

# 'A Special Day' takes up with ordinary lives

Film, like other art forms today, reflects the contemporary interest in technique, in manipulation of materials, in style. Therefore, it is a welcome change to see one which also values content. "A Special Day" is such a film. Nominated for two Academy Awards, for Best Foreign Film and Best Actor (Marcello Mastroianni), "A Special Day" was directed and written by Ettore Scola (with co-writers Ruggero Maccari and Maurizio Costanzo). Scola deals with the personal lives of ordinary people, and he develops their relationships against a historical background of political events.

The entire film is as tightly structured as a play. It's restricted in time—the events of one day, in place—an apartment building, and in personae—two principal characters, Antonietta and Gabriele.

As in his previous work, "We All Loved Each Other So Much," Scola deals with the personal lives of ordinary people, and he develops their relationships against a historical background of political events.

THE YEAR IS 1938 and all Rome has turned out to celebrate Hitler's visit to Mussolini. The tenants of a high-rise apartment building pour out of their cubicles to attend the parade and festivities. Only two people are left: Antonietta (Sophia Loren), a passive, overworked housewife who stays behind to clean up the mess left by her husband (John Vernon) and six children, and Gabriele (Marcello Mastroianni), an unemployed radio announcer who eschews the Fascist pomp.

They meet in the morning when she seeks help to recapture her pet mynah bird which has flown to a ledge near his apartment window.

In their loneliness and isolation, emphasized by the massive, empty building, they tentatively reach out for each other. The day passes with shared confidences, argument, tears, laughter, and love.

Antonietta shuffles around all day in torn hose, slippers and a shapeless house dress. No makeup. Combed hair is her greatest concession to fashion.

Yet, stripped of glamor, Loren is still very impressive. Just watching her perform a homely task such as clearing dishes from the table, one is struck by her graceful movements.

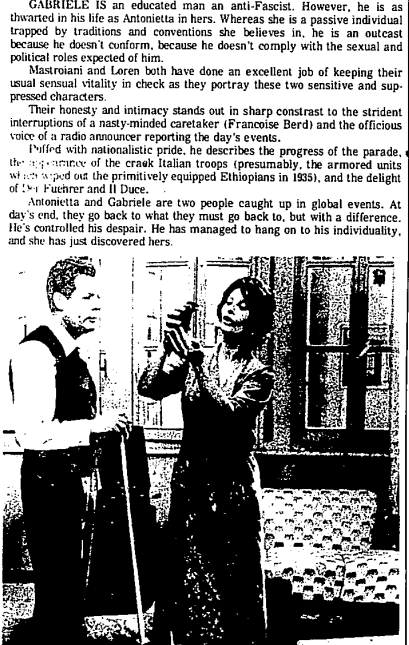
GABRIELE is an educated man an anti-Fascist. However, he is as thwarted in his life as Antonietta in hers. Whereas she is a passive individual trapped by traditions and conventions she believes in, he is an outcast because he doesn't conform, because he doesn't comply with the sexual and political roles expected of him.

Mastroianni and Loren both have done an excellent job of keeping their usual sensual vitality in check as they portray these two sensitive and suppressed characters.

Their honesty and intimacy stands out in sharp contrast to the strident interruptions of a nasty-minded caretaker (Francoise Berd) and the officious voice of a radio announcer reporting the day's events.

Puffed with nationalistic pride, he describes the progress of the parade, the entrance of the crack Italian troops (presumably, the armored units which wiped out the primitively equipped Ethiopians in 1935), and the delight of Hitler and his Duce.

Antonietta and Gabriele are two people caught up in global events. At day's end, they go back to what they must go back to, but with a difference. He's controlled his despair. He has managed to hang on to his individuality, and she has just discovered hers.



Marcello Mastroianni and Sophia Loren portray two lonely people who meet recapturing her lost mynah bird.

## Glimpses

- AMERICAN HOT WAX (PG). Story of rock 'n' roll era with guest shots by Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis. Tim McIntire plays deejay Alan Freed.
- THE BIG SLEEP (R). Robert Mitchum and Sarah Miles in unnecessary undistinguished remake of the 1946 Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall film about hard-boiled private eye.
- THE BOYS IN COMPANY C (R). Lives of a cross section of young men from Marine boot camp to Vietnam. Good individual performances.
- CASEY'S SHADOW (PG). Sensitive movie about impoverished Cajun (Walter Matthau), his three sons and the horse that becomes pivotal to their future fortunes.
- COMA (PG). Scary and unpleasant movie about some strange goings-on at a hospital. Genevieve Bufile is the plucky doctor who uncovers a fiendish arrangement.
- THE FURY (R). Director Brian DePalma unleashes the special effects in gory film about secret government agency and two teenagers with strange psychic powers.
- HIGH ANXIETY (PG). Mel Brooks tips his hat to Hitchcock in this lunatic romp at the Psycho-Neurotic Institute for the Very, Very Nervous. Liberal visual "quotations" from Hitchcock in this howler.
- HOUSE CALLS (PG) Walter Matthau and Glenda Jackson in entertaining comedy about amorous adventures of widowed doctor and complications in hospital politics.
- SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER (R). John Travolta (of Kotler's sweatshops) is the main man in film with plenty of disco action.
- STRAIGHT TIME (R). Dustin Hoffman in true story of ex-con battling tough odds when he tries to go straight.
- AN UNMARRIED WOMAN (R). Jill Clayburgh in top form as woman who picks up the pieces after her husband leaves her, then finds there's more to life than Scotch Tape. Written and directed by Paul Mazursky.

