



LOUISE SNIDER

Papa the loser in film version

One of Ernest Hemingway's most definitive statements appeared in "A Farewell to Arms": "Words like 'glory, honor, courage,' he said, embarrassed him because these abstract words 'were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments."

It was an attempt to destroy sentimentality by stripping away later abstractions. Poor Papa Hemingway, almost 50 years later in "Islands in the Stream" (PG), the movie based on his posthumously published novel, put the empty abstractions and the sentimentality, not the concreteness.

The film version of this novel is a beautifully mounted seascape that profits from some solid acting by George C. Scott. Scott brings strength and dignity to the role of the protagonist, Thomas Hudson.

Hudson, presumably a Hemingway alter ego, is a strong-willed, self-serving, twice-divorced artist living in semi-seclusion in the Bahamas. In his mature years, he's re-examining, reassessing his values.

UNFORTUNATELY, what the film fails to examine is Hudson's own character and worth. We are given Hudson's distant relationship with his children, his paternalism toward an alcoholic dorell, and his mixed feelings towards the first of his ex-wives. We are given nothing, however, to account for the way people adopt a worshipful attitude toward him and seek his approval. Add to this the distant rumblings of World War II and the presence of Jewish refugees on the island, and we've got a film that says too little about too much.

The movie, like the book, is presented in three parts. The first part, called "The Boys," is the most effective and worthwhile. It concentrates on the father-son relationship and provides some truly moving scenes.

Hudson's three sons, who he hasn't seen in four years, arrive to spend their summer vacation with him. He confronts them almost bearishly. But for all his gruffness and toughness, he's concerned with what they think of him and how they feel about him.

The boys yearn for his love and approval, even Davey, the middle son who is the most antagonistic toward him. The pent-up anger bursts loose in a pillow fight that gets out of control. Davey is left crying, pounding at his father, and scared of what he's doing—all at the same time.

In a Caribbean counterpart of the "moment of truth" in the bull ring, Davey proves his courage in a battle with a huge marlin. It's an important part of the book and the movie, but an embarrassing one. Ernest Hemingway's content represents such an antiquated concept of manhood, and embarrassing because the sequence presents a clumsy photographic mixture of process shots and live action.

IN THE OTHER two parts of the movie, "The Woman" and "The Journey," the reality and strength of emotions are diluted into sentiment, prescribed attitudes, noble deeds and romantic adventure.

The appearance of Claire Bloom, which normally can be counted on to perk up a scene, couldn't overcome the burden of the sudsy dramas between Hudson and his ex-wife.

In the final episode, Hudson's overwhelming concern for Eddy, a sea-going rummy, is just as overblown and inexplicable as his relationship with his ex-wife.

When Hudson rescues some Jewish refugees from a burning fishing boat trying to slip them into Cuba past the Coast Guard, it looks like a tugboat-size "Voyage of the Damned."

GEORGE C. SCOTT

Glances

MOVIE RATING GUIDE
G General audiences admitted.
PG Parental guidance suggested. All ages admitted.
R Restricted. Adult must accompany person under 18.
X No one under 18 admitted.

Actress is more than a star

By ETHEL SIMMONS

When Nancy Gurwin of Southfield decided to form her own dinner theater production company, "People called me and said I'd never get it off the ground."

Did that discourage Ms. Gurwin? Not on your life. "It gave me a little fuel," she said in that breathless, throaty voice of hers.

The pale-haired actress has taken her concept and turned it into a successful run of the Broadway musical hit "I Do! I Do!" at the Botsford Inn Dinner Theatre in Farmington Hills. Not only is she the brains and the money behind the production, she's the costar, too.

The show, which ran for three months, closed Sunday. But, guess what, it will reopen at a new dinner theater location, Vittorio's restaurant in Livonia.

ACCORDING TO Michael Goodman, Ms. Gurwin's producer, response cards from the audience at the Botsford Inn indicated that most of the playgoers were from Livonia.

"There's a real need for dinner theater in that area," explained Dolores Shevlin, who wears many hats including publicity for RG Productions.

"There's nothing there." "I Do! I Do!" with Ms. Gurwin and bearded singer-turned-actor Phil Marcus Esser will open June 16 for a two-month run at Vittorio's.

RG Productions stands for Ms. Gurwin's maiden name (Rovner) and her married name. Husband Don is a lawyer, who has helped with the legal end of things, but basically the dinner theater is her baby.

She's also the mother of four children, whom she devotes her attention to during the day, before going off to star in musical theater at night.

MEANWHILE, AT the Botsford, another production company (not Ms. Gurwin's) is opening with the mystery "The Mousetrap" on Thursday, in dinner theater format.

Ms. Gurwin hopes the public won't confuse her production company with the other one. Her company will be back at the Botsford, however, on July 7, opening "The Thurbur Carnival," a series of sketches by James Thurbur.

At Vittorio's, on Plymouth Road, east of Farmington Road, the enthusiastic manager, theater buff Henry Strong, is planning to knock down walls to expand the dinner theater area.

There'll be kleig lights, a marquee and maybe a black-tie opening night. At Vittorio's the show will run Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, with a sit-down dinner at 7 and performances at 8:30 p.m.

At the Botsford, "The Thurbur Carnival" will run Thursday and Sunday, with dinner at 7 and show at 8:30 p.m. Botsford Inn owner John Anbut has a



NANCY GURWIN

long history of presenting theatrical productions at the venerable inn

DINNER WILL BE served in the downstairs dining room and the show performed upstairs in the ballroom.

Before developing her own dinner theater production company, Ms. Gurwin had worked with two other such companies. When she was associated with the (then) Turgeon & Guest Productions, Pierre Turgeon asked her what show she'd like to do someday

and she suggested "I Do! I Do!" "I talked with Dolores (Shevlin)," she recalls, "and decided to go on my own and do it. I contacted Michael Goodman who had done producing for me before."

Goodman produced her one-woman show "Two Knights with Nancy" at the Jewish Community Center. "It was all told in music and directed by Edgar Guest," she said.

Guest directed "I Do! I Do!" and will direct "The Thurbur Carnival." Another key member of the production company is associate producer Donna Zalkin.

PRODUCER GOODMAN continued the story of RG Productions "She's got guts," he said of Ms. Gurwin. "She came to me and said, 'Here it is,' dumping the whole concept in my lap."

"Tears came to my eyes. She had such confidence in me. I needed something. I was in a stagnant mood. How can you let her down?"

"I Do! I Do!" is told mostly in song, with a little choreography tossed into this production. A warm, lively show it tells the story of a married couple from newlywed through maturing years.

Because Ms. Gurwin and Phil Marcus Esser have been appearing together for three months, "The show is more tight," she said. "Working with somebody that long, you can establish rapport."

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