

Housewife flees monotony

Burstyn's Alice bounces between affairs

By TED MUMFORD

In Mean Streets, director Martin Scorsese portrayed the oppressiveness of metropolitan life. In his newest film Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore, he deals with the monotony of the Southwest. More

important, the film also concerns itself with the dilemma of liberation from a slavish housewife existence for Alice Hyatt (played by Ellen Burstyn).

The story starts with Alice leading a frustrating life with her surly husband Don (Billy Green Bush), and

brattish 12-year-old Tom (Alfred Lutter). When she is suddenly widowed, Alice must find a means of survival; she decides to return to her hometown of Monterey for a gamble on a long shot — the singing career she dreamed of before her marriage.

Alice supports herself and Tommy on their trip by working first as a singer in Albuquerque, and then as a waitress in Tucson. The first job ends when she flees from a particularly seedy affair with one Ben Eberhart (Harvey Keitel, the star of Mean Streets). At the second job she falls in love with a lonesome divorced farmer, David Barrie (played by

Kris Kristofferson). In the ensuing strife Alice, Tommy, and David all find themselves.

Although the film is sometimes overly sentimental, particularly towards the end, Burstyn's performance alone make it worthwhile. She makes Alice clumsy, earthy and tough, but never stoops to being "wacky". She performs with an underlying anger from her personal experience of the frustrations of show business and raising a son without a father. She has given us one of the few intelligent female leads in recent years.

Young Alfred Lutter and Burstyn

interact very well. They alternate in moods of euphoria and depression on the road to understanding each other.

Although Kristofferson has never considered himself much of an actor, his film appearances have always been competent, and this one is no exception. The man has a lot of down home charisma, the role of a farmer fits him perfectly.

The film is not a journey to the heart of America; Alice is no more than Alice. It is simply a statement of a woman's need to be free, that transcends feminism and is more than a simple love story.



Ellen Burstyn and Kris Kristofferson in Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore.

Chairs everywhere, nor any spot to sit

By PAUL WASSMAN

Sitting around dreary Downsview is not my idea of a fun-packed weekend. Sitting on dreary TTC for ninety minutes isn't too thrilling either but, it's the price a student has to pay to enter the real world of downtown. Having had the good fortune to find a sucker — er, helpful person — to buy some scrip, I gathered together my cents and hied myself thither to that july cosmopolitan institution, the Art Gallery of Ontario, affectionately known as Fort Kulcha.

The current exhibition, Chairs, is not one of your typical cultural events. It is, rather, an intense investigation into the idea of chairs. Or, as the AGO puts it, "a serious, comic, metaphysical, insane, feet on the ground examination of the burning issue of chairness."

Right. Since sitting is one of my avocations, and I pride myself on the fact that I have sat on a great many things, I approached this exhibition as a connoisseur of fine seats. To my delight and edification, the exhibi-

tion broadened both perception and experience.

The chairs lounging about several galleries are the evolution of an exhibition mounted by the art gallery of the University of British Columbia in the winter of 1968. Alvin Balkind Curator of Contemporary Art, warns in the prologue that 'the show avoids the historical approach'. There is no attempted chronology, and the show is not the exclusive concourse of high art. It is a vertical exhibition that reveals the history of design, styles and social attitudes through the ages. It is also a horizontal exhibition, that is to say, an interdisciplinary gathering together of elements that are broad in scope, illuminating, entertaining, irreverent, even mischievous.

The show is a three ring circus that engulfs and absorbs. The nostalgia of an old school desk, the kind that scraped knees and monumentalized initials. Neat old moviehouse seats, too. Frumpy, dumpy, lumpy chairs. Sleazy chairs. Easy chairs. Some not so easy. Gah, dentists chairs, now this won't hurt a bit. Chairs that invite you to sit, others that defy.

Many artists have looked at the problem of chairness. The solutions, the artifacts and the art reveals the motif to be one of infinite possibilities and permutations. But the metaphysical question is: if you can't sit on it, is it a chair?

The first chair, ever, was there, represented by a fibreglass boulder. Yes, friends, man learned first to sit, then to lie. The distance between the klismos of ancient Athens and the Barcelona chair of Mies Van der Rohe does not seem too great. And yet between them is David Gilhooly's "Frog seducing a rutabaga in an overstuffed chair". Ahem.

From the looks of the joint, the people who set up the show couldn't resist a joke. Two dummies making out in a popcorn strewn theatre, a rickety wheel chair on loan from the AGO labelled "Mixed Media". My favourite was a beat-up sleazy kitchen chair, an anonymous loan.

Given this plethora of sitting opportunities, I went bananas. I sat on anything that wasn't hung up, much to the distress of the blazered personnel who had accurately marked me as a sitting freak. But I tried not to make an ass of myself, and the potentially unsettling situation passed like a davenport on a foggy afternoon.

Chairs is, undoubtedly, an exhibition to make you consider things you haven't considered before. And that's good. It's an intriguing aspect of what it is to be human as well. Show me a man who doesn't sit down and I'll show you a case of terminal varicose veins.

I'm sure that this is a show that people will be talking about for a while.

Not something you can take sitting down.

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