



Lights, Camera, Action!

Jenny is sweet, innocuous... that's all

By IVAN ZENDEL

Jenny is a sweet innocuous little film. But the trouble with sweet innocuous little films is that there is not much one can say about them, aside from that they are sweet, innocuous, etc.

Marlo Thomas plays the part of Jenny. Danny Thomas' little daughter is beautiful and if you've watched *That Girl*, you'll be glad to know that Marlo manages to avoid the nauseating idiosyncrasies of screechy voiced Anne Marie. But taking the analogy one step further, Alan Alda, the male lead, plays a perfect Donald Hollinger, (Oh Donald!) who has grown up and started smoking dope.

The story itself is rather simple. Jenny is a girl who gets knocked up, becomes pregnant, and meets a young film maker named Delano, (Alan Alda) who is about to be drafted. He proposes to Jenny telling her that it would solve both their problems.

As far as Delano is concerned, the marriage would be a marriage of convenience. Jenny, however, in her true wide eyed idealism, sees love in the offing, and consents. The story of marital discourse begins. Delano, you see, has a girlfriend, and as far as he is concerned, marriages of convenience, should not infringe on his social life. Then, to top it off, Jenny understands and laughing and crying throughout, becomes best friends with said girlfriend.

Jenny and Delano go to meet her parents. Jenny runs out on one of Delano's pot parties. Delano's deferment is denied and Jenny has her baby.

The film ends in limbo. Delano never says "I love you" and Jenny never says "I hate you." But being a purely emotional film, it doesn't really matter, because, well, we all understand (sigh).

The direction, the photography, the camera work, and the script were all competent. Nothing more, nothing less.

The only outstanding failing of the film is the acting. Alda is poor. He plays his part with a singular lack of enthusiasm and conviction. Marion Haily (the girlfriend) walked through the role as though she wasn't sure the camera was running. The other characters were pure caricatures. Again the fault may lie with the script, but even then, caricatures can be acted with some sort of finesse.

Jenny is of the same grain of John and Mary and *Last Summer* but without the charisma of Dustin Hoffman and Mia Farrow, and the sensitive direction of the Perrys. It does provide a passable Saturday night's entertainment with your favorite girlfriend whose hand you can hold.



Marlo Thomas and Alan Alda in sweet innocuous little Jenny.

With a name like Heironymus....

Merkin has got to be fun

By LLOYD CHESLEY

The Coronet is not one of our better theatres, to be sure, but if you check what they're showing now you'll see that besides a dubious effort called *The Activist*, they have Anthony Newley's well-attacked gem of almost a year ago, usually called Heironymus Merkin (so I won't give you the full title for fear you'll think me fatuous).

In the first reel of the film Newley gives you three characters that represent exactly what every critic said in condemning this movie. It is hilarious to note that these three critics represent all three types active in papers today: the pseudo-intellectual creep, the bitchy broad, and the dummy trying to be on a level with the 12-year old mind of the average audience (as soon as I place myself I'll probably quit in a minute). Have fun matching these up first with Toronto's major critics and then other writers some time.

For those of you who know *Stop The World I Want To Get Off*, Merkin will cover familiar ground. It's simply about a man's struggle between existentialism and humanism as a way of life. The fact that the issue is never resolved is the greatest beauty of the film. It has no ending, for in life the only ending is death and death here would have been too trite to use.

Now that we have dispensed with the substance of the film, let's get to the form writer-director-star Newley uses (I might interject that there are few other credits I can give you; as a rule critics get the credits not off the screen but out of little folders and I got no folder this time out).

What we have here is a mixture of Reformation theatre, surrealism and English music hall. This type of originality left him wide open for attack. Also the (shall we say) "liberal" sex scenes are the type of thing critics feel they must attack or admit they enjoy (although why critics want it felt that they aren't turned on by sex is quite beyond me).

The setting is a beach rich in the color of the sea and sky about it and often distorted by some of the most exciting lens-work that I've seen in a long time (these days the only thing done with a lens is a zoom or a distortion of the distance

between things on the vertical axis). Add to these gorgeous visuals some terrifically dynamic montage-type editing and you find yourself constantly glued to the screen.

Meanwhile you're watching those scenes that had the film arrested (a silly way to describe a silly situation) as well as Newley deliver some of his best songs. I was even amazed to find that supporting stars Milton Berle and George Jessel were funny and appropriate as *Good Time Eddie Filtch* (the Devil) and *The Presence* respectively.

The Presence is Death, and as might be expected from the choice of Jessel to play him, he is personified as a bad joke. This type of humorous-serious symbolism carries the heavy theme in the full tradition of high comedy that we usually associate as having started with Chaplin and can see today mainly in the films of Truffault.

The girls are quite amazing. The leading females (in all senses of the word) are Newley's ex-wife, Joan Collins, and a playmate he found to play Mercy Humppe, Connie Kreski. It is nice to see that Newley didn't deem it necessary to maintain this level of feminine pulchritude in all the girls, which should loosen the tension among the female Nazis in the audience. It also emphasizes the serious tone of what he is saying. Sure he uses the gorgeous ones in the main roles, but it is the gorgeous girls in his life that had the greatest effect on him. Also, and quite simply, gorgeous girls are a far superior subject for communicating to an audience than hags are.

Along the course of the film Newley proves that he can be a master of many moods, be it black comedy, a surrealistic death scene, broad comedy, semantic wit and even one beautifully tender scene in the rain. He controls visions, words, music and song in filling out the total canvas of this film.

I for one think that Heironymus Merkin is a really great film. It has a serious theme that it treats intelligently. It has the courage to present the theme in the most difficult of forms, the comedy. It is a film original in form, gorgeous on screen, rich in detail. It is that

rarest of entities, a good idea well presented. I'm not sure why it was so overlooked in so many circles, but it certainly deserved more than such slight treatment.

My last word on the film is "Honesty". It always knows when and why it is breaking convention and we are always sure it is never for sensationalism. It doesn't pretend to have all the answers, indeed quite the opposite, but it does show a careful consideration of both sides of the theme it treats. And, I guess on top of all that, the thing it is so aware of is the necessity of fun in movies. In comedy, it entertains. In comedy, it teaches. In comedy, it is great art.

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