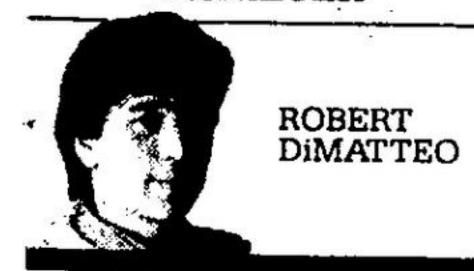
## Love, deceit examined in new movie

## FILMETER



By Robert DiMatteo

In Movie Theaters

SEX, LIES, AND VIDEOTAPE (R) "Psychodrama" began as a form of therapy in which patients could safely act out their anxieties. The result was an emotional nakedness that proved influential to dramatists and filmmakers hoping to plumb new levels of psychological depth. At its worst, though, psychodrama has come to imply a talky, self-indulgent, heavyhanded emotionalism.

That's why Steve Soderbergh's first film is such a surprise - a dark comedy of manners about the fates of four people in Baton Rouge. Shot for only \$1.2 million, the movie has a strippeddown look and abounds in the sort of intense, slightly awkward conversations that sound too real to be scripted. (Actually, they were partly improvised.) Emotionally direct and unflinching, it might be called a psychodrama - but it's a psychodrama fulfilled.

The story is elemental, for all its complications. Free-floating Graham (James Spader) returns to Louisiana, where he visits his former roommate John (Peter Gallagher), now a yuppie lawyer, and John's somewhat puritanical wife Ann (Andle MacDowell). John is having a clandestine affair with Ann's sister Cynthia (Laura San Giacomo), and Ann feels neglected, though she doesn't know why. Soon she's talking to Graham, who confesses to her that he is impotent: He can only gain physical pleasure by watching his taped interviews with women who confess their sexual habits. Ever interested in a new man, Cynthia becomes the latest subject for Graham's probing camera. Soon Ann, too, submits to Graham's interviewing prowess.



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Because of its simplicity, the movie depends upon its actors to an extraordinary degree. They all come through with fresh, idiosyncatric performances. McDowell is a revelation as the sensitive, discontented Ann. As Cynthia, Laura San Giacomo almost steals the picture with her irresistible taunting humor and husky-voiced sexiness. In the sketchiest, least sympathetic role, Peter Gallagher nevertheless creates a three-dimensional philanderer. And Spader, whose performance won him the best actor award at Cannes, is so daringly on his own wavelength that he may strike some people as mannered.

Soderbergh has said that "video is a way of distancing ourselves and cutting ourselves off, anesthetizing our responses." On the surface, his film can be read as anti-video - perhaps even a bit moralistic. But it may say something a little different than Soderbergh himself realizes: Video is not the enemy, but how we use it. Video helps Graham heal himself as much as it destroys him. And, through the sexy, unrepentant character of Cynthia, the movie transcends any moralism. This is a debut film to treasure. GRADE: \*\*\*

## New Home Video

COUSINS (PG-13) Paramount. As remakes go, this Americanization of the '70s French comedy "Cousin, Cousine" is not too bad. This new version comes across like a slightly hipper, saucier version of an Alan Alda film. It's warmhearted with a vengeance, risque with a constant edge of lyrical cuteness.

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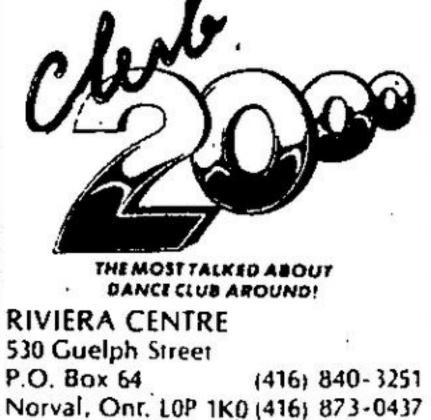
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## "Sassy" Bonnie Raitt has lived her own blues music

By DIAHANN NADEAU Herald Special

Veteran blues slide-guitarist Bonnie Raitt played the International Showplace at Canada's Wonderland on Aug. 28. A woman with a past, a great voice, and a sassy, attitude ('I ain't about nothing if not about attitude'), Raitt gave a rollicking performance, backed by an excellent five-piece band.

Raitt is simpl one of the most interesting women in rock/pop. Unapologetic, beautiful, talented, and funny, she makes sex kittens like Madonna and Paula Abdul look silly and boring. (Or even sillier and boring than they already do.) Raitt has lived her music, and a lot of that music is blues.

Songs ranged from older material such as her bluesy rendition of Del Shannon's Runaway. twe've been listening to Al Green'), and Sippie Wallace's Woman be Wise to new material from her latest album, Nick of Time. The latter tunes are marvelous, including the beautiful reggae-influenced Have a Heart. written by Bonnie Hayes, Cry on

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Raitt is a great guitarist and her band underscored her abilities. Particularly outstanding were former Buckingham Marty Grebb on keyboards and soprano sax, and Johnny Lee Schell on guitar, trombone, and bass. Raitt did a couple of songs alone with Schell, who is a perfect foil for her. Raitt is generous in giving other musicians a lot of limelight and a great deal of credit.

The International Showplace is smaller and more intimate than Kingswood, but one has to sit on benches without backs. An undercapacity crowd attended the concert, but those who were there were fans and loved every moment. Raitt has always been on the edge of the big time a d has never quite broken through. It is a mystery to me how someone who began playing back in 1967, released her first critically acclaimed album in '71, and has such an enormous talent can still be a well-kept secret.

Her two encores included Nick of Time about growing older, (Raitt talked about licking her problems and being healthy and alive). River of Tears, dedicated to Lowell George, Paul Butterfield, and Richard Manuel, friends who did not make it through, and an exquisite version of John Prine's Angel, a country flavored tune that brought some of the audience to tears. Raitt herself seemed overcome at the end of that one.

Bonnie Raitt is a terrific performer and should not be missed next time around. Her between-

song patter is delicious, and almost worth the price of admission alone.

However, with her voice and guitar and fascinating repertoire she could never say a word and still blow many musicians out of the water.



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