



If you ever want to have a laugh

It's really nice to see people enjoying themselves, like the preview audience which laughed through "If Ever I See You Again" (PG), because it is so incredibly bad.

Yes, it's a tear-jerker just as the advertisements claim, only the tears come from hilarity, not heartbreak. Somehow, I don't think that what director Joe Brooks had in mind.

Brooks is the fellow who produced, wrote and directed "You Light Up My Life." Trying to repeat that success, he has preserved all the latent insipidness of his first film while disposing of its positive qualities, such as credible actors and some semblance of an interesting story.

If there is a credible-ego-of-the-year award, Joe Brooks should get it. Not only did he produce, direct and write "If Ever I See You Again" and compose, arrange and conduct the music, but he stars in the movie.

IN HIS LEADING role he distinguishes himself by a unique acting style. With effortless ease he delivers whether happy, sad, angry or romantic—in the same tone of voice and with nearly the same facial expression. This is tough to do for anyone not suffering from some severe dysfunction.

Brooks is, not alone, however, in his uncanny non-acting ability. There is one performer who actually beats him at his own game. You guessed it. It's the person with the leading female role, Shelley Hack.

Ms. Hack's dramatic virtuosity as Revlon's "Charlie" girl undoubtedly clinched this role for her. Actually, my favorite scene is her big dramatic moment when she tries to cry. She tries very hard. She squinches her eyes and clenches her fists, but nothing happens. (Are there any openings in Acting 101, no prerequisites required.)

This is a pseudo-movie: A musical score strung together with post card scenes of California and a story about a guy who still has a crush on his college sweetheart of 12 years ago. To give the story depth, he also is considering a career change.

He's a successful but dissatisfied composer of jingles for television commercials. Inspired by his friend who gives a piano recital at Carnegie Hall, he decides he wants to compose serious music—background music for movies.

THE REAL WORLD and movie world mesh with a fat commercial for American Airlines smack in the middle of this movie. As the plane soars, headed toward the West Coast, the music swells with Brooks' new hit "California."

Actually, some of the better scenes in this movie are those involving commercials, as in the beginning of the film when our hero is working on a dog food jingle.

Before Brooks became a movie impresario he made his livelihood composing such ditties for television commercials. Perhaps he should stick with what he knows best. As I often tell my children, better to create the best dog food commercial than the worst movie.

Thank goodness it's rated 'PG'

"Thank God It's Friday" (PG) is a disco movie for all those who couldn't crash the "R" rating of "Saturday Night Fever."

Aside from a few exterior scenes, the noisy but innocuous action percolates inside a strobe-lighted, bizarrely decorated discotheque called The Zoo. The name is a misnomer. There is nothing about this place or its frenetic occupants that resembles a zoo. No animal, save Homo sapiens, the only one not in a zoo, would dare to inhabit this jungle.

"TGIF" is an unstructured movie that jumps about to look at the comings and goings, mixing and matching of the teen and post-teen crowd during one night at the disco. There's even a suburban married couple present, just to help everyone in the audience find someone to relate to.

The humor is what you'd expect: Minors trying to sneak in, losers looking for action, a mismatched couple on a computer date, and that old favorite, a homosexual in drag.

Although the musical "stars" are the Commodores and Donna Summer, the best number is a cartoon dance sequence energetically performed by Chick Vennera in a graceful, muscular style reminiscent of Gene Kelly.

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).

THE DUELLISTS (PG). Gorgeous but dry period drama of irrational feud between two officers in Napoleon's army.

THE END (R). Black comedy about misadventures of an about-to-die guy. Burt Reynolds and Dom DeLuise star.

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.

THE GREEK TYCOON (R). Jacqueline Bisset and Anthony Quinn in story of Jackie and Ari Onassis. Exploitive movie with banal dialogue.

HARPER VALLEY P.T.A. (PG). You heard the song in the '60s, now see the movie as Barbara Eden and Nanette Fabray thump the hypocrites.

THE LAST WALZ (PG). The last concert given by The Band, Thanksgiving '76, is documented in this film by Martin Scorsese.

MADAME ROSA (PG). Tender story of old Jewish woman (Simone Signoret) who raises Arab boy. Won Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. English subtitles.

THE MAN WHO LOVED WOMEN (R). Francois Truffaut's sadly amusing story of a womanizer.

OPERATION THUNDERBOLT (PG). Spirited Israeli account of the commando raid on Entebbe to free the passengers of hijacked jettliner.

PRETTY BABY (R). Red-light district of New Orleans in 1917 as seen by a child prostitute in lush, unromanticized 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 Kottler's sweatshops) is the main man in film with plenty of disco action.

A SPECIAL 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.

McPartland performs stylishly

By JIM WINDELL

Bess Bonnier introduced the special guest artist to kick off the Jazz at the Institute summer program Thursday night, and she spoke from experience, saying it is not easy to be a solo pianist.

However, when the artist is a Marian McPartland, playing solo piano looks easy.

The gracious and sophisticated Ms. McPartland is one of the grand dames of jazz, and her appearance each time she comes to the Detroit area reconfirms this. She always manages to be the consummate interpreter of standard songs and wistful ballads.

Her gentle English wit was perfect for the rather baronial Kresge Court in the center of the Detroit Institute of Arts. It became a quite intimate setting despite the high ceiling and brick walls because Ms. McPartland always has the ability, even at an outdoor concert like Meadow Brook, to seem to be playing just for each listener.

