

films

This Property is Condemned (at the Capital) was "suggested by a one-act play of Tennessee Williams", and is about ten times more uneven than the worst bone fide Williams I've seen.

Natalie Wood plays Alva Starr, the nubile, fanciful, innocent, promiscuous and consumptive daughter of a tough Southern hotel manageress. Her mother is played by Canada's own Kate Reid, appearing in her first Hollywood role.

It's Depression-time, and to the Starr establishment comes a handsome young man (Robert Redford) who turns out to be responsible for laying off half the railroad workers on whose prosperity the existence of the hotel and indeed the town depend. Naturally this lackey of pre-Keynesian capitalism falls in love with, after first being amused and irritated by, our Alva.

Mama, however, wants Alva to "be nice to" one Mr. Johnson, a well-off aging lonely railway conductor with a crippled wife. Agonizing Choice: should Alva run off to New Orleans with ticket donated by Handsome, or should she Keep the Family Together by snuggling up to Mr. Johnson in Memphis?

One suspects that the original Williams one-acter was a slight, tight piece of work from which most of the film's witty lines are lifted. Kate Reid gets more than her fair share of these, and does very well by them; hers are both the best role and the best performance in the film.

In expanding the one-acter to a movie, three script-writers have crammed together a good deal of phony lyricism (confusingly, since some of the lyricism does work), some sex 'n violence which is quite nicely done (though if I'd suffered the beating which Robert Redford undergoes I wouldn't want Natalie Wood pressing her leafy mouth all over by bruised face), a New Orleans idyll of unparalleled tedium, and a death for Alva which is so nakedly Victorian melodrama that I suspect it was originally one of Williams' little jokes.

Nevertheless, just enough of the Williams atmosphere comes through to render the film tolerable for a good three-quarters of its length, and even intermittently rewarding.

I recommend it to all who are prepared to chuckle through the bad spots, as well as to those who wish to catch Kate Reid at what may well be a turning-point in her career.

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Meanwhile, a dedicated band of serious film-lovers, of which I was proud to be a member, occupied itself with more esoteric stuff last week, trekking into the darkest Strand to view two films of considerable artistic integrity: *Rasputin the Mad Monk* and *The Reptile*.

It would be quite an achievement to make a dull film about *Rasputin*, the fantastic power-behind-the-throne in the penultimate years of the Russian monarchy.

At the Strand the swashbuckling side of *Rasputin* is emphasized. He severs the hand of an attacker in a barn wherein he was seducing the daughter of the man whose wife he'd just cured of an incurable fever. (See what I mean? **Complicated!**) In his latter days of prosperity, he affects a magnificent shocking-pink shirt.

Unfortunately, his death isn't nearly as impressive in the film as it was in fact.

The historical *Rasputin* was an unconscionably long time dying. The respectable conspiracy to rid Russia of his flambouyance succeeded in cornering him. He was stabbed again and again, but wouldn't die. Finally he was drowned in a butt of wine, stabbed some more, strangled, and thrown in to the river.

The film makes do with a single sword, poisoned candies, and a suspiciously modern-looking hyperdermic needle. (There is, however, an impressive-acid-throwing sequence earlier on.)

As for *The Reptile*, we came in just at its most impressive moment—an archetypal wordless sequence in which father just misses stabbing snake-daughter beside the bubbling underground sulphur pools.

At last, a film that respects its own conventions! The whole apparatus of gothica is put faultlessly through its paces—the frightened rustics, the lonely moor, the plucky little wife, the mysterious corpses with blackened faces and foaming mouths, the remorseless oriental snake-cult.

And out of all the flummery emerges something limited but genuine.

—John Thompson



SHE SINGS—You'd think Buffy Sainte-Marie made a living posing for covers, but she doesn't. She is an Indian from Saskatchewan and she sings what she calls "songs of the soul." The rising young folk-singer performed in Edmonton last Monday, so if you weren't at the Jubilee Auditorium it's too bad.