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.

# Getting Around

By ETHEL SIMMONS



The Birmingham Theatre used to be an old vaudeville house, and I was anxious to go backstage and find out just what facilities there are to be converted for the theater's return to live entertainment.

Gesturing with his long cigarette holder, Pierre LaMarre, director of the new Birmingham Theatre, gave me a whirlwind tour of the theater's three floors plus areas below the stage.

I was amazed to find the theater is so large and in such good condition backstage. First opened in 1927, the theater was designed by C. W. and George L. Rapp, architects.

The theater's original policy was to show movies, alternated with vaudeville shows. Checking microfilm copies of The Eccentric later, I was able to learn a lot about those first days and shows. But that's another story.

THE AFTERNOON I visited the Birmingham Theatre, the six-week renovation project had barely gotten underway. Everything must be ready, however, in time for the opening attraction, comic David Brenner.

The stand-up comedian from Philadelphia, who now lives in New York, is one of the most popular in the country. Brenner has performed in Las Vegas night clubs and hosted Johnny Carson's "Tonight Show," among his credits.

He will play the Birmingham Theatre for five shows, along with the local Brookside Jazz Ensemble. Performance dates are May 18 at 8 p.m.; May 19 at 7:30 and 10 p.m.; and May 20 at 7:30 and 10 p.m.

Pierre LaMarre and I started our Birmingham Theatre tour in the lobby, naturally, where the wallpaper had just begun to be ripped off. Men's and ladies' rooms were to have new wallpaper, too.

Then it was into the auditorium of the 1,236-seat theater, which was showing movies up until March 31, when the last picture show was presented.

THERE WOULD be new carpeting and chandeliers in the lobby, floors repainted in the auditorium, seats repaired, but no new chandeliers.

According to LaMarre, the four chandeliers in the ceiling are original Tiffany glass, as are the eight along the walls. The auditorium's red draperies will remain, and the high painted ceiling needs no renovation.

Sound equipment will go in the old organ loft. The orchestra pit was covered over in 1950 and will be dug out in the future to accommodate musicians for live stage shows.

The big movie screen may fly back, LaMarre said, and could be used for special projection for plays. A sound man was scheduled to come in a look at the stereo sound, to see if it could still be used.

Behind the stage, there are 20 lines for hoisting scenery and light battens. A separate stage door to bring in scenery adjoins the theater's own private alley. Nearby is a small room for the stage manager.

THE ONLY DRESSING room that has been in use at the Birmingham Theatre in recent years is a small one to the side of the stage. This is the star dressing room that has been used by so many celebrities who spoke at the nationally known Birmingham Town Hall.

The town hall closed its season only a few weeks ago at the Birmingham Theatre. I asked LaMarre if town hall will return this fall, and he said the theater hasn't been contacted yet by the lecture series, but he certainly hopes so.

This small dressing room has been cleared out and looked very bare since I saw it last, with delicate furniture

# Backstage tour reveals surprises about theater



DAVID BRENNER

for the star and guests and auto-graphed photos of celebrities covering the walls.

"This will be used as a quick change room," LaMarre said. In addition to an upstairs dressing room, the star will have the change room to use during the show.

Another dressing room is located on the first floor. There is also a trunk door, to bring trunks up to the second or third floor.

Three dressing rooms on the second floor will be ripped out to become two star dressing rooms. These old dressing rooms looked intact, with dressing table mirrors surrounded by light bulbs.

WE DIDN'T go up to the third floor, which LaMarre said was laid out the same as the second floor, with three more dressing rooms.

Asked if any old movie or show biz memorabilia had been found when cleaning out the theater, LaMarre replied, "I wish we would have, but we didn't."

Beneath the stage, we explored an area which will become another dressing room, an area for toilets and showers, and a second dressing room. These lower-level rooms will be used by chorus people. Next is a bathroom, an orchestra room with an entrance to the orchestra pit, and an instrument room.

Still more spaces are a storage and costume room, and heating and air conditioning area.

