

Entertainment

'Producer of the decade' Daniel Lanois has music in his soul

By DIAHANN NADEAU
Herald Special

Daniel Lanois has been called the producer of the decade. With such albums as Peter Dinklage's *So*, U2's *Joshua Tree*, and Robbie Robertson's brilliant comeback to his credit, it's no wonder people have been saying such things about him.

This year Lanois produced the Neville Brothers and Bob Dylan's best album in a very long time. He also came out with his very own album, *Acadie*, a collection of exquisitely pretty and mystical songs, music with cadence and mystery and a wealth of spiritual references.

Born in Quebec, Lanois moved to Hamilton at 11, and began his producing career there. He moved to London, England, three years ago, and lately has been working in New Orleans. He came back to Canada on the final leg of his North American tour last week to play a brilliant set at the Diamond.

It was a magical evening, there was a sense of the prodigal son returning, (although this would be even truer of his gig in Hamilton the next night, his final of the tour), and the crowd was full of Toronto music celebrities. Much music was there in force, taping the show for a Big Ticket Special in 1990.

Lanois came on stage wearing a set of headphones, an unusual touch. Was it a joke, reminding us of his producing hat? Or did he just not feel comfortable without them? He never said. What he did was play a glowing set, finely honed and layered, doing most of the songs on his album and covering a few others, such as a rocking version of Hank Williams' *Jambalaya*, The Velvet Underground's *Waiting for the Man*, and Little Sister, made famous by Presley and redone lately by Dwight Yoakam.

Lanois played guitar, backed by Ronald Jones on drums, Daryl Johnson on bass, Malcolm Burn on keyboards and guitar, and fellow Hamiltonian Bill Dillon (who worked on Robbie Robertson's album) on guitar. As you would expect of a producer of Lanois' stature, the band sounded terrific. The sound was rich, engulfing, pure and resonant.

Lanois seemed pretty relaxed, although he doesn't exactly have a patter for the stage. His love of the music shone through: he was always anxious to get back to it, talk just got in the way. The songs are beautiful, ranging from joyful, Cajun influences to country and folk inflections, to the otherworldliness of the first single, *The Maker*.

As a producer Lanois is brilliant, bringing new ideas and setting new limits for artists. As a musician, songwriter, and singer, Lanois is equally adept, shining proof that being a technical wizard doesn't mean the loss of heart and soul.

The opening act was Crash Vegas, a Canadian band with a record (produced by Malcolm Burn) soon to be released. They did a short, tight set, featuring the clear tones of the lead female singer. (No one announced their names.) They were good, playing music that set the atmosphere for Lanois' set. The whole concert will be on *Much Music* one of these days and should be well worth watching, if they've managed to capture any of the spirit of the live show.

Take a chance on Chances Are

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Here is a sampling of some new releases on video available here in town.

AT THE MOVIES

CHANCES ARE: This is a delightful romantic comedy, starring Cybill Sheperd, Robert Downey Jr., Ryan O'Neal, and Mary Stuart Masterson. Louie Jeffreys has everything: a brilliant career in law, a beautiful young wife, a baby on the way, a great best friend and a nice house. Life's too good actually - he is killed by a car on his way to his first anniversary dinner.

Wife Corinne (Sheperd) never forgets Louie and 23 years later she is still unwed, still loved hopelessly by best friend Philip (O'Neal), and still leaving chocolate out for Louie at night. Enter Alex Finch (Downey), a young man who has already flirted with daughter Miranda (Masterson) when Philip brings him home for dinner. Alex starts having flashbacks and suddenly realizes he is Louie Jeffreys reincarnated.

Alex/Louie has a devil of a time persuading Corinne he's back, and Philip thinks he's just plain nuts. Some very funny scenes ensue (watch for the ball-dancing scene with Fran Ryan as Mrs. Palmadge), and all's well that ends well. A satisfying and sweet comedy, highly recommended.

MISS FIRECRACKER: Holly Hunter stars in this loopy comedy about Carnelle Scott, a Southern hot-so-belle who is determined to enter a local beauty contest and win. She is aided by Popeye Jackson, (Afro Woodard), a seamstress who got her start making clothes for bullfrogs (she produces one for illustration).

Carnelle's cousin Elaine (Mary Steenburgen) comes home to Yazoo City to speak at the contest; as a former Miss Firecracker Elaine is a goddess in Carnelle's eyes. Elaine's brother Delmont (Tim Robbins) returns as well, released from an insane asylum. Brother and sister clash, the town laughs at Carnelle's heartfelt efforts, and her former reputation as Miss Hot Tamale doesn't help her at all.

This is one of those comedies about nutty Southern women that writer Beth Henley is famous for. She also wrote *Crimes of the Heart*. Full of off-the-wall dialogue and characters, Miss Firecracker is a lot of fun, a sparkling look in the weird world of local beauty contests. Scott Glenn plays a consumptive lover who spurts Carnelle in the search for 'eternal grace.'

