

## Dangerous LIAISONS

**DIRECTOR: (STEPHEN FREARS)** 

"I was born to dominate the other sex and to avenge my own," says the Marquise with such poison that all the men in the audience simultaneously cross their legs. Crikey! Dangerous Liaisons deals with a time (Hmm .... late 17th century I'd say) when most of the French population live like animals in cardboard boxes at the edge of the forest, and the remainder (about 0.0005%) are totally rich bastards (vive la revolution) that do nothing else except spending half the day getting dressed and the other ripping it all off again for a protracted session of ultra-bonking with whoever has the correct appendage or orifice. Amidst all the copulation, boredom begins to set in and invariably some of the more reprehensible advocates of this kind of behavior start making bets on whether one protagonist or another is likely to slip and/or get the beef (hoo-hoo! Snurk-snurkfnaar!) from another. That or revenge.

Yes, it is revenge that the Marquise de Merteuil (Glenn Close) wants. It turns out that her ex-lover is now planning to be married to her cousin's daughter. (hang on, this gets a bit complicated) Given the circumstances under which this gentleman left her, the Marquise is not the least bit impressed. Enter (oops Freudian slip) the Vicomte de Valmonte (John Malkovich), a more wonderfully enticing reptile with a side bucket of slime you will not meet. The Vicomte loves to go-a-diddlin' and frequently sets himself stupendous goals such as planning to seduce the pure and pious Madame de Tourvel (Michelle Pfeiffer), while her hubby is of in foreign parts (Ooer!). "But hey Vicomte," says the Marquise "pop it to this young thang ] want violated, and by Godfrey you can

have the pleasure of my estate." "Blimey!" thinks the man from Valmonte, "this could be worth the stuffing!" But no, in the end Mr. Priapus opts to set out for his original task. Both wishes seem likely to be granted however when it turns out that the cousin of the Marquise (i.e. whose daughter is about to marry her ex-lover) has told Pfeiffer's character just what a heap of amoeboid skunk-vom the Viscomte is, thus severely hindering

GRAPHIC BY PETER KUPER

his efforts to be seen as a reformed and gentile chap with newborn innocence.

Right!' shouts Malky, 'I will see to the daughter!' And he does. And everything goes completely mental!

But what an excellent film. Close, Melkovich and Pfeiffer shine individually in their respective roles, and in fact so much so that you know the Oscar ceremony is fixed right up the sphincter. Melkovich is so delightfully obnoxious as the unlikely lothario that, after the first ten minutes of the film, one feels immediately refreshed at a subsequent appearance in another scene; indeed you may well find yourself hanging on his every word. Both his presence and delivery are exceptional which tends to smooth over the nagging doubt that a rather more handsome actor might have been used in the role. Glenn Close shimmers in feminine venom. This is no graduate in 'Iluman Warmth and Understanding 101', this is a character that appreciates the way women are used in society and, by by God, she will not abide by it. A paragon in early feminism? Not really. Her attitude is one of carnivorous solipsism with generous lashings from the dark-side of existentialism. Man, woman, beast.... whatever gets in her way gets stamped into spurting porridge remnants!! But Close is brilliant. When scheming or fixing someone with that deadliest of stares, the viewer is convinced to break into a cold sweat; knowing full well that the icing-cake facade just barely covers the seething tangle of hatred and bitterness that lies behind the mask.

The film as a whole has the delightful ability to slide sneakily from an almost comedic set of sequences that allows us to laugh at the ribald behavior of the gentry, into the deadly consequences that such blatant manipulation was produced in the lives of others; here used merely as pawns in a game between the wickedly debauched.

Everything seems to happen very quickly in the last third of the movie, indeed the audience may find themselves a little shocked on watching what ini-



Careful Girls...... Those ARe False Hands!!! Oh No!!! Glenn Close (Marquise de Merteuil), John Malkovich (Vicomte de Valmont) and Michelle Pfeiffer (Madame de Tourvel)

tially seemed to be quite innocent incredibly sensitive and fluid little romantic farce blossoming quite violently into a splendidly horrific climax. In closing I'll tie the odds and ends together by remarking that this is a spectacular experience. The scenery and costumes themselves are breathtaking as is Stephen Frear's classic.

direction. The musical score has the remarkable temerity to blend traditional chamber music with pianoforte and all the works into cinematic melodrama with the greatest of ease.

Dangerous Liaisons is a

Steve Griffiths

## Notice

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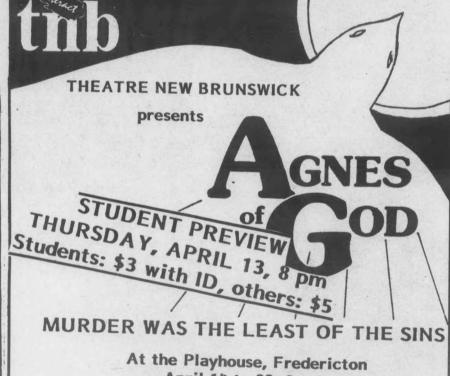
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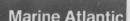
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