

The
Movies



LOUISE SNIDER

# 'Madame Rosa' has the schmaltz of chopped liver

When the violins play while the titles appear (albeit an excellent score by an excellent group), you can bet there are some sentimental scenes in your future. "Madame Rosa" (PG), which won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film, amply fulfills that promise. It's as schmaltzy as my grandmother's chopped liver and just as irresistible.

Simone Signoret is Madame Rosa, a retired Jewish prostitute who now earns a meagre living by boarding the children of other prostitutes.

We first see her wheezing her way up six flights of stairs to her apartment. Her body is bloated; her legs are wrapped in elastic bandages; her face is heavy with bags of flesh.

When she finally reaches the top and we all breathe a sigh of relief (right along with her), she is greeted by a motley crew of children who might have stepped out of a U.N. poster.

THEY REFLECT their diverse parentage and the population mix of the Belleville quarter of Paris where Madame Rosa lives. It's an area teeming with Arabs, dark-skinned Africans and other immigrants from France's former colonies.

Among the children is a thin, wary Arab boy, Mohammed, known as Momo. Momo is played with dark-eyed, brooding intensity by Samy Ben Youssef, a 14-year-old Algerian boy who is not a professional actor.

Momo is special among Madame Rosa's charges. The relationship between the aged and dying Jewish prostitute and the lonely, alienated Arab boy is very tender and yet vigorous.

The story lends itself to obvious political connotations and statements, but it is not a "political" movie. The basis of the story is the struggle for survival and the human need for love.

Madame Rosa is a survivor. She has survived Auschwitz. She has survived life on the streets. Now she struggles bravely with the indignities of illness and age. Momo, struggling through his adolescence and questions about his heritage, witnesses her last battle and desperately tries to hang onto the one person who loves him and links him with his cloudy past.

THE POTENTIAL for soap opera and melodrama is ever present. Among Rosa's and Momo's friends are a transsexual hooker (Stella Aninetta) with a heart of gold, a prosperous black pimp who writes to his parents with Madame Rosa's help, and several husky young men who gallantly carry her up and down the stairs and do the same for the frail doctor (Claude Dauphin) who attends her.

What keeps this emotional stew from turning to a bowl of mush are the firm characterizations and the directional skill of Egyptian-born, Israeli-reared Moshe Mizrahi, the writer and director. He emphasizes the supportive quality of relationships rather than the sordidness of the setting.

He is aided significantly by Signoret who brings tremendous assurance and dignity to the role of Madame Rosa. Remembering the sensual beauty of Signoret when she stirred audiences with her climactic performance in "Room at the Top" (1959), I could not imagine her as Madame Rosa. Having seen her in "Madame Rosa," I can not imagine anyone else in the role.



Madame Rosa and young friend stroll in Paris.

# Glimpses

**NEW RELEASES**

**COMING HOME (R).** Powerful story of Vietnam era with Jane Fonda as officer's wife who falls in love with disabled vet (Jon Voight).

**F.I.S.T. (PG).** Sylvester Stallone as union organizer in film that spans decades from early struggle and idealism to national strength and corruption.

**FM (PG).** Funny film about a rock 'n' roll radio station and the conflict between the disc jockeys and station management.

**THE FURY (R).** Director Brian DePalma unleashes the special effects in gory film about secret government agency and two teenagers with strange psychic powers.

**HOUSE CALLS (PG).** Walter Matthau and Glenda Jackson in entertaining comedy about amorous adventures of widowed doctor and complications in hospital politics.

**I WANNA HOLD YOUR HAND (PG).** Beatle hysteria of the '60s in story of six youngsters who go to New York to see the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan show. Sound track of Beatles' recordings.

**THE LAST WALTZ (PG).** The last concert given by The Band. Thanksgiving 1976, is documented in this film by Martin Scorsese.

**1900 (R).** The rise of Italian Fascism provides the background for Bernardo Bertolucci's epic that parallels the lives of two boys, one born to a family of landowners, one to a family of farm workers.

**PRETTY BABY (R).** Red-light district of New Orleans in 1917 as seen by a child prostitute in lush, unimaging film by Louis Malle.

**RABBIT TEST (PG).** Joan Rivers directed this wild comedy about the world's first pregnant man.

**SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER (R).** John Travolta (of Kotter's sweatshops) is the main man in film with plenty of disco action.

**ASPECIAL DAY (R).** Sophia Loren and Marcello Mastroianni are excellent as two lonely individuals caught up in bombast of Italian Fascism.

**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

## Vaudeville shows brought in crowds

First of two parts

Live entertainment at the Birmingham Theatre is nothing new. When the theater opened in 1927, it was as a movie house that quickly established itself as a vaudeville palace as well.

Microfilm copies of the Birmingham Eccentric unveil a fascinating history about those early days. One of the most interesting news stories relating to the theater told about an 11-year-old violinist and vaudeville star who returned to his home town of Birmingham to appear at the Birmingham Theatre. During his stay, unfortunately, his \$1,000 violin was stolen from his mother's home in Lathrup Townsite.

