

Glass Menagerie alive

The Glass Menagerie
Cineplex Odeon Films
Westmount 4

review by Elaine Ostry

Paul Newman brings Tennessee Williams' play *The Glass Menagerie* to the cinema with the style that marks a great director. Newman has served the play's intention well, and the film is very faithful to the play, just as an adaptation should be.

The viewer's attention is immediately caught by the opening scene, which shows a man walking to an abandoned apartment building. One immediately starts wondering where he is going, and what could be the meaning behind the mysterious, searching lances he throws at the camera.

That man is Tom, returning to his old, long-abandoned home. He starts to recall the past, introducing the movie as "a memory play." As he talks, the camera blurs and the apartment appears as it did in the late nineteen-thirties, with his mother's voice rambling on as usual.

Newman establishes the setting of the movie very well. The set is meticulously perfect in showing the time of the Depression. The swing music coming from the dance hall across the alley adds greatly to the poetic mood of the film.

Although it is a "memory play," *The Glass Menagerie* is hardly nostalgic. The memories are too painful to invite sentimentality. Even the mother's accounts of summer days with "seventeen gentleman callers," is shadowed by the memory of her husband, "the telephone operator who fell in love with long distances," and left his family.

The fate of the characters is obvious from the start, but this does not mean that one's attention strays. On the contrary, one becomes fascinated with the characters; one feels compassion for them. This is due not only to the brilliance of Tennessee Williams, but to the efforts of the cast.

John Malkovich, as Tom, creates a very interesting portrait of someone on the verge of making a painful and irrevocable decision. He shows Tom's utter restlessness with his eyes, his voice, even with the way he smokes a cigarette. One can see Malkovich's great control over his role that allows him to portray Tom without exaggeration, and with much intensity. When Tom cries: "People go to movies instead of moving!", one can feel his despair.

Karen Allen gives the best performance of her film career (you remember, the girl in *Raiders of the Lost Ark #1*) as Laura. Laura is too shy and nervous to take initiative in her life, and as a result is dependent upon her brother and mother. She has a crooked leg, and the embarrassment of this handicap has made her shy.

Allen shows Laura's nervous halplessness with the same controlled concentration that marks Malkovich's performance. Her eyes flicker, her hands tremble, her voice trembles, but none of this nervousness is overdone. She is, however, too composed in the final scene. Her stress is clear and understandable, and her strange charm is evident. She is a delicate creature, as frail as the glass animals she collects.

Joanne Woodward is very good as the mother, Amanda. Woodward's experience — she won an Academy Award for *The Three Faces of Eve* — is obvious. Woodward



Characters have intimate interplay in the *Glass Menagerie*

creates an interesting character. Poor mother has to cope with a restless dissatisfied son and a withdrawn daughter, as well as her own pain as an abandoned wife.

Woodward shows the different facets of Amanda's character with great flexibility. One moment, Amanda is lost in memory of her carefree youth; the next, she is a shrieking hardpan. Woodward depicts both Amanda's bossiness and charm very skillfully. One cannot help but admire Amanda's dignity and ability to survive.

James Naughton does a good job in the lesser role of Jim, the gentleman caller. He represents Laura's — and Amanda's — last chance for happiness and security. Naughton plays the ambitious Jim with brash charm, and leads the scene between him and Laura with just the right combination of confidence

and awkwardness.

Newman proves himself to be an excellent director with his treatment of *The Glass Menagerie*, from the first scene, the movie is distinguished by quite an artistic approach to direction. The artistry, however, is not obtrusive. The transition between scenes of Tom's narration in the abandoned apartment to events in the past is smooth. Particularly effective is Newman's use of light and shadow, and when he panned shots quickly back and forth to show Laura's panic when she discovers the identity of the gentleman caller.

In all, the actors and the director of *The Glass Menagerie* have worked very well together to produce a film of great skill and integrity.

Wonder Woman (DC: story by George Perez and Len Wein; art by Perez and Bruce D. Patterson) has her own monthly series again, and she's finally getting the treatment she deserves. Her origin has been re-told with a much greater mythological influence.

Although the writers for *Wonder Woman* are male, the book has a female editor (Karen Berger). DC seems to be genuinely aiming for a feminist viewpoint with the series, something sorely needed in the male-dominated industry.

Other comics definitely worth the investment are *Elementals* (Comico), *Lone Wolf and Cub* (First), the recent 12-issue series *the Watchmen* (DC), and so on. All of the comics mentioned are especially good because both the art and the narrative are well-done. It really takes excellence on both levels to produce a worthwhile comic.

In addition to all of the obvious reasons to read comics — good art, good stories, the visual narrative style itself — comics are fun. And what self-respecting adult wants to let kids have all the fun?

Comic books no longer just for children

by Wendy Joy

So when was the last time you read a comic book?

You probably threw them away several years ago, thinking they were just for kids. Maybe "illustrated narrative" is a better term for the medium. After all, not all comics are comedic, and besides, everyone thinks you're a juvenile if you collect comic books. Whereas if you tell them you collect illustrated narratives, they might not have the foggiest idea of what you're talking about and will probably be impressed.

Whatever you want to call them, comics combine art with story to create a unique genre. Art and story, in a good comic, complement and enrich each other. Both elements of the genre are undervalued. There are many brilliant artists and writers

working in the comic industry that are ignored by virtually everyone except comic fanatics. Not only do these creative people do good work, they also have to produce at an incredible pace if they are working on a monthly series.

In addition to the undervalued artists and writers working in the business, there are also a lot of comics that are geared more towards the adult rather than the child reader. *Scout* (Eclipse: Timothy Truman, artist, writer, and creator) is one of these. The story is set in a possible future America. Issues #1-24 have chronicled the years 1999 to 2003.

Scout's America has fallen on hard times. The San Andreas Fault has finally shifted most of California into the sea, the economy is in disastrous shape, there have been several nuclear reactor meltdowns, and because of food riots and general unrest (and

political instability), a state of martial law has been implemented by the government.

Emanuel Santana (aka Scout), an Apache, is the central character of the narrative. The story itself is primarily action-adventure, but there are all sorts of mystical, mythical, and political elements. The characters are well-developed, the writing is excellent, and the art is, in a word, great.

Issue #24 of *Scout* leaves America on the brink of civil war. There are two upcoming mini-series, *Swords of Texas* and *New America* that will chronicle the 12-year civil war and will follow some of Scout's secondary characters. Scout will return in *Scout War Shaman*: the time is now ten years later, and Scout is now a husband and father. He will enter the Civil War against his will. It should be a series to look out for, as Truman's work is consistently excellent.



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