

# The Verdict is a fine Paul Newman movie

by Terry Dupuis

The central character of a new powerful courtroom drama is an alcoholic lawyer named Frank Galvin.

The role was supposed to go originally to Robert Redford; then it was announced for Jon Voight. But both actors turned it down, and Paul Newman stepped into the role. The result is one of Newman's most outstanding performances, and there is a strong feeling that he may win an Academy Award for it in April.

If he does, it will be his first win. Newman was nominated 5 times in the past (for *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof*, *The Hustler*, *Hud*, *Cool Hand Luke* and *Absence Of Malice*) but the gold statuette has always eluded him. 1983 may be Paul Newman's year, after a screen career of almost 30 years.

When we first meet Frank Galvin in *The Verdict*, he is an ambulance-chasing lawyer, seeking out his clients at hospitals and funeral homes. He has a cramped dingy little office full of the records of lost cases over the past 10 years.

Galvin is hung over much of the time, and he spends most of his afternoons drinking and playing a pinball machine at a neighborhood bar. We later discover from one of the film's characters, that Galvin was not always like this. Something had happened to his career and his personal life 10 years ago.

An opportunity for Galvin's redemption comes one day when his former law partner brings him a case. It involves a malpractice suit of a woman who went into a hospital for a routine operation, and ended up being reduced to a vegetable like state. Galvin's

partner tells him the case could net him some quick money, because the other party is quite anxious to settle out of court, the other party being two respected doctors and a renowned hospital which is run by the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston.

Everyone is after Galvin to settle out of court. It would appear to be madness to take this case to court. After all, it's been 10 years since Galvin took a serious case to court, and his adversaries will be powerful and formidable men. But Galvin recognizes that this case may be his last chance to lift himself up out of the pit into which he has squandered a decade of his life. So he takes the case to court, and thus begins one of the most compelling of all screen courtroom dramas.

*The Verdict* is really Newman's movie, but this is not to slight the rest of the fine cast:

Jack Warden plays Galvin's sympathetic ex-partner; Milo O'Shea plays the unsympathetic trial judge; and James Mason portrays the sophisticated defence lawyer who is representing his clients—the two doctors, the hospital and the Archdiocese of Boston.

*The Verdict* is the latest in a long string of movies in which Paul Newman plays an individual bucking the system. This is also a favourite theme of the movie's director Sydney Lumet. Lumet began his directing career 25 years ago with another riveting courtroom drama called *12 Angry Men*. Lumet's crusade for justice in his movies has also been evident in such films as *The Pawnbroker*, *Serpico*, *Dog Day Afternoon* and last year's *Prince Of The City*. In *The Verdict* we sense that both its director and its star are very much at home with the material.

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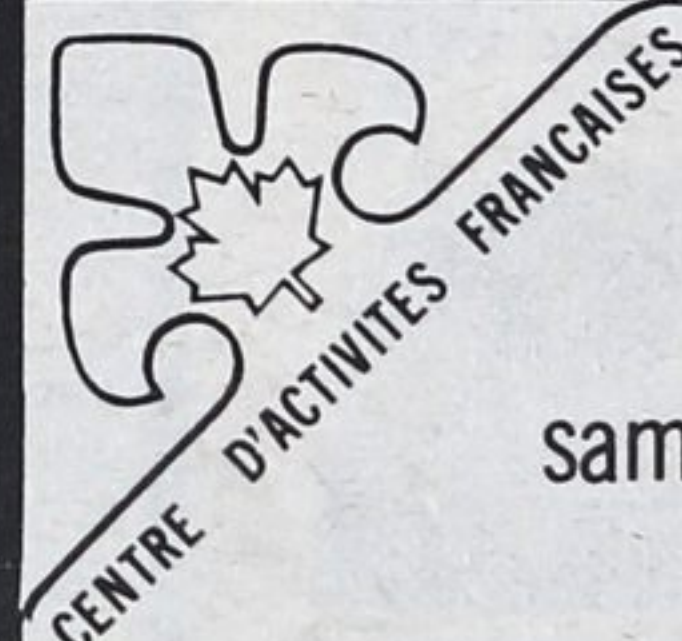
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