

# Keaton shines in 'Looking for Mr. Goodbar'

By Alan Fox

It is easy to dismiss *Looking For Mr. Goodbar* as a film of sensational nihilism. But that would require blind insensitivity, since director Richard Brooks' skillful treatment and Diane Keaton's excellent performance as Terry Dunn make this movie an intense experience. One can't walk away from it with an "Isn't it disgusting" shrug; it hits home and has to be mulled over to exorcise its chilling vision of 'all the lonely people'.

Foremore in the film is Keaton's

brilliant portrayal of Theresa Dunn. Dunn teaches deaf children by day, and is a doping swinging single by night. Dunn thrives on the impersonal atmosphere of the single's bars, and enjoys its emotional void. Slowly, Brooks' fragmented narrative pieces together a portrait of this enigmatic woman. Obviously in love with children, she wants none of her own. Crippled in childhood, she is unsympathetic to people who lack independence.

Surely Dunn as a victim of scoliosis is superficially classic

forties melodrama. So is her attitude: 'Don't feel sorry for me, I'm tough'.

Brooks' use of this outlook breathes new life into it. The flashback to Dunn's childhood comes in the middle of a seduction scene. The flashback is brutal, clinical and emotional assault. In a quick series of sterile hospital images we become involved in Dunn's horror at the instance, and revolted by the idea of her having to remain in that ugly cast for so long. Dunn tosses it off, though, and gets down to the

business of seducing her prof. We are forced to do the same, and shrug off Brooks' horrific images. In this film's world, there's no time for self-pity.

There are a lot of sick people in *Goodbar*. Mr. Dunn (Richard Kiley) is at first glance a stoid Irish Catholic father. We soon see that he is really repressed rather than stoid, and he is carrying around a lot of guilt about his crippled sister (who committed suicide).

Katherine, Terry's beautiful older sister, is a doping nymphomaniac. Unlike Terry, whom the description also fits, Katherine is an emotional leech, searching for someone to give her some security. She accumulates a series of lovers and husbands in that search, and devours all sorts of tranquilizers and psychologists.

Another similarity between the two is that Katherine is a stewardess and takes care of passengers, while Terry is a teacher and "takes care" of students. Terry is Katherine's "Rock of Gibraltar" because Terry gives the illusion of being stable.

The illusion is pointed out clearly by Brooks. Terry gets beaten and pushed around several times in the film, yet she exhibits nothing to indicate that this is out of the ordinary to her. All of the main characters maintain a facade of control, which crumbles under great stress, since it is actually mere repression.

Her first lover, the professor, is very aloof and cold; yet when something really irritates him, he is not above screaming at Terry. This is applicable to all the characters.

James, pseudo-suitor, screams "Shut up" when Terry's insults have pushed him past the point of endurance, yet he immediately assumes a calm pose again after that burst of temper. Later still Terry pushes him past his limit again, and he lashes out with a lot more violence than the provocation calls for, because he has repressed too much anger.

All this may be simple psychology

on paper. In the film though, it has a depth that is impossible to achieve in writing, unless one returns to the Rossner novel the movie was based on.

Brooks has a gift for achieving an ultra-realistic effect in his films. The opening title sequence is composed of a series of grainy still photographs that look quasi-photo journalism. The soundtrack is all old hit songs (1975). At one point Terry's dad talks about the FBI show (remember "The story you are about to see is true..."). Brooks achieves an atmosphere full of icons which suggest that this is *real*, not just a film.

Dunn's end, at an immediate level, is fodder for those holier than thou "it serves her right" types (Surely you've read about it elsewhere). More to the point, though, is that it is a classic Greek Tragic ending. Dunn's fatal flaw is hubris (pride) and it's her cool kicking out ther impotent pick-up that causes her death, not the pick-up per se.

If Dunn hadn't had principles, and had allowed him to stay the night, then there's no reason to assume she would have died. (It can't be argued that he would have done it anyway: He doesn't exist. We can only judge him by what Rossner and Brooks let him do, since he serves their 'artistic purposes'.)

That the film is not fashionably nihilistic is proven by the depth of the characters. Rossner's source for the novel was a news story, and she retained the guise of reality when writing the story.

Brooks, in his adaptation, has done the same, and the actions and motivations of the characters are believable. He is not saying that society is rotten, but that *this* society is rotten.

For here is a film with characters that could be next-door neighbours, and all manner of pedestrian acquaintances. Unlike *Taxi Driver*, *Goodbar* is, at its heart, everyday.



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Par Jacqueline Bruneau

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Deux pièces de Molière (1622-1673) étaient au programme; *Le Médecin Volant* et *Le Médecin malgré lui*. L'équipe du T.P.Q., sous la direction de son metteur en scène Jean Gascon, nous a fait passer une soirée agréable. Il est à déplorer cependant que le public ait été si peu nombreux, alors que la rumeur publique annonçait le contraire. Dommage.

Molière, par l'entremise de comédiens connaissant bien leur métier, a su nous faire rire de nos défauts. Décidement, ses pièces ne vieilliront pas: écrits il y a trois siècles elles sont toujours d'actualité, et le seront sans aucun doute dans trois.

Thème commun et intrigue commune pour les deux pièces; jeune homme et jeune fille de bonne famille ne pouvant s'unir à cause de l'opposition paternelle. C'est là qu'intervient Sganarelle, médecin pour l'occasion, qui par ses ruses et ses inventions, réussit à détourner les desseins du père.

Molière en profite bien sûr pour égratigner la médecine de son temps ainsi que les gens intéressés au gain... tout cela a beaucoup de résonances contemporaines.

Pierre Thériault (Sganarelle) et ses camarades jouent bien. Quelques innovations agréables du metteur en scène (cf. les salutations répétées et les échanges de chapeaux). Les toiles peintes du décor, par contre, n'ont guère leur raison d'être. Quelques allusions aussi à la situation actuelle au Québec: est-ce bien nécessaire?

Néanmoins, ce fut une soirée plaisante, et un spectacle que l'on aurait aimé voir dans un endroit plus vaste, comme le Burton Auditorium, car il méritait un plus large public.

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