

Films

Suddenly there are interesting movies everywhere, or at least near enough to everywhere that I haven't gotten around to them all.

So let me remind you that *Woman of the Dunes* is at Studio 82.

I haven't seen it yet, but I haven't met anyone who has who doesn't rave about it.

Incidentally, the fact that it's here at all is very much to the credit of the Alberta film censor, Mr. Jack Day, whom I had the pleasure of meeting last Thursday.

Mr. Day's unspeakable predecessor Colonel Fleming banned *Woman of the Dunes* outright, and the ban was upheld by the Appeal Board. As they stood, our censorship regulations contained no provisions for further or later appeal: once banned, always banned.

Mr. Day very sensibly decided that this was insane, and has been responsible for new regulations which provide for periodic re-submission of films. *Woman of the Dunes* is the first-fruit of the new dispensation, and Mr. Day deserves our gratitude.

Richard Lester's latest film, *Petulia*, has finally arrived at the Garneau, and proves well worth waiting for.

Lester has been known as a tricky director for a long time now, since *The Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film* in fact; this two Beatles movies were full of overhead shots, calculated non-sequiturs, good jokes thrown after bad, and general mayhem.

The Knack was a superb film, where all the tricks worked. *How I Won the War* was a very strange film indeed, less integrated but more radically adventurous.

The striking thing about *Petulia* is that the tricks are suddenly gone. With the exception of a consistent controlled use of flashback-flashforward technique (to think that only three years ago almost no-one in the Edmonton Film Society could follow Resnais' *Muriel*, the first film to exploit the technique on a large scale), Lester keeps coolly to the business of the hour.

Which is, I'm afraid, California again—that lush grim portent of where we'll all probably be in a few years, barring the Revolution.

Lester, who is on record as having called San Francisco the most exciting city in the world, uses it absolutely lethally (making *The Graduate* look like the cream-puff it is) as the back-drop to a story about marriages, accidents and coincidences.

Petulia, who is Julie Christie (her best role for years), flames like a pathetic gallant comet in eccentric trajectory through the hardly-less-screwed-up life of George C. Scott, a doctor recently divorced.

Petulia's husband is Richard Chamberlain, whom you may remember with slight nausea as Dr. Kildare. Don't be put off. Lester turns the after-image to good use, and creates from the shards of all-American good looks and wholesomeness the most convincing psychopath I've seen on the screen.

I could go on and on about the complexities the film achieves by juxtaposing various bad marriages, various violences and blood, various levels of social misery. But I would much rather you see it for yourselves; for me it removes any remaining doubt that Richard Lester is one of the fifteen best directors in the world.

Let me glancingly dismiss *Ulysses*, made by Joseph Strick, whom Francois Truffaut has called the worst director in the world because he so relentlessly mutilates masterpieces.

This is not quite fair. Strick does as good and workmanlike a job on Joyce's novel as can reasonably be demanded. The casting is excellent. The photography of Dublin is evocative. The camera is handled with some intelligence. Joyce's words, huge gobs of them, are as impressive as always.

And once I left the theatre, the whole three-hour fabric fell apart, because the film has no design of its own and is unable to duplicate the gigantic architecture without which *Ulysses* is nothing.

—John Thompson

students for a romantic-medieval university

"Philadelphia" — success

Philadelphia is a comedy, but not without tears.

Its view of life is as lamenting as it is lusty."

The Citadel's Thursday night performance of Brian Friel's Irish comedy 'Philadelphia, Here I Come' was very nearly an unqualified success. 'Philadelphia' is a very bright light, a delightful document of the playwright's tender understanding and forgiveness of human weakness. The Citadel's performance was akin to a stained glass window through which this light was diffused over the audience in a finely coloured mosaic of emotion.

'Philadelphia' is a comedy, but not without tears. Its view of life is as lamenting as it is lusty. The director Sean Mulcahy has captured the spirit of Friel's vision and has in turn transmitted it to the cast who on stage rendered a perfect realization of the playwright's intentions. Mulcahy's acting was no less impressive than his direction. He played the role of Private Gar. This role is an interesting one and not without its problems. It is not a consistent role: it represents at one time Gar's conscious, at another his unconscious. Just how does an actor represent another actor's unconscious on stage and still preserve his

essential quality of "a kind of nothing"? Well, Mulcahy quite understandably didn't quite represent nothingness not could he ever be mistaken for another character. While he was a person on stage, you were always aware that he was a non-person. Mulcahy took a comfortable place on the stage and the paradox of his role never became a difficult assumption of the audience.

This effect was a result both of Mulcahy's carriage (a controlled tension between his physical impotency and his dynamic, sometimes violent speech) and the rest of the cast's smooth movement around and in ignorance of the Private Gar.

Hagan Beggs gave an equally distinguished performance as the other half of Gar O'Donnell. Together Beggs and Mulcahy have created a masterful portrait of the whims, follies and aspirations of a character. Their acting of Gar when by himself had the magnificence that only a careful understanding of the possibilities of a well drawn character can provide.

The best acting of the night came from Sydney Brown

(Gar's father) and Josephine Fitzgerald (Madge). Brown was a silent for most of the play. Even in silence he shone. Brown as a tired beaten old man provided the needed contrast to the struggling hopeful defiance of his son. Equally as tired but not beaten Marge made the resolution of the O'Donnell household complete.

The boys played by David Yorston, Hamish Robertson and Mel Tuck were on the whole well done. Tuck seemed a little weak. Alfred Gallagher was as polished as the Canon as he was stale as the Senator. Alan Stebbings did a good job. Carolyne Woodstock was just adequate. The poorest scene in the production was the confrontation with Aunt Lizzy. Vernis McCuaig, Denis Kalman and Orest Kinasevich just weren't up to the same kind of quality of acting given by the rest of the cast. The setting and lighting of the production were adequate and professional, as is generally the case with Mr. Silver's productions.

'Philadelphia' will be running until December 7. Tickets may be picked up at the box-office.

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