

Arts

Clayton proves pointless in latest *Lonely Passion*

By MICHAEL REDHILL

Don't believe any of this "tragic-comedy" stuff when they talk about *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearns*. In this film, when you laugh, it's out of pure pity for these monstrously stupid people, caught in traps of age, sex, religion and gossip. Judith Hearns is a tragedy. However, well-made, it is an exasperating film to watch.

It is the story of Judith Hearns, (Maggie Smith) spinster and piano teacher, who is falling through life after the death of an aunt who raised her as an orphan. Hearns takes up in a Dublin co-op, run by the rumour-mongering Mrs. Rice and her porker son, Bernard. It is there that she meets James Madden (Bob Hoskins, doing his best DeNiro), Mrs. Rice's worthless brother. Madden is fresh from New York and looking for a business partner. Judith is looking for love, and her blithe ignorance to Madden's true stripe is enough to make you rip your hair out.

Smith's performance is excellent. But who can make a case for an excellent performance when the character in question, the protagonist for that matter, is someone the audience would give a leg to have one clean swipe at? Judith Hearns is so weepy, so full of self pity, *such a problem*, that it is a pleasure to see her get her just deserts at the hands (or wallet) of James Madden.

When Director Jack (Room With a View) Clayton sets up a posh Victorian tone at the beginning of this film, and we are introduced to the young Hearns, repressed by Catholicism and a crusty aunt, we expect a revelation of sorts to occur later in the film. A catharsis, or a change for the better, wasn't necessary but we desire some degree of self-discovery. Instead, she turns to drink, is victimized in the most obvious way by Mrs. Rice and Bernard, and all without realizing how she is being treated. Though she is tormented by her growing belief that there is no God, she takes a slap on the hand from a priest and thinks of it no more. She continues worshipping the spirit of her nasty and (thankfully) dead aunt, although it is clear in flashbacks that Judith resented having to take care of her.

So what is Clayton's point? Although the press material speaks of a bitter-sweet story, there is nothing sweet about this near-spinster who is at the edge of some great personal unshrouding, but too stupid to get there. We have no sympathy for Judith Hearns. Like Madden who gives her a great kick in the heart near the end of the film, we too want to give her an almighty wallop, if only to wake her up. It's strange for a film to be as well-made as this and as dissatisfying.



BOOGER AGAIN? Maggie Smith and Bob Hoskins in Jack Clayton's *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearns*.



BOOGER? Billy (Chris Mulkey) and Eddie (John Jenkins) are friends whose paths have diverged in Burton Morris' *Patti Rocks*.

Censor "blackballs" Patti Rocks

By OTAV LOMBARDO

Before it could even premiere, David Burton Morris' film, *Patti Rocks* was already surrounded by controversy—it had become the first movie in the history of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) to receive an "X" rating on the basis of verbal content alone.

Based on *Loose Ends*, a 1975 award-winning movie about two young blue collar buddies, *Patti Rocks* is a peek into the lives of Billy Regis (Chris Mulkey) and Eddie Hasset (John Jenkins) twelve years later. Eddie has become a supervisor of the Minneapolis car dealership service department where they both used to work. Billy now works on the river barges. Their friendship had taken a turn for the worst some months earlier when Eddie fired Billy.

The complication occurs at the beginning of the movie. Although Billy is in his second marriage and has two daughters, only now has his philandering caught up with him. *Patti Rocks* (Karen Landay); his latest mistress is pregnant. Unable to stand telling her the truth of his marital status alone, he convinces a

reluctant Eddie to accompany him on the journey to Patti's place for moral support.

The long car ride to Patti's house becomes the backbone of the movie. Alone on the open road, their dialogue defines the changes that have occurred over a decade.

Though Billy does most of the speaking, his character is essentially flat. He expresses his sex-based fantasies with almost lyrical abandon but cannot be said to have any essence other than that of the archetypical philanderer.

The ugly truth he personified kept the laughter level low in this "adult comedy." Though any male has heard more explicit misogynist ramblings, it is the fact that Billy is a confirmation of the worst fears of women that must have frustrated the censors. Unable to wield their mighty scissors against the pictorial content of this film they decided to punish this verbal expose of society's patriarchal nature by blackballing it with an "X" rating.

Eddie, in contrast, is a reformed version of Billy. His occasional comment and smile serves to acknowledge Billy and their past friendship. Nevertheless, his predominant facial expression com-

bines a judge's sobriety with the stoic acceptance of the suffering. Eddie too, was once a philander, but a broken marriage seems to have reformed him. His ability to change eventually becomes the movie's expression of hope.

Rising action accelerates towards an inevitable climax as Regis and Hackett confront Patti. Clear thinking and self-assertive, she is the rock that chauvenistic males are increasingly running into. Having treated women as childish objects all his life, Billy can't possibly turn on a dime and change his ways now. Not only is he met with scorn but can't even explain his marital status, which was the purpose of his long journey.

In desperation, he again convinces Eddie to do his dirty work. But the plan only creates more problems, as Eddie slides from his role as friend's confessor to that of a mature male lover. Patti's intervention saves the movie from a bitter ending and allows the time devoted to the journey to her place to take on a deeper significance. In the last half of the movie it becomes apparent that though they travelled in the same car, these ex-buddies are travelling down two completely different roads.

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