has a male-menopausal air about it that is exclusively Mazursky's. It's there in the "Playboy"-ogling manner in which Sonia Braga is presented. Braga plays the goddesslike mistress of the dead dictator, who becomes Dreyfuss-the-fake-dictator's mistress too. She's luscious — that's the extent of the part. In a dual role reminiscent of Chaplin's in "The Great Dictator," Dreyfuss acts up a storm, but the script just doesn't give him enough to work with.

Raul Julia hams it up as the dictator's right-hand fascist, and Mazursky himself appears in drag as the dictator's mother. Despite the effort, much of this comedy is flat and strained. **GRADE: ★★**

supper. **GRADE: ★★★★★**

FRANTIC (R) Warner, \$89.95. Director Roman Polanski takes the Hitchcockian tactic of structuring a narrative around an ordinary couple thrust into an extraordinary situation in an exotic city. He centers on the trauma of an American surgeon (Harrison Ford) whose wife (Betty Buckley) disappears soon after the couple checks into a Parisian hotel. The result is an atmospheric, yet overdeliberate, movie. **GRADE: ★★★★★** (Film grading: ★★★★★ — excellent, ★★★ — good, ★★ — fair, ★ — poor)

New Home Video

CINDERELLA (G) Walt Disney, \$26.99. The price is right for this enchanting, cornball 1950 animated feature for the whole family. There are cute songs (like "Bibbidi Bobbidi Boo"), twittering birds and scampering mice, lovely put-upon Cinderella, and, of course, that gleaming glass

Reviewing the life of Lennon

By Martin Brady
American Library Assn.

A year that has already seen the publication of Chet Flippo's biography of Paul McCartney now brings three books that celebrate and denigrate the life of the other great Beatle songwriter, John Lennon.

The most controversial is Albert Goldman's "The Lives of John Lennon," (Morrow, 719 pages, \$22.95) decried by many (including McCartney) as an unadulterated pack of lies that unfairly sullies the name of a man who is no longer around to defend himself.

Excerpts published in People magazine have imparted a startling image: A drug-besotted, cleanliness-obsessed hermit paging through porno magazines, ignoring son Sean — exploding the popular portrait of Lennon the devoted "househusband."

How Goldman divined such excesses of detail is something of a mystery. He claims to have interviewed 1,200 people, but does not attribute the scores of damning anecdotes to specific sources.

And yet, it cannot be denied that Goldman has imaginatively mined the standard sources, charting Lennon's early days in Liverpool, the manic Beatle years, the bitter break-up of the band, and his far-from-career-fulfilling years with Yoko.

Goldman's John Lennon is malicious, arrogant, anti-Semitic, racist, bisexual — in short, a physical and psychological mess. Yoko fares even worse, as a power-mad, castrating heroin addict, a greedy conniver — everything her detractors have always said she was.

Goldman does pose provocative questions. Was Lennon responsible for the death of his friend Stuart Sut-

cliffe? What were the circumstances surrounding the death of Beatle manager Brian Epstein? Should Lennon's career be considered a sell-out — the hard-edged rock 'n' roller trading his defiance for the homogenized ideal of pop star?

Julia Baird is Lennon's half-sister. Her "John Lennon, My Brother" (Holt, 154 pages, \$18.95) is a harmless book that recounts her distant relationship with him. With the assistance of journalist Geoffrey Giuliano, Baird paints a portrait of John as a loving brother devoted to his siblings and aunts.

"Imagine: John Lennon" (Macmillan, 255 pages, \$39.95) is a gorgeous photographic tribute to the man, designed as a tie-in to a forthcoming Warner Bros. documentary of the same name. The book's writers/editors are Andrew Solt, who directed and co-produced the movie, and Sam Egan, who wrote the screenplay.

Quotes from Yoko (who authorized the multi-media creation), the other Beatles and their associates are scattered among some 250 black-and-white and color photos, many quite familiar, others never before published.

NRS BRAND REALTY INC.

Home Post Scripts

By Glenda Hughes, Sales Rep. 873-0300

By the time this column hits the paper, I will be in Merry Old England — probably trying to keep warm and darting amongst the raindrops! We are going to a lovely part, in the South, so perhaps the weather will behave, just for the time we are over there.

I have heard so much about the way real estate is handled in England, I am determined to check out just how it is all done, and people can actually make a living at it. From all reports, I have had from my clients, it is rather humorous how it all works. So, I am very anxious to learn the details, so that we can all have a laugh.

Before I left, I "put to bed" a lovely listing that provided me with just the greatest people. They were so co-operative in submitting to my suggestions, as to how to get their home sold quickly, I was almost speechless (you will note, I said, "almost speechless"! When they asked me what they could do to help, I just ran through a couple of pointers, like; keep the lights on, keep the house neat (but you have to "live") and remain calm. Well, the first time I arrived at the home for a showing, the house was lit up like a Christmas tree, the radio was playing softly, everything was so neat, you would think they were away on vacation — and they were real trouper at remaining calm. These lovely people had two teenagers — no easy feat to keep them neat and tidy, and they put their trust in their agent to sell their home. It did sell, very quickly, and I can tell you, that if all clients took, seriously, the advice of their agents, they would save themselves a lot of headaches, and our lives and theirs, would be so much easier. We are there to work for you — that is what you pay us for — and if you lived on this side of the fence, you would know what I mean by "great clients".

We do try our damndest to work miracles for you — and with co-operation like these people, it can all happen quickly and painlessly. The biggest reward of all, is having happy clients!

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