The Birmingham Theatre's past was revealed through many news stories and big, weekly ads for what was then called the Kunsky-Birmingham Theatre. These ads, usually more than a quarter page in size, listed the movie attractions for the coming week and also gave the vaudeville program.

Theater history was prominently displayed in an ad from the Nov. 17, 1927, issue, which stated: "The Most Beautiful Theatre in Michigan opens Monday, Nov. 21. The special preopening performance will be under the auspices of the Community House and the proceeds will go to this worthy community organization. The ticket sale is

entirely in the hands of the Community House Committee. The general public opening of the theater follows the next day."

PAGE ONE of the Nov. 23, 1927, issue featured a lavish story bylined "The Wanderer." The headline read: "Theater Crowded by First Nighters" and the story told that "approximately 1,500 people attended the performance, dressed in their very finest, and remained until the last flash of film touched the screen at 11:30 p.m."

This first large motion picture theater in Birmingham was built at an impressive cost of \$400,000 and was said to combine features that were the highest in various types of architecture.

Seven-year-old Virginia Craine Farrar of Birmingham "cut the ribbons that opened as a dignified barrier to the crowd."

Opening night ceremonies featured the symphony orchestra from the Michigan Theater in Detroit, organist Arthur Gotow who played "Foot and Peasant" and contralto Susan Clough.

THE KUNSKY-Birmingham Theatre opened to the public with a quick-changing bill of movie attractions. The program for the week of Nov. 23-Dec. 1 included: Reginald Denny in "Out All Night."



an organ solo by Morgan Gareau, Pathe News and comedy on Wednesday; Dolores Costello in "The College Widow" with Buster Collier, news, comedy and Thanksgiving music on Thursday-Friday; Harry Langdon in "Three's a Crowd" at the Saturday matinee, with news, organ solo and comedy; Eileen Pringle in "Body and Soul" on Sunday; and Ronald Colman and Vilma Banky in "The Magic Flame" plus the usual special attractions on Monday-Tuesday.

Tickets were priced at 50 cents for loges, 35 cents main floor and 15 cents for children, in the evening; matinees were 25 cents for adults and 15 cents for children.

In the Dec. 21, 1927, Eccentric, the Kunsky-Birmingham movie ad hinted at expanded vaudeville programs. Along with the movie, comedy, short studies and news weekly, a soprano soloist was billed.

THE DEC. 29, 1927, issue promised a big New Year's Eve Show. The movie ad read: "7 unusual acts of vaudeville with a jazz orchestra—and feature picture besides!" All this at regular movie prices.

A news story in that same issue declared that a large number of theater parties were planned for this first midnight performance. "A seven-piece orchestra will accompany the acts instead of the organ as is usually used."

Frank Steele and the Jail Bird Orchestra, along with six other acts of singers, dancers and entertainers were scheduled.

Apparently, the big vaudeville night was a success, because on Jan. 5, 1928, the Eccentric ran a short story saying that starting the following week, "Four acts of vaudeville will be a part of the regular Friday night program."

In keeping with the conservative tradition of the community, "The acts will be of the highest class and will be selected to meet the discriminating



Young Virginia Craine Farrar snipped the ribbon opening Birmingham Theatre on Nov. 21, 1927.

taste of residents of the village," theater manager Russell Chapman was quoted as saying.

The first Friday night bill featured the Night Owls, a dance orchestra; Miller and Welch, who did various kinds of dances; the Hill Sisters, a harmony specialty; and an act by Whitney Roberts, who was also the master of ceremonies.

# DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

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FROM 4 P.M. TIL 7 P.M.  
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LIVE ENTERTAINMENT WITH MAGIC  
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**The Jolly Miller Lounge**  
ALL NEW AND TERRIFIC  
Monday to Saturday 11 a.m. til 2 a.m.  
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**LAUREL & HARDY**  
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with live theatre pipe organ accompaniment by nationally known artist **Rex Koury**

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A WESTERN INTERNATIONAL HOTEL

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Tues., May 16 • 8 p.m.  
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Advance Tickets: \$3.50  
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Send this order with stamped, self-addressed envelope and check or money order to Organ Show, 2300 Lancaster Center Pl. Wood, MI 48036  
\_\_\_\_\_ returns at \$3.50 ea. -  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Mail orders received after May 9 will be held at the box office

**Mother's Day Buffet**  
Served 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Variety of hot foods including Sliced Roast Beef, Baked Chicken, Swedish Meat Balls, Carved Ham, Vegetables, Potatoes, Assorted Salads and Desserts.  
\$7.25 per person  
\$3.50 children  
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MAJOR CREDIT CARDS ACCEPTED

**MOTHER'S DAY**  
MAY 14th, SUNDAY  
starting at 12:00 noon, do something special for Mother. Show her you care by taking her to that special place to eat. Dine in a warm cordial atmosphere where she can select her favorite entree. Make Mother's Day a delicious tradition for the Mother in your life.  
For your convenience all restaurants will be open 12:00 NOON

**HOLIDAY INN**  
**THE DOCK**