

Mommie Vindicated

by Tina Novotny

When Christina Crawford's controversial autobiography, **Mommie Dearest** appeared two years ago, it rocketed to the top of the best-seller charts. Last name familiar, first name not? Well, Miss Crawford's success as an author was well insured, not because of any addictive new style or a novel storyline but because her writing was fueled by two important components; A) a big name and B) mud to sling at it. When advance promotion was done for the movie version featuring Faye Dunaway as Joan Crawford, the public's anticipation could be measured by a geiger counter. Sadly, the excitement

was not wholly a tribute to either actress, but rather more an example of the "National Enquirer" mentality of the masses.

And line up they did, but not for what they expected. True, the basic plot still adheres to the subject of the book (famous movie star adopts, thus endearing herself to her public but privately proceeds to abuse the children both mentally and physically) but there stands a major difference between the book and the enactment; objectivity and fairness. We still see scenes as depicted in the book of Joan abusing Christina, waging a battle of wills with her and acting generally manical and

depraved, but because of the magnitude of Dunaway's performance we also see the woman as the enigma she was.



Make-up artist Lee C. Harmon's recreation of the legendary star is almost frightening in its perfection, which only further makes us identify with Joan Crawford as a woman preyed upon by her destiny as Dunaway breathes humaness into the face so many loved from afar.

Christina Crawford is played respectively by Mara Hobel and Diana Scarwid, another startling likeness not only between vita persona and dramatis personae, but also between these high-powered young actresses themselves. Here too we are given a more just perspective on the Crawford women's conflict, for the real Christina would never have presented herself in her

book as she appears to us on the screen: a precocious, somewhat impudent child of money. And how well spent it is. Director Frank Perry moves his characters through such material magnificence that one almost forgets that this movie has so base a plot as child abuse.

When the credits roll and the house lights flicker on it would be hard to say whether either Crawford came away victorious. The mother-daughter relationship is complex enough in itself without one of the parties being Joan Dearest, mommie to a myriad of fans. As for who got the last word, one thing is for sure; an eye for an eye, a movie for a book.



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