MOVIE REVIEW

The Journals of Jean Seberg
Wormwoods Dog and Monkey Cinema

BY MARK REYNOLDS

From the Journals of Jean Seberg, running at Wormwood's from the 16th to the 19th of September, is as provocative a look at the movie industry as you are likely to see. A fictitious autobiography of Jean Seberg, the movie is impossible to pigeonhole as it is part film history, part biography, and part satire.

Directed by Mark Rappaport — whose last film was Rock Hudson's Home Movies — the film stars Mary Beth Hurt (Six Degrees of Separation, Light Sleeper) as Jean Seberg. The Seberg character narrates her life starting from her first big break in the 1957 flop Saint Joan.

Seberg was an unknown picked from over 3000 hopefuls at age 17. She was woefully inappropriate for the role, and the movie was a bomb. The actress recovered and went on to star in several critical successes, most of which were made by one of her two French director husbands.

Seberg's trademark flat stare — a post-modern violation of the "fourth wall" principle in movies — is a recurring image in the movie and portrays Seberg as almost an innovator in film. In From the Journals... Seberg is presented as both a post-modern icon and as a tragic victim; a victim of sexism, her middle american background, and political repression, not to mention a sadistic husband.

The film is about all these things, and as such is not a biography. Its scope includes a history of film, the social upheavals of the sixties and seventies, explications of film technique, and Seberg's life. Seberg is not so much the subject of the film as she is a *motif.* Film technique, film history feminism, and the sixties are examined through Seberg; she serves as the lens more than the focus of the movie.

The movie is almost entirely composed of film clips, from the silent era to the eighties, that are narrated by Seberg/Hurt. This technique causes

choppy viewing at first, but a flow is soon found. Some of the clips distract from the narration, rather than augment it, but we do get to see Clint Eastwood sing. This clip alone is worth the price of admission.

Seberg's career came to an end in 1979 with her suicide, the death partially blamed on FBI harassment. This aspect of her life is seriously underplayed in the film, but not to the movie's detriment. The movie is more about movies than Seberg, and the FBI angle served as an interesting finish rather than as an important part of the story.

Mary Beth Hurt's performance, like the movie itself, is choppy. She literally makes the character of Seberg come alive. Her wry observations and insights create a very sympathetic portrait of Seberg. And the physical resemblance is striking (not to mention Seberg and Hurt both hail from Marshalltown, Iowa). When Hurt gets upset, however, she is unconvincing.

The direction is choppy as well, though I'm sure this is at least partially due to the film's low budget. Parts of the monologue seem stilted, and some of Hurt's appropriations of Seberg traits (i.e. looking at the camera) seem more like caricature.

From the Journals of Jean Seberg is both challenging and informative, and most importantly, entertaining. It manages to be everything: documentary, biography, and drama, as well as a compelling rags to riches to rags story.



New Adventures in Hi-Fi
REM

Warner Brothers

There are three phrases which never fail to piss me off: 1) Homosexuality is immoral, 2) RuPaul is an artist, and 3) All REM songs sound the same. The last is impressively disproved in the band's latest effort: New Adventures in Hi-Fi.

This is REM's 13th CD (including two best-ofs), and for all intensive purposes thirteen is a very lucky number for the band. The album is a compilation of the styles that have emerged in the group's music during the nineties.

The contrast of elements is immediately evident with the CD's first two songs — "How the West was Won and Where it Got Us," and "The Wake-up Bomb." The first is a soft, melodic, but vocally dominant piece featuring broken thirds. The second is a rousing pop number reminiscent of the better parts of *Out of Time*, the band's 10th album.

The album's third song, "New Test Leper," strongly reminded me of some of the softer more introspective songs found on Automatic for the People. REM has experimented

with several different styles since they signed with Warner in 1987 and it seems like the band, with this effort, is trying to channel everything they've learned in the last decade into one small, easy to comprehend package.

You can listen to REM on basically two levels. The first is a cursory background type participa-

tion, which makes an instrumental like "Zither" so enjoyable. Or you can absorb Stipe's lyrics and punctuation, which better suit a piece like "So Fast, So Numb" or "Electrolite".

My only real criticism is really more of a disappointment. Whereas I understand the band's need to move away from string instruments on Monster (their last al-

bum), I have begun to miss the beautiful arrangements written by Led Zeppelin alumnus John Paul Jones.

Although the band experiments with Arp Odyssey, Fuzz Bass, Autoharp, Farfisa, and Mellotrons, I miss the less electric sound which made songs like "Nightswimming" (from Automatic...) so magical.

REM has just signed a new contract with Warner Bros., despite a bidding war between Dreamworks SKG, Capitol Records, and Sony Music, for a reported \$80 million. This is the richest recording contract in history. If New Adventures... is any indication, then Warner will get their money's worth.

DANIEL CLARK

Suckerpunch Suckerpunch

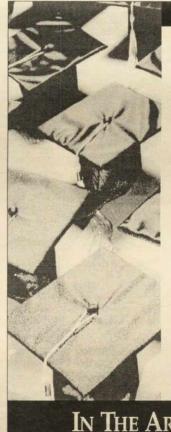
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The new self-titled effort from Suckerpunch is a futile effort in unoriginal punk, built around some basic chord changes and simple riffs designed (unsuccessfully) to be catchy. The lyrics are unintelligent and generally unconvincing, angst-ridden, garage band dirt. Attempts at harmony are ill-advised and come off

sounding awkward and forced.







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