

# Visionary or myopic

by JIM ELLIS  
DANNY SAMSON

*Paris, Texas*, one of 1984's most critically acclaimed films, made an unexpected, but not unappreciated, stop in Fredericton this past week. The film was written by noted American playwright Sam Shepard, and directed by West German Wim Wenders.

The story features Shepard's usual lonely-figure-in-search-of-something-or-another character. This time it's Travis (Harry Dean Stanton) who has lost his wife and child, and apparently his mind. Travis has a quest. His problem is that he doesn't really know what he's searching for.

When we first meet him, he is walking across the desert to Paris, Texas, where he believes he was conceived. This adds an almost mythical atmosphere to the story, like Sir Galahad searching for the Holy Grail. Travis's goal, (like the Grail), is elusive until he is reunited with his son, but even this goal turns out to be spurious when he finally confronts his own conscience. It is only then that he finally discovers his true goal.

To be fair, Wenders and Shepard have to be allowed

their original premise; that this is a Romantic story.

It becomes obvious that Travis is something of a romantic hero - a lone wanderer seeking to unburden his soul of the guilt that has driven him to roam the desert for four years. His crime, we realize - as he realizes - was to separate his child from its mother. It becomes his single-minded goal to reunite them. Whether he destroys relationships or reopens old wounds is unimportant to his quest, and consequently to the film.

We are quite aware that Travis leaves behind him a wake of suffering. Wenders, however, does not choose to agonize over the other characters, except where they come into direct contact with the quest.

It is fine, having said 'what *Paris, Texas* presented, but we have differing opinions on 'how' it was presented. What follow are both sides of our differences.

While the story operates on a partially mythical level, the movie lacks all the typical myth-making machinery. No swelling violins here - instead we get the spare haunting guitar of Ry Cooder, used to superb effect to heighten the

loneliness of the landscape and the characters.

Wenders wisely decides to show us just what we need to know and nothing more; all of the scenes and emotions portrayed are strictly relevant, and the rest is left to the viewers' speculation. This economy of presentation is probably what saves the romantic from slipping into the sentimental.

This does not mean that Wenders has scrimped at all. On the contrary, the photography is consistently spectacular. What it does mean is that the photography never becomes superfluous. Nor is all the effort restricted to pans of the desert landscape. Each shot is carefully planned and beautifully executed, whether it is Travis sitting on the hood of a pick-up truck or the family eating dinner. *Paris, Texas* is a masterpiece of execution, an intelligent, haunting movie that is remarkable both for what it has included and for what it has chosen to leave unsaid.

Conversely, it can also be said that Wenders lost all this message in a muddle of confused sentimentality. Why do Jane (Nastassja Kinski) and the boy acquiesce to Travis's intru-

sions with disinterested calm? Their apparent acceptance of his actions condones what will ultimately prove to be another error. Two wrongs don't make a right, but this film asks the viewer to make a romantic hero of a fool.

The final half hour of the film amounts to a quick reassembling of the story. We are finally given the rationale for Travis's erratic behaviour,

but the machinations involved leave the viewer mired in a jumble of emotions and innuendo - some of which makes sense, most of which doesn't. The result is a film whose presentation was at times stunning, and whose idea was sound, but whose message was far too confused.

Jim:\*\*\*\* (out of  
Dan:\*\* five stars)

## At the 'shed

By SCOOP  
Brunswickan Staff

On January 31st patrons of *The Woodshed* were treated to a strong and entertaining performance by St. Thomas singerguitarist Vann DeLorey.

Worried about his cold, and the occasional crack in his voice, Vann knocked back peppermint tea and ice water, hoping to sustain his voice range throughout the evening. It might be added that he did exceptionally well, tackling high and low notes with goodhumoured courage. The audience was very appreciative of Vann's efforts. Requests were shouted out and DeLorey accepted most of the

challenges.

Being a self-taught musician gives DeLorey a raw, uninhibited, and fairly powerful style. The real attraction is

DeLorey's performance is his voice. His singing expresses the traditional sentiments of folkrock with depth and control. DeLorey's favourite musicians are Hendrix and *The Doors*, but he plays a wide repertoire of material, comprising country, blues and folk.

Vann DeLorey will be reappearing at *The Woodshed* on February 14. It'll be well worth a stroll down to The 'shed - see you there.

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