In the second set of the evening, starting at 9:45, she polished off 15 numbers, most of which were ballads of the kind that set a jazz connoisseur's heart aflutter just at the mention of the title.

OPENING WITH "Stella by Starlight," which she built into a rich improvisation after a simple statement of the theme, she went on to the understated but lovely "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most," which she treated with loving respect.

Review

Her "A Fine Romance," released last year in an album by the same name on the Tony Bennett-owned label Improv, featured a rolling left hand bass while she built melodic ideas with her right hand.

Her strong bass lines—sometimes she gives us stride piano and a boogie bass—remind us that the old cliché about women having weaker left hands at the piano is another of those old wives' tales without much substance.

Ms. McPartland's delicate touch

was evident on Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides Now" and Sondheim's "Send in the Clowns." She has recorded the latter song a couple of times in the last few years, but she began this version by plucking the piano strings to give the effect of guitar chords.

She had fun with a Kern and Beatles medley of "Yesterday" and "Yesterdays" showing smoothly flowing rhythmic improvisations before giving the Beatles' song a grand finish with a classical style.

MS. McPARTLAND'S second encore was her own moody composition "Afterglow," which she recorded on her own label, Halcyon, in 1975. That flowed into a request she said she and George Shearing had just done in by

playing in a four-handed version in New York recently. Her performance ended with "Lullaby of Birdland."

The word halcyon she chose in 1969 as the title for her own record label. It has many meanings. I don't know which she had in mind, but I would like to think that calm, peaceful and tranquil were the definitions that prompted her to choose this name.

Her approach to jazz piano is restrained, cleverly modulated and well-balanced. It is also incredibly calm and tranquilizing and Marian McPartland always is well-mannered and elegant in her person and her music.

This was a most appropriate beginning to the jazz series at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Joey Heatherton sizzles plenty

By ETHEL SIMMONS

Singer-dancer Joey Heatherton rocketed her way through a strenuous postponed opening night show Thursday at the Birmingham Theatre.

The senses performer, who had just arrived from an engagement at the Sahara in Las Vegas, wore a diaphanous, shimmering silver gown for the first segment.

The neckline plunged, and her shapely legs were visible through the sheer skirt. Ms. Heatherton's platinum blond hair spun as she moved

through energetic high kicks and body-carressing dance motions.

When she belted out, "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone," she made the lyrics sound like she was making love.

Despite all her outward sexiness, Ms. Heatherton has a kind of Marilyn Monroe sizzle and innocence. She is slender, pale and something of a tease; her breathy voice is suggestive and appealing.

DURING THE SHOW Ms. Heatherton made a couple of quick changes

into other dazzling costumes. She went from the long white gown into a rhinestone-studded long top worn with a black boa and a black fedora with rhinestones.

For the final segment, she came on stage in a sheer pink halter-top dress with pleated skirt that looked something like the one Monroe wore in the famous picture where her skirt blew up.

Ms. Heatherton put her shoes on, on stage, and then danced to "Give Me Somebody to Dance For," moving fluidly with balletic steps.

Raitt opens Star

The Star Theatre of Flint begins its seventh season June 20 with John Raitt starring in the musical about the Civil War, "Shenandoah."

The following week, on June 27, Kathryn Crosby brings the new Broadway hit "Same Time Next Year," also starring Tony Russel, to the Whiting Auditorium stage. Mrs. Crosby has already toured more than 50 cities with this production.

Beginning July 4, Milton Berle will bring the "Milton Berle Show" to Flint. Berle became television's first giant with his Texaco "Star Theatre" in 1948.

A favorite who has played to sold-out crowds in his two previous Star Theatre appearances, Paul Lynde opens July 11 in the comedy "The Impossible Years," in which he plays the role of a harried psychologist.

Also starring in the production will be Elizabeth Allen.

Mickey Rooney returns the week of July 18 as the delightful "Cap'n Andy" in Jerome Kern's immortal "Showboat." He will be followed the week of July 25 with Tony Award winner Brenda Vaccaro and James Farentino in Neil Simon's comedy "California Suite."

AUG. 1 brings a "Musical Evening with Ginger Rogers" to Whiting Auditorium. Following Miss Rogers, the singing star of "Oklahoma" and other musicals, Gordon MacRae lends a nostalgic touch to the Old West in the musical "Paint Your Wagon" and Tony Franciosa opens Aug. 15 in the new production of the thriller, "Count Dracula."

The season will close the week of Aug. 22 with an encore appearance by New York Metropolitan Opera star Roberta Peters, performing in Rodgers and Hammerstein's modern classic "The King and I."

All productions at the Star Theatre of Flint play Tuesday through Saturday evenings at 8:00 p.m., Sunday evenings at 7:30 p.m., with Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:45 p.m.

SEASON TICKETS and individual tickets for all shows are available at the box office at Whiting Auditorium in Flint, or by calling 239-1464.

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MON. JULY 10 - THE BROOKSIDE JAZZ ENSEMBLE with URSULA WALKER
WED. JULY 12 - THE AUSTINORND BAND
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WED. JULY 19 - THE THAD JONESMEL, LEECH ORCH.
MON. JULY 24 - LONNIE LISTON SMITH
WED. JULY 26 - CHICO HAMILTON
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WED. AUG. 2 - STANLEY TURRENTINE
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WED. AUG. 9 - WOODY HERMAN
MON. AUG. 14 - THE BLUE BELLECHAMPEL JAZZ BAND
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MON. AUG. 21 - FATS DOMINO
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