OUT COLD: A disappointing

comedy starring Terri Garr as Sunny, a cheating wife of a cheating, nasty husband. Bernie (Bruce McGill) owns a butcher shop, robs his partner Dave (John Lithgow) and treats him like dirt. When Sunny purposely shuts Bernie in the freezer and kills him, Dave assumes it's his fault and takes on the job of getting rid of the body. Meanwhile, a detective (Randy Quaid) Sunny hired to tail Bernie stumbles on to the murder without quite understanding what has happened. Sunny gets rid of him too.

This should be a funny black comedy but instead it is tired, never gets off the ground, and Garr's character is too one-dimensional. Lithgow and Quaid are good, but can't save this script.

TO DIE FOR: A bad vampire movie that doesn't offer any fun and not enough scary moments. Just kind of boring.

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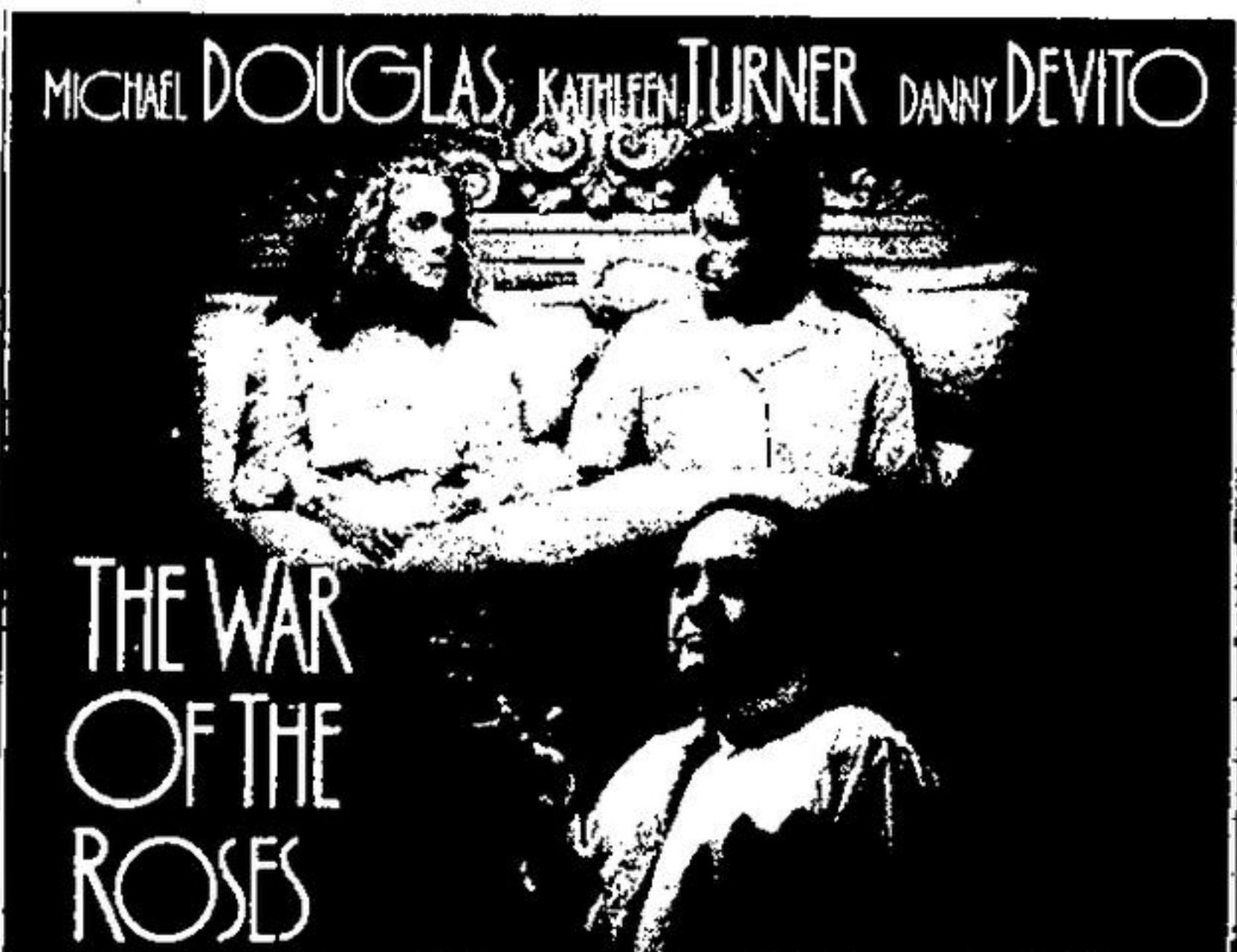
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