



LOUISE SNIDER

## Heavenly flick devilishly funny

"Heaven Can Wait" (PG) is the most thoroughly enjoyable film to brighten a movie screen this summer. In fact, this year, it's a delightful road remake of the 1941 fantasy-comedy, "Here Comes Mr. Jordan."

Warren Beatty, producer and star of the film, shared the directing slot with Buck Henry and co-authored a witty script with Elaine May. Some of the deadpan repartee is reminiscent of the classic Nichols and May routines.

As Joe Pendleton, a naive and earnest quarterback who is sacked before his time, Beatty is the central figure among a well-meshed team of supporting players.

Dyan Cannon and Charles Grodin particularly add spice and sparkle as a nasty and paranoid pair of conniving lovers. They scheme to kill her husband so they can marry and inherit his wealth. Their plots, however, seem to misfire. She goes into screaming hysterics while he tries to calmly explain her agitation to everyone by claiming she saw a mouse. In one involuted pun, Cannon says she should be "canonized" for her efforts.

PENDLETON'S INVOLVEMENT with the pair stems from a celestial error. Joe was on his way to football practice when he was killed prematurely in an auto crash, but his overzealous Escort (Buck Henry) made a ghastly error. He wasn't scheduled upstairs for another 50 years.

Mr. Jordan (James Mason), the chief dispatcher, and the Escort must quickly return Joe to earth in a suitable body; Joe's has been cremated and is no longer available.

From bodies offered him, Joe selects that of Leo Farnsworth, the millionaire head of a giant conglomerate. Joe's choice was influenced by the presence of Betty Logan (Julie Christie). She has come from England to plead with Farnsworth to stop development of a power plant that would uproot the people in her village and pollute the environment.

As Leo, Joe ignores his wife and her lover (Cannon and Grodin) and concentrates on Betty. Being a health food freak, he is whipped liver and why shake is his favorite beverage and being in love with an environmentalist, Pendleton/Farnsworth is ready to revamp corporate policy. He will make his company a people conscious, ecology conscious organization.

The meeting with his board of directors is the highlight of the movie. He addresses them as if he were talking to his teammates on the Rams. It's an hilarious and charming mixture of idealism and comedy.

Beatty and May have excelled in skillfully updating the issues. His ardent soliloquy to the board reflects contemporary concerns about the environment, football and multi-national corporations.

THE INDIVIDUAL reactions of board members and the incredible explanations by Grodin of his employer's behavior are all minor masterpieces.

The reactions of the servants to their master's startling change of behavior provide another continuing source of comedy. Joseph Maher stands out as the butler Sisk who can arouse laughter with a subtle change of expression.

Such excellent performances integrated into a delightful and even heart-tugging plot make "Heaven Can Wait" outstanding entertainment.



Warren Beatty, a professional quarterback, celebrates his team's Super Bowl victory.

## Glimpses

### NEW RELEASES

**BAD NEWS BEARS GO TO JAPAN** (PG). Scrappy action with the Bears, their scheming agent Tony Curtis and a Japanese wrestler not to mention the ball game.

**CAPRICORN ONE** (PG). Hoax about a space shot is the gimmick in this flick with lots of action and lots of loopholes.

**THE CHEAP DETECTIVE** (PG). Peter Falk and terrific cast check in Neil Simon's comical take off on the Bogart movies of the '40s.

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

**CONVOY** (PG). Kris Kristofferson leads convoy of angry truckers in movie expanded from hit record.

**DAMEN: Omen II** (R). The nasty kid from "The Omen" is now 13 and he's back to kill more people as the world heads for Armageddon.

**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. **GREASE** (PG). Brg.dway musical about the funky '50s is translated to film with John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John.

**HARPER VALLEY PTA** (PG). You heard the song (in the '60s), now see the movie as Barbara Eden and Nanette Fabray thump the hypocrite.

**SHEAVEN CAN WAIT** (PG). Warren Beatty's successful and distinctive remake of humorous fantasy, "Here Comes Mr. Jordan." Football player goes to heaven and returns to earth as business tycoon. Fine performances.

**JAWS 2** (PG). Unimaginative recap of original "Jaws" as another shark with a case of overbite and a taste for teens terrorizes beach resort.

**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 amusing and charming story of a womanizer.

**MATILDA** (G). Kangaroo becomes professional boxer and pockets the cash.

## Hilberry tackles British humor

The British invade the Hilberry Theatre Aug. 2 when plays by three of England's top comedy writers join the summer theater festival.

Alan Ayckbourn's marital farce "How the Other Half Loves" opens upstairs at the Hilberry at 8:30 p.m. At the same time two one-acts, "The Real Inspector Hound" by Tom Stoppard and "Red Peppers" by Noel Coward, play in tandem downstairs, at the Hilberry Studio.

"How the Other Half Loves" plays for two weeks, Wednesday-Saturday at 8:30 p.m. through Aug. 12. "The Real Inspector Hound" and "Red Peppers" play Wednesdays-Fridays at 8:30 p.m. with certain times Saturday at 5 and 9 p.m. also through Aug. 12. Ayckbourn, who has been called "the Neil Simon of England" and "the most successful comic dramatist Britain has produced since Noel Coward," also wrote "The Norman Conquests," a trilogy of comedies recently presented on Channel 56.

NOEL COWARD, whose wit enlivened the English stage for half a century until his death in 1973 was considered by many the leading dramatist of his generation.

And Tom Stoppard catapulted to the forefront of contemporary English playwrights with his full length works, "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead" and "Jumpers." His award-winning teleplay, "Professional Foul,"

recently aired on American television.

"How the Other Half Loves" will be presented at the Hilberry in an Americanized version which premiered on Broadway on March 29, 1971. John Schiebeck praised it as "a true masterpiece of comedy...dazzling wonderful, fun," and Frank Ganss called it "a very funny play" that would "stand the marketplace on its ear."

Coward's "Red Peppers," a parody of a small time music hall turn, was originally part of "Tonight at 8:30," a famous one-act play series featuring Coward and Gertrude Lawrence.

"The Real Inspector Hound," a spoof of an Agatha Christie thriller, "is an easy first class entertainment," Leonard Harris said when it opened in New York.

APPEARING IN "How the Other Half Loves" are John L. Breen, Jim Birtsdall, Mary Ostrann, Joyce Ramsay, Mark Robbins and Barbara Softcheck. The comedy is directed by Robert T. Hazzard, with set design by Stephen P. Krempasky, costumes by Marilyn Renaud and lighting by Gary M. Witt.

Erick Devine and Dianne Winslow play Coward's song-and-dance team, the Peppers, and the Stoppard play features Erick Devine, George Christopher Kappaz, Douglas McBride, David D. Montee, Jane Mellon and Dianne Winslow in leading roles.



Marital bliss is not always at its best in Alan Ayckbourn's "How the Other Half Loves," starring Joyce Ramsay and Jim Birtsdall (standing) and Mark Robbins and Barbara Softcheck.

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