Film Society goes again

Membership in the Edmonton Film Society continues to be the biggest entertainment bargain in Edmonton for students—\$4.00 for 10 programs in the Main Series, \$3.00 for another 10 programs in the Classic Series.

Screenings are held on Monday nights, alternately Main and Classic; Main Series is shown in the Jubilee Auditorium, Classic Series in the Math-Physics amphitheatre (mp 126).

The season starts on October 31. Those are the bare facts of the case.

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Film Society offers us in Edmonton an unique opportunity to keep in touch (apart from an unavoidable time lag of a year or two) with what is currently being done by the best minds working in today's most exciting art-form, the cinema.

There is an added excitement in the immediacy of our contact with the creative talents in films.

Contemporary music must, by and large, wait fifty years before finding performers in Edmonton willing to tackle it. Contemporary theatre fares somewhat better, but the available resources aren't enough to go around; hence local theatre groups tend to settle for the fashionable. Contemporary art is largely denied us because of the limited facilities of the Edmonton Art Gallery.

But when we see a film at Filmsoc we can be sure that it is the same film that perhaps six months before was agitating the sensibilities of New York, Paris, and (gasp!) London.

Provincialism has definite advantages, but only when it's an enlightened provincialism. Film Society provides us with a beautiful chance to enrich our provincialism, to fertilize it with international pollen, so to speak.

Just to clinch the matter of cosmopolitanism, let's whirl through the announced films of the season by country of origin.

France leads the field with 6 films: *Muriel* (by Alain Resnais of *Hiroshima Mon Amour*), *The Suitor* (a comedy in the Buster Keaton tradition), *Peau Douce* (by Francois Truffaut of *Jules et Jim*, shown two years ago), and *Pierrot le Fou* (a wildly controversial film by the most fashionable director now operating, Jean-Luc Godard) in Main Series; an early Godard (*Vivre Sa Vie*) and a pastoral film by Jean Renoir (the son of the painter) in Classic Series.

From the U.S.S.R. comes the

new *Hamlet* (Main) and a classic film of the Revolution, Eisenstein's *The General Line*. The U.S.A. provides two Classic evenings, consisting of comedies involving Norma Shearer, W. C. Fields and the Marx Brothers.

Germany and Italy are the source of two movies apiece, one of the latter being an excellent early Fellini. Represented by single films are Japan (a Kurosawa comedy), Mexico (a black comedy by Luis Bunuel) and Sweden (everybody's favorite Bergman comedy).

Tickets are available from the Extension Department (Corbett Hall) or downtown at the Bay.

—John Thompson

Playgoers beware!

ONCE AGAIN UNTO THE SEATS, DEAR FRIENDS; OR PROMOTERS OF DRAMA, WHERE IS YOUR SACRIFICE?

It is expected in this quarter that Edmonton Drama will, in spite of (or because of?) Joe Schocter of the Citadel, again go through its barren winter ritual of self-impression.

The presence of many foreign persons on the stage at Citadel will be a relief, but only to Edmonton apes who have grown tired of taking turns at impressing each other.

Studio Theatre will continue to exhume the dead traditions of "the illusion of reality", while finding relief in the odd still-born piece which any Broadway play inevitably is.

The avant guard will continue to advance half-heartedly into the

obscurity of a drama which few, even among the dramatic tribes, have the heart to consider at all.

Walterdale will offer its old face in a new place (11407-107 St., just behind the Menorah Curling Club); and the All Saints' Friendship Guild will probably present another competent but sentimentalized performance of "My Wife Looks After the Appearances, and I Look After the Other Realities".

There is little reason to wonder that the crude intensities of the cinema and TV will continue to force cultural liberation on the Edmonton consciousness.

It may even be that local drama will never drop its refined insensibilities and become a vital formative factor in the creation of this, as yet, unborn city.

But then who really wants to give birth to a city anyway?

—Peter Montgomery