

Entertainment Outlook

Documentary details town's demise

FILMETER



ROBERT DIMATTEO

In Movie Theaters

ROGER & ME (R) First-time director-writer-producer Michael Moore returned to his hometown of Flint, Mich. — the birthplace of General Motors — to film a documentary about what happened when GM closed

ranged the time frame of certain events to bolster his argument. However, this isn't all that damaging, since the movie is clearly Moore's highly partisan view. (As a documentary, "Roger and Me" has far more in common with the anti-establishment absurdism of "The Atomic Cafe" than with, say, the scrupulous investigation of "The Sorrow and the Pity.")

Along the way, Moore gives us a scathingly funny portrait of '80s greed — how a powerful American corporation tried to put a new public relations face on its cruel, pinched old one. And, in a ploy worthy of GM, Warner Brothers — which is distributing the film — has pledged to save a seat at each showing of the movie — just in case Roger Smith ever decides

to see the film. GRADE: ★★★★★

MUSIC BOX (PG-13) There are striking examples of foreign directors who successfully made the transition to Hollywood — Roman Polanski and Milos Forman among them. But there are also examples of gifted foreign filmmakers lured by Hollywood whose American-based efforts fall short.

A pretty good case could be made against the American movies of Greek director Constantin Costa-Gavras, too. The man who gave us the crisp, sophisticated political melodrama of "Z" and the complex moral inquiry of "The Confession" has lost his bearings in his recent American-based movies — the white supremacist expose "Betrayed" and now "Music Box." Both were scripted by Joe Eszterhas, and both are ruined by simplistic plotting and motivation, and by a talkiness that has always been a weakness of Costa-Gavras films.

For that matter, "Music Box" is as muted and logy as it is talky. It's too bad, too, because the subject is a potent one — i.e., how little we may know about the people we love. Her brow knitted in earnestness, Jessica Lange stars as a hard-driving Chicago lawyer defending her beloved Hungarian-emigre dad (Armin Mueller-Stahl) against charges that he was once a Nazi. GRADE: ★★

(Film grading: ★★★★★ — excellent, ★★★★★ — good, ★★ — fair, ★ — poor)

What made Zsa Zsa such a big star?

ASK DICK KLEINER



DICK KLEINER

Q. In all the news reports about Zsa Zsa Gabor's trial, she was described as "a movie star." Everyone at Louie's Restaurant would like to know when, or if, she was ever a star in any movie. — C.W. and J.D., Kalamazoo, Mich.

A. Poor Zsa Zsa. Not only was she found guilty, but now the elite crowd from Louie's is questioning her credentials. While she was never a major star, she did have quite a few solid roles in some important films. Among them: "Lili," "Moulin Rouge," "Diary Of a Scoundrel," "Arrivederci Baby" and "Picture Mommy Dead."

Q. Please settle an argument between me, my family and friends. I say Jamie Lee Curtis was one of the children on "Eight Is Enough." — M.H., Stuart, Fla.

A. You say incorrectly. She wasn't.

Q. As a young girl, I watched a show. It was my favorite after-school show. There was a young girl and boy (Buffy and Jody) and their butler/housekeeper. What was that show, and who played the parts, and what

years was it on, and are they all living? — Mrs. Nampa, Idaho.

A. That was "Family Affair," and it ran on CBS from '66 through '71. Sebastian Cabot was the butler, and the children were Kathy Garver, Anissa Jones and Johnnie Whitaker. Cabot and Jones are dead, the others alive.

Q. I would be grateful if you could tell me the name of the actor who plays Lucas on "Another World." — M.R., Hollywood, Fla.

A. That is John Aprea.



Zsa Zsa Gabor Patrick Macnee

Q. Could you tell me what became of Patrick Macnee of "The Avengers"? Is he still living? — P.C.M., Kent, Wash.

A. Macnee is still living, still debonaire, still acting. He has just published his autobiography, "Blind In One Ear," which has a lot of good stuff about his old Avengers co-stars, particularly Diana Rigg.



MICHAEL MOORE (center) is flanked by two residents of Flint, Mich., "the town that General Motors forgot," in his documentary, "Roger and Me."

down many of its plants, putting 30,000 people out of work. It's a record of how Flint became an economically ravaged city, a place where rats outnumber humans.

This sounds like grim stuff, but it isn't. Biting is what it is. The film is structured around Moore's attempts to meet with GM Chairman Roger Smith, in order to bring him to Flint to see what he has wrought. Not surprisingly, Smith proves elusive. But the people Moore does talk to are startling, darkly humorous subjects. One woman stands before a sign that says "Pets or Meat" — she'll sell you rabbits to cuddle, or skin them before your eyes for dinner.

This muckraking documentary is developing a curious history. After playing to enthusiastic audiences at film festivals, a backlash has developed, led by a "Film Comment" article that details how Moore rear-

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