



## Women's choices examined freshly in 'Girl Friends'

A number of recent movies—"The Turning Point," "Lumiere"—have dramatized the 20th-century female dilemma of career versus marriage. "Girl Friends" (PG) brings a refreshing proletarian approach to this now familiar problem.

Susan Weinblatt (Melanie Mayron), a struggling young photographer, (movie makers have a penchant for casting "career" women as photographers), shares an apartment with her friend Annie (Anita Skinner), a struggling young writer.

Annie is blonde, neat and waspish. She's a dilettante, who becomes more dedicated to getting a husband than to advancing her career. Annie explains that she needs someone to depend on.

Susan is distinctly New York Jewish, and she is serious about her professional career. The measure of her dedication is marked by her willingness to earn a living by photographing her mitzvahs and weddings while awaiting recognition.

ANNE GETS a husband and moves out. Susan is left to cope. She has no one to depend on but herself. She not only has to deal with her loneliness but with economic hardships. Thus Claudia Weill in her directorial debut manages to extract some sharp perceptions about friendship, independence and social climate from a very slim, modest story.

"Girl Friends" says as much about the realities of a young artist struggling for recognition as it does about feminist issues. Susan's daily dose of rejection from magazine editors and others to whom she tries to sell her work gives a clear message. To make it in a highly competitive field requires a lot of inner strength as well as talent.

If Susan has her problems, so does Annie. She is confused and vacillating about the development of her writing career. We find that Annie, with her husband, baby and economic security, still needs Susan as much as Susan, facing the world solo, needs Annie.

This is perhaps the main point of the movie, but it is also the most weakly stated. The two women share an intimacy and rapport which nurtures them both. However, the film never presents the ground work which would establish their relationship.

Where are those scenes which would capture the texture, quality and intensity of their friendship? From all we see, Annie could be one among many interchangeable roommates who help pay the rent.

ONE OTHER ASPECT of this film requires mention and that is the way Annie's husband Martin (Bob Balaban) is presented. Nothing specific is said about him, but there is a subjective tone in the film that seems to sneer at his cultural aspirations or pretensions.

Objectively, his actions are those of a loving, patient and encouraging husband. So why the patronizing smile as if Susan somehow is superior?

"Girl Friends" has several fine moments and flashes of humor that emerge from Vicki Polon's incisive script. It would have more punch if it were more structured and less anecdotal, but it's a notable and entertaining first effort.



Melanie Mayron (left) and Anita Skinner portray best friends whose close relationship ends when Skinner gets married.

## Glimpses

### NEW RELEASES

**THE BIG FIX** (PG). Another fetching performance by Richard Dreyfuss who plays a former college activist turned private eye.

**BLOODBROTHERS** (R). Hard look at lives of two blue-collar brothers whose macho values affect their families.

**BOYS FROM BRAZIL** (R). Quality cast with Gregory Peck as arch villain distinguishes film of Ira Levin's novel about fiendish plot by Nazi criminals in South America.

**CORVETTE SUMMER** (PG). Boy chases stolen Corvette and catches car and girl. Mark Hamill and Annie Potts get in gear.

**DEATH ON THE NILE** (PG). A highly decorative and entertaining film of the Agatha Christie mystery with Peter Ustinov as Hercule Poirot and a large, splendid cast.

**GOIN' SOUTH** (PG). Fine character study by Jack Nicholson in adventure that proves there's still hope for the Western.

**INTERIORS** (PG). Woody Allen's serious film explores the tensions within a family where neuroses and artistic sensitivity dominate their lives.

**NATIONAL LAMPOON'S ANIMAL HOUSE** (R). Outrageous and raunchy comedy about life at Delta House, the bottom-of-the-barrel fraternity on a small college campus in the early '60s.

**SEPTEMBER 30, 1955** (PG). Richard Thomas stars in wistful reminiscence of the "50s set at time of James Dean's death.

**SOMEBODY KILLED HER HUSBAND** (PG). Silly comedy-mystery as Farrah Fawcett-Majors and Jeff Bridges search for the somebody of the title.

**UP IN SMOKE** (R). Dope jokes from Cheech and Chong who celebrate the weed in their usual gross manner.

**A WEDDING** (PG). All the action takes place in one day as director Robert Altman dissects "the last of our country's big rituals."

**WHO IS KILLING THE GREAT CHEFS OF EUROPE?** (PG). Comedy-mystery with George Segal as fast food franchiser and Jacqueline Bisset as master dessert chef.

### MOVIE RATING GUIDE

- G General audiences admitted.
- PG Parental guidance suggested. All ages admitted.
- R Restricted. Adults must accompany person under 18.
- X No one under 18 admitted.



## Getting Around

By ETHEL SIMMONS

### Greco swirls into Count Dracula role

Jose Greco, whom everyone knows as a Spanish dancer, will be swirling his cape as Count Dracula in a dramatic production coming to the Birmingham Theatre.

Greco was interviewed by phone Wednesday from his hotel in New York.

Greco said the producer of "The Passion of Dracula" remembered how he performed as a dancer and decided to cast him in the lead role as the bloodthirsty count.

"The severe, arrogant stance that I seem to convey when I dance" was what, apparently landed Greco on his feet as Dracula.

Greco does not dance in the part, but he does "swirling with the cape. The character changes into any sort of beast or animal."

The cape is a symbol, and in an instant he can become a bat.

Arriving in Birmingham on Nov. 6 for performances through Nov. 18, Greco last performed in the Detroit area with his large dance company four or five years ago.

This is the eighth week of the road tour for "The Passion of Dracula" starring Greco. "I was supposed to do the New York engagement," he said, "but I was occupied."

Contrasting his portrayal of Dracula to Bela Lugosi's in the movies, Greco explained his own version "is a little more human."

He added, "He's a longing sinister man who can only exist by drinking human blood. He isn't everyone's cup of tea."

But actually Dracula is just looking for a mate, like everybody else. "The Passion of Dracula" follows the idea of the film in which Lugosi appeared, Greco said.

If it seems like there's been a lot written and staged about Dracula, it's because there are four different productions adapted from the original Bram Stoker novel.

These plays are "Dracula," "The Passion of Dracula," "Prince of Darkness" and "Count Dracula," according to Greco.

THE APPEAL of the Dracula story.

Monday, October 9, 1978

IS.F.Ro-9B11015B



The hands of Dracula (Jose Greco) alarm his prey (Lynn Watson). "It's a part I love to play. It has so much choreographic movement," Greco said.

according to Greco, is "the bizarre fantastic things that all of us have." The drama has hidden sexual tones, he said.

"At one point she (the female lead) is convinced she is in love with me. I ask her to cut my chest open and drink blood. She does."

Does this make the show suitable for the kiddies? Can you take the family to see it at the Birmingham Theatre?

Greco hastened to explain, "There's no direct suggestion of eroticism. The kids probably enjoy the show the most

because the tricks are fantastic. I disappear, become a bat and fly into the audience. When the cross is touched, it explodes in my hand."

Born in Italy, Greco was brought up in New York and achieved world acclaim as a fiery dancer heading his own spirited troupe. Greco has been living in Spain since 1945 and coming to America every year to perform.

He has done dramatic roles in movies ("Ship of Fools"), but his is his first stage play. Greco's dance company will begin its regular tour in February.

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