

# Entertainment

## Movie Review

### Havana misses the boat

By GARRY J. MURDOCK  
Herald Special

Sydney Pollack's new film, Havana, brings Robert Redford back to the big screen. Also starring Lena Olin, Alan Arkin and Raul Julia, the movie is set in 1958 Cuba, shortly before the revolution that saw the ousting of General Fulgencia Batista.

What Pollack has here is the opportunity for a great film, both in plot and in relaying a time in history in which people were willing to die for a cause.

But he falls short. Way short.

Redford plays Jack Weil, combination 'gambler-drifter' who seems to ease on into Havana, Cuba, at a period of heavy political unrest and fighting to have his friend/hotel owner set up the biggest-stake poker game of his life.

We can understand why Weil wants this game - he's been waiting for a shot at the big money for all his life. He's tired of the nickel and dime stuff. But why does he have to play this game in Cuba? And why now?

Lena Olin plays Bobbie, the wife of one of the head revolutionary organizers. Her performance is spectacular. She is

an American citizen in love with a Cuban. She is also driven like her husband to help free the country of the dictatorship that dominates it. Unfortunately, she, like everyone else, doesn't know that Castro would set up his own dictatorship, once in power.

The problem lies in the fact that director Pollack has failed to tell the audience what exactly is going on. If you didn't know that Batista's administration at the time was corrupt, if you didn't know about the unbearable oppression the people of Cuba felt, if you didn't know that Fidel Castro (at that time) was the revolutionary hero who led the overthrow of Batista in 1959, then you had a good chance of not understanding the film.

That is unfortunate, because if the film had provided this information, one may begin to understand how the future of Cuba changed so drastically with Castro's administration. A change that had a lot of benefits for the people at the time, but was still a dictatorship nonetheless. A change that also led to a communist government in 1960 with international ramifications that are still felt today.

However, if one tries to stick to the basic premise of the film - if one just accepts the fact that Bobbie is a revolutionary (simply a revolutionary figure without worrying about the historical context) and that Weil is the man who wastes no time in sweeping her off her feet after her husband's execution, then one may begin to understand the simple plot behind the film: Gambler loves girl. Girl is married. Husband dies. Gambler moves in. Girl is tormented but eventually succumbs. Gambler does something noble in the end.

What one finds hard to believe, however, even in this single plot, is how Weil at one point travels through the war-weary Cuban countryside, getting shot at and facing armed soldiers in order to find Bobbie. One wonders that Weil must have fallen deeply in love with a lady he had only met 72 hours earlier, or that he was quite crazy.

The film is also incredibly long - Pollack really didn't need two-and-a-half hours to tell this tale. In fact, the movie would have probably fared far better if some scenes were cut.

Out of ten, Havana rates a 4.

### Amazing Grace - remarkable history

By BOB SPENCE  
Thomson News Service

Amazing Grace, a powerful song with its words of redemption and reconciliation, has been played at everything from weddings to funerals to civil rights demonstrations.

Ironically, it was written by a man who was involved in the slave trade - the captain of an 18th century British slave ship.

Sunday Arts Entertainment with Veronica Tennant looks at the life of the man who wrote the song - and his musical legacy.

Through dramatic and documentary sequences, John Newton's transformation from slave trader to abolitionist is recounted.

The segment, entitled Amazing Grace, also features clips of various performers - including Johnny Cash and Judy Collins - singing Amazing Grace and then talking about the impact of the song.

This episode of CBC-TV's Sunday Arts Entertainment airs Dec. 23 at 2 p.m.

Martin Short portrays a stressed-out supermarket clerk who unwittingly is drawn into the world of high-tech international espionage in Innerspace, an upcoming comedy/adventure movie on CTV.

The clerk ends up carrying something he didn't expect - the incorrigible Tuck Pendelton (Dennis Quaid). Pendelton agrees to participate in a top secret miniaturization experi-



**Bob Spence**  
Entertainment  
Thomson News  
Service

ment. But after being shrunk to a tiny fraction of his size, he is accidentally injected into the backside of the poor clerk, setting off a wild chain of events.

The movie airs at 8:30 p.m. (ET), Dec. 30.

CBC producer/director Harry Rasky offers a detailed look at the life of Robertson Davies.

The Magic Season of Robertson Davies chronicles his many careers - from actor to journalist to author - and includes dramatic excerpts from several of his works, including The Deptford Trilogy and a number of his plays.

In the 90-minute film, Davies talks about his Welsh background, Canadian literature, magic, God and sex.

It airs at 8 p.m., Dec. 27 on CBC-TV.

The Wheel of Time has stopped long enough for some books to be off-loaded.

When Robert Jordan's fantasy novel Eye of the World was released last year, it drew rave reviews from critics. Now comes the second instalment in his Wheel of Time series, The Great Hunt (Tor Books).

His colorful characters once more do battle against the powers of evil in a series that may be the best of its ilk since Tolkein's Lord of the Rings.

CTV offers an encore presentation on Christmas Day of The Magic of Aladdin.

Prima ballerina Karen Kain and actor Ross Petty star in this pantomime version of the fable.

It airs at 1 p.m. (ET), after you have recuperated from opening presents and before you set down to your fowl meal.



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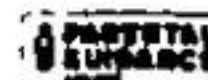
### CINEMA 1

"...THIS IS A CHRISTMAS MOVIE ONLY A GRINCH COULD HATE."

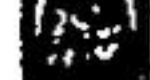
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- Pat Collins, WWOR-TV

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- Jeffrey Lyons, WPIX-TV

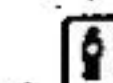
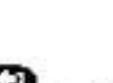
"FIVE STARS OUT OF FIVE!"

- Arvey Basile, CTV VANCOUVER



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