"If we could find out who some of the old stars were, we could contact them to come back for the opening," LaMarre said. The Eccentric's microfilm may reveal all, but the Birmingham Theatre revealed only dust.

THEN WE WENT upstairs, to LaMarre's office, right now a jumble of leftovers. The big window overlooks a parking lot next to the theater.

There's also a filing room and a bath. A small staircase leads to the projection booth.

"The spotlight men will probably work the spot out of the projection booth," LaMarre said.

Duncan Fuller Interiors of Birmingham is the designer and architect for changes to the new Birmingham Theatre. The theater is owned by Central Park Properties of Birmingham, partners Ernest P. Fuller, Edward A. (Ted) Fuller and Gary P. Deeb.

When I visited the theater, Deeb was filling in temporarily at the box office window. "I've swept floors, too," he said. "At Deeb and Fuller we have a policy to try out jobs we ask other people to do."

The Birmingham Theatre box office is open daily 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Deeb reported. "Sales have been excellent. David Brenner was sold out a few months ago at D.D.'s (in the Hyatt Regency Dearborn)."

BRENNER is the first attraction to be announced by the new Birmingham Theatre.

LaMarre was off the following day to New York to negotiate more entertainment bookings. "We'll be booked all the way to next March if I can," he said.

# DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE ON THE TOWN

Welcome to the new **King Lim's** Mandarin, Cantonese & Cantonese Cuisine Luncheons & Dinners Cocktails Carry Outs 3350 Auburn Road 172 Mile W. of Auburn Rd. 852-8280 Your Host: Harold Hom

**Samoy's RESTAURANT** 1005 MIDCLOBBY RD. in Bham, Linnco. Cantonese & American Food Japanese Steakhouses Exotic Cocktails CARRY-OUTS OR CHINESE FOOD Chinese Lunch Mon-Fri 11-2 Japanese Dinner 5-9:30 Fri. 4-9:30 Sat. 10-10:30 P.M. Closed Monday

**BEN'S BULL PEN** completely new Michigan's Most Beautiful Barn Specializing In PRIME RIB & CRAB LEGS LUNCH Mon. thru Fri. 11:30-3 P.M. DINNER Tues. thru Thurs. 5-10 P.M. Fri. & Sat. 5-12 Closed Sunday **BEN'S BULL PEN** 1-75 to Joslyn Exit - North on Joslyn 3 Miles 391-3200 Bill Kirshman on the Vibe for your listening pleasure

**CHINESE BUFFET** Features all varieties of your favorite Chinese and Cantonese dishes. All you can enjoy served Fri., Sat., Sun. Evenings. WEEK NIGHT SPECIALS SHRIMP-CHICKEN-RIBS (Combination of any two items & Fried Rice, served Mon. thru Thurs. only) \$4.50 **SHANGRI LA WEST** Restaurant & Lounge Telegraph Rd. N. of Square Lake Rd. Miracle Mile Shopping Center (Across from Shopping Center) (Across from Shopping Center)

**Pearl's Garden** the Finest in Chinese & American Cuisine 469 S. Woodward, B'ham. 644-2913 Mon.-Thurs 11-10 p.m. • Fri. 11-11 p.m. Sat. 12-11 p.m. • Sun. 12-10 p.m.

**SNEEKERS** **SNEEKER'S PREVIEW** HOT HOT HOT SNEAKERS THE WORKS • WINE AND BREW • SALAD PATCH And lots more of the Good Stuff easy listening music • Live nightly Wednesday thru Sunday Monday thru Friday 5:00 p.m. till 2:00 a.m. Saturday and Sunday 5:00 p.m. till 2:00 a.m. 1:00 p.m. till 2:00 a.m. Located off Walnut Lake Rd. on Drake Rd. just 2 1/2 miles west of Orchard Lake Rd. 661-0262 Little Sneaker's Welcome Sneaker's Banquet Facilities

**Meadow Brook Theatre** presents **COLE** An entertainment based on the words and music of **COLE PORTER** Created by Benny Green & April Strahan OPENS THURSDAY, APRIL 20th Daily except Monday Tickets: Huddsboro call 377-3300 COLE was originally produced at the Meadow Brook Theatre, Huddsboro, N.Y. in the summer of 1976

**Sundown...** **Bodega** 14433 Telegraph Rd., Redford Township & 25425 Van Dyke Centerline

**THERE'S ROOM AT THE INN** A thoughtful way to welcome visitors or clients is a reservation at the Kingsley Inn. We are near all business, sports, and educational centers in Oakland County. **Kingsley Inn** Woodward and Long Lake Road Bloomfield Hills 644-1400 564-5144

**save energy** Combine trips whenever possible to avoid unnecessary use of your car. If each car owner could eliminate one short trip a week—the nation's gasoline bill could be cut by 7%.