

Compromising Positions — this movie just runs out of steam...sorry

by **TERRY DUPUIS**
The quiet affluent suburban community of Nassau County is rocked by a murder in a new murder mystery comedy called **Compromising Positions**.

The victim is Dr. Bruce Fleckstein, a womanizing dentist who is found one morning stabbed on the floor of his office. Since Dr. Fleckstein had a reputation as "the Don Juan of dentists", there is much speculation

about who murdered him. Some people suspect it was an ex-girl friend, while others wonder if it was a jealous husband or boyfriend.

While this murder causes much interest in the community, it ends up becoming a fascination to a housewife named Judith Singer. For one thing, Judith was one of the late dentist's patients, and she had a checkup at his office the same day he was murdered.

Moreover, Judith is a former journalist who had retired seven years earlier in order to raise a family.

But this whole incident involving Dr. Fleckstein reawakens Judith's journalistic curiosity.

This is much to the consternation of Judith's husband, a successful business executive who doesn't want his wife getting involved in a murder case. Judith's delving

also upsets the murderer, who breaks into her house and leaves a warning on the walls that she should mind her own business.

Judith's investigations lead her to become involved with a wide array of characters, including a homicide officer, the dentist's widow and his sister and brother-in-law. Delving into Dr. Fleckstein's background, the journalist uncovers that he had some involvement with organized crime.

The best performance in the film is the one given by Susan Sarandon as Judith Singer, the intrepid journalist-turned-housewife-turned-reporter again. Sarandon manages to make this difficult role seem believable and sympathetic, and she endows Judith with both warmth and humour.

Pau Raul Julia also has a good role as the investigating officer who becomes frustrated with Judith's amateur investigations. He ends up coming to respect her more as the case goes on. Sarandon and Julia acted together in *Tempest* three years ago, and they make a good co-starring team once again.

Also in the cast of **Compromising Positions** is Edward Hermann as Sarandon's self-absorbed husband. It takes a long time before he even realizes how involved his wife has become in the Fleckstein case. Judith Ivey plays Sarandon's best friend, a fun-loving sarcastic girl who is given to making wisecracks.

Finally, there is Joe Mantegna in the small but pivotal role of the murdered dentist. He gets bumped off right after the opening credits, but his is the character which gets

the whole plot rolling. The plot was written by Susan Issacs. She wrote the original novel in 1978 and she has adapted her own screenplay for the movie version. I never read the novel, but in

the case of the screenplay, I found that the story started off intriguingly but than ran out of steam in the second half of the film. And I thought the denouement was predictable and rather disappointing.

Compromising Positions was directed by Frank Perry, a film maker who seems to be more at home with serious material. Perry was the director of *The Swimmer*, *David and Lisa* and *Mommie Dearest*.

Creator wacky comic performance by Peter O'Toole

by **TERRY DUPUIS**

Like his late friend and colleague Richard Burton, Peter O'Toole has never won an Academy Award.

But he has come close on seven occasions. O'Toole was nominated the first time for *Lawrence Of Arabia* at the beginning of his screen career. Then he was nominated both times he portrayed King Henry II in *Becket* and *The Lion In Winter*. Nominations followed in ensuing years for his work in *Goodbye Mr. Chips*, *The Ruling Class*, *The Stunt Man* and *My Favourite Year*.

Another nomination may follow this year for O'Toole's work in a new comedy called *Creator*. He gives a wonderfully wild and eccentric performance, although the Academy may consider it too similar to his work in *My Favourite Year* to nominate him. There certainly is a similarity. In *My Favourite Year* he portrayed an irrepressibly eccentric actor. In *Creator* he plays an irrepressibly eccentric scientist.

Peter O'Toole's role in *Creator* is that of Dr. Henry Wolper, a biologist teaching at a university who happens to have been a Nobel Laureate winner for some of his research. But he is not a happy man. He is still lonely and obsessed with the loss of his wife Lucy who died 30 years earlier in childbirth.

But unbeknownst to the faculty at the university, the good but slightly mad doctor is experimenting with the process of creating life. In a small building he has at the back of his house which is full of laboratory equipment he has borrowed over the years from the university, he is attempting to recreate his dead wife from cells that he had preserved at the time of her death.

Creator is a silly nonsensical comedy which badly needed a Peter O'Toole in order to pull off its brand of wackiness. O'Toole is the whole show really, and without him the movie

would be a waste of time. As it is, the story sags whenever he is off screen. There is a subplot in the film concerning his young assistant Boris whom the good doctor takes under his wing.

Boris falls in love with a young woman student at the college, and a lot of footage is given over to their story.

Boris is played by screen newcomer Vincent Spano. He is a John Travolta type who shows some signs of acting ability in *Creator*, but further acting roles will decide whether his career will have any longevity.

But I didn't care much for the work done by his co-star Virginia Madsen, who was recently seen in *Dune*. And I was even less enthralled by O'Toole's co-star Mariel Hemingway. She may be the grand-daughter of famed novelist Ernest Hemingway, but that doesn't mean she can act. Appearance-wise, she resembles a homely version of Brooke Shields, and her acting abilities are even more minuscule than Brooke's.

However, there are two good supporting roles in *Creator* which offer Peter O'Toole some fine support. These are from David Ogden Stiers as O'Toole's rival and nemesis at the college. He wants O'Toole discharged from the university because he feels the man is an embarrassment to the faculty and may prevent the college from getting a much needed loan for its research. Stiers recreates the same type of pompous sneery character that he played for years on *Mash*.

The other good supporting role in *Creator* is given by aging character actor John Dehner. He plays one of O'Toole's few supporters on the college staff.

In summation, *Creator* never really amounts to much of a movie, but Peter O'Toole's fans may want to catch it for his wacky comic performance as Dr. Henry Wolper.

Chalk up a safe Hallowe'en

Although Hallowe'ens in the past have turned out to be a nightmare for local police, Penetanguishene Police Chief Robert Cummings is pleased to report that the town force had a very quiet evening last Thursday.

Cummings says other than an incident of a group of teenagers throwing raw eggs from a moving vehicle, there were no major occurrences this Hallowe'en.

The chief adds, although there were no damages as a result of the pranksters, the group were stopped by police and warned about their actions.

Despite added auxiliary staff put on by the force for the occasion, the extra manpower was not needed.

Cummins says the older teenagers in Penetang should be commended for their excellent behavior last Thursday night.

Five per cent increases approved

Three paid positions in the Town of Penetanguishene were given a five per cent salary increases at Monday night's Council meeting.

At the final meeting before next month's municipal election, council gave its seal of approval to the salary ratification for Penetang volunteer fire fighters, the town office's janitor and the Clerk-administrator, Yvon Gagne.

According to Mayor Ron Bellisle, the increase imposed was set out earlier in the year within the town's budget.

Although the town had set limitations for firefighters and the janitor, the salary increase was discussed among the council and Gagne himself, says Bellisle.

According to Bellisle, even though some of the councillors discussed a possible raise of more than five per cent for the clerk, Gagne wanted the same as other town employees were given earlier in the summer.



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