

Film

Sequel suffers from anemia

Manon of the Spring
Princess Theatre
March 21 - 31

review by Jaie LaPlante

Manon of the Spring, the sequel to the dripping-with-prestige French epic *Jean de Florette*, is merely an excuse to extend the dignity-of-purity lecture of the first film for another two painfully long hours.

No wonder nobody wants to go see serious movies anymore. If they were all as bloodless as these two films, the cinematic art form would have to be declared bankrupt.

What's really hard to swallow is all those U.S. critics who ranted and raved about the two "masterpieces" (*Time* even put both on its year-end ten best list) — all over this simplistic, self-consciously lyrical, so-called tragedy.

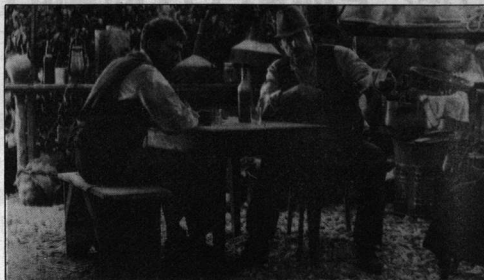
The truth is that while Claude Berri's adaptation of the Marcel Pagnol novels is beautifully filmed and very well acted, both are completely, utterly anemic — void of

anything approximating dramatic tension or true feeling.

Those people who respond to these films are only responding to what they think they are supposed to be feeling. They see what the idea is and then play the tragedy out in their own minds. There's certainly nothing to respond to on screen; emotionally, *Manon of the Spring* is as empty as Rutherford North the day after finals.

For those who are still considering suffering through it in the name of high art, however, here is the situation: It is ten years after the death of the hunchback Jean de Florette, who represents Goodness, and who was tortured by his inability to realize his dream of living off the land. The real problem, of course, was that Cesar Soubeyran (Yves Montand) and his nephew Ugolin (Daniel Auteuil), who represent Evil, had intervened and blocked off Jean's water supply.

Luckily, his beautiful daughter Manon (Emmanuelle Beart) has inherited her papa's deep purity of soul. We know this because she runs wild in the hills, uncorrupted by the



The Soubeyrans get their just reward in *Manon of the Spring*.

materialistic villagers who had refused to help Jean de Florette. She herds cattle. She bathes naked in mud streams. She tends plants. In short, she has become One With Nature.

So for two hours we watch her exact revenge, surely and oh-so-slowly, on those that caused her father's death. She finds the source of the town's spring and blocks it off. There is general panic, lots of talk and lyrical shots of the countryside, accusations against

the Soubeyrans, and then Manon falls for a new arrival in town and decides to turn on the fountain again.

That's it. That's the whole movie. Don't say you weren't forewarned. *Manon of the Spring*, combined with prequel *Jean de Florette*, is a waste of four hours of good, quality life. The only two serious films now showing that are truly worthy of the description of "masterpiece" are *The Dead* and *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*.

Theatre



naughty but nice

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Phoenix gets condom crazy

by Elaine Ostry

As we all know, the world is now afflicted with condom madness in the fear of getting AIDS. And if you've read these pages in past years, you also know that the Phoenix Theatre's mandate is to present "controversial and contemporary" works.

So it's not surprising that the Phoenix should be presenting a show called *Condomadness* will be, according to Dave Jackson of the Phoenix, "a naughty but nice benefit." This variety show will feature groups such as Guys in Disguise.

"There'll be 'Oprah Whinefrey' and Doctor Ruth sex demonstrations," describes Jackson. "We've incorporated a party with it, too — lots of dancing, food, fun. We're hoping for a

really good turnout."

The Phoenix Theatre has established a close relationship with the AIDS Network, beginning with last year's production, *As Is*, for which the theatre asked the Network's advice. Last year the Phoenix hosted a benefit for AIDS, called *Another Late Night with Joan*. It raised over \$1000 for the AIDS Network. "This year," says Jackson, "they approached us for a benefit."

Condomadness will be held at the Phoenix Downtown on March 26. Tickets are \$15 each, and are available at the Phoenix or the AIDS Network.

"It's a cause that we believe in," states Jackson.

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