

The Movies



LOUISE SNIDER



Diana Ross as Dorothy and the once-slaved Winkles celebrate in the movie musical "The Wiz."

Yellow brick road not worth traveling with adult Dorothy

Look for "The Wiz" (G) to fix-ze out. Elaborate costumes, lavish sets and special effects dazzle the eyes. Yet, the most expensive musical ever made (\$20-\$30 million, according to different quotes from different folks) lurches along and hits every pothole in The Yellow Brick Road.

This is not a remake of MGM's 1939 classic "The Wizard of Oz," which starred Judy Garland as Dorothy, but a spin-off of the successful Broadway musical "The Wiz." Sidney Lumet, who doesn't have a way with song or dance, directed this updated, black urbanization of the L. Frank Baum novel.

Who plays the simple, young Dorothy? None other than Motown's own 34-year-old Diana Ross, a choice long in the tooth, but sold at the bank. In "The Wiz," Dorothy is not a naive child but a naive, 24-year-old Harlem schoolteacher who is afraid to venture off her turf. A snowstorm blows her and her dog Toto into the world she was afraid to confront, south of 125th street.

Ross is a glowing and vivid Dorothy, but she's stuck with some ho-hum ballads and a role that just doesn't give her a chance to let go. Playing a 24-year-old schoolteacher going through a childlike world of witches and wizards in order to learn about life isn't fantasy but absurdity.

ON THIS TRIP with Dorothy are Michael Jackson as the Scarecrow, hanging out in the shadow of a slum; Ted Ross as the cowardly Lion, lately of the New York Public Library facade; and Nipsey Russell as the Tin Man, rusting away at an abandoned amusement park.

Also on hand is Lena Horne who makes a brief but snazzy appearance as Glinda, the Good Witch of the South. Not all the stars in this galaxy shine. Richard Pryor is a tacky and often unintelligible Wiz.

"The Wiz" was shot in New York City and the striking use of this location footage is one of the highlights of the movie. The imposing New York skyline, the Brooklyn Bridge, the World Trade Center and other landmarks are integrated with the action.

There are some glorious visualizations in this film, but it doesn't take long for the overdeveloped song and dance numbers to begin to pall rather than appeal.

Sometimes a performer or a routine stand-out—a duet here, a vital characterization there. These are isolated moments that relieve the tedium in a "Wiz" that is as S-L-O-W as its name is fast.

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.

THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL (R). Some fine actors at their worst (except for Laurence Olivier) in loony film about fiendish Nazi plot.

COMES A HORSEMAN (PG). Modern western with Jane Fonda and James Caan as ranchers struggling to hold onto their land.

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.

GIRL FRIENDS (PG). Melanie Mayron and Anita Skinner star in Claudie Weill's directorial debut that focuses on marriage versus career.

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.

MIDNIGHT EXPRESS (R). Riveting, gut-grabbing story of Billy Hayes' experiences in Turkish prison where he was selected for possessing hashish.

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

SEPTEMBER 30, 1965 (PG). Richard Thomas stars in wistful reminiscence of the '30s set at time of James Dean's death.

SOMEBODY KILLED HER HUSBAND (PG). Silly comedy-mystery as Farrah Fawcett-Majors and Jeff Bridges struggle 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 CHIEFS OF EUROPE? (PG). Witty comedy-mystery with George Segal as fast food franchiser and Jacqueline Bisset as master dieting 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.

Area women start ethnic eating club

International ethnic dining is on the agenda for metro Detroiters.

It's the Ethnic Eating Club, developed by Lorraine Jeffe of Bloomfield Township and Mary Quackenbush of Orchard Lake. The first meeting will be 6:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 13, at the Little Hungary restaurant in Berkeley. Charter memberships are available for \$20, enabling each member to dine at two ethnic restaurants.

When two meals are purchased, the

member will receive either one free meal—the least expensive one—or a 40 per cent discount on the charge with the exception of one restaurant. These options will be available at each ethnic restaurant once during the calendar year.

THE WOMEN have selected the following restaurants: Taj Mahal (Indian), Little Hungary (Hungarian), Old Parthenon (Greek),

Mexican Village (Mexican), The Little Cafe (German), Phenicia (Lebanese), Paradiso (Italian), Yummy House Restaurant (Chinese) and O. K. Restaurant and Bar (Japanese).

Ms. Jeffe and Ms. Quackenbush believe one of the assets of the Detroit area is its ethnic composition. They were convinced they should promote the wide variety of ethnic foods.

"We've been all over and met the most fantastic people—people who, by

hard work, are trying to make the American dream come true by sharing their culinary skills," said Ms. Jeffe.

Both women participate in many activities throughout the Detroit area. Their children are grown and their past volunteer activities are numerous.

Lorraine Jeffe is a native of Fargo, N.D. The mother of two is a graduate of Northwestern University and has taken graduate courses at Wayne State University.

'Trial' suggests answer

In 1966 a black Army regiment stationed at Brownsville, Tex., was dishonorably discharged without trial. In 1972, the Army cleared its records, calling the punishment a "gross injustice." What happened?

Charles Fuller suggests an answer in his play "The Brownsville Raid," which premieres in Michigan at Wayne State University's Bonstelle Theatre at 8:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 24. It will run for two weekends through Dec. 3 with Friday and Saturday matinees at 2 p.m.

When "The Brownsville Raid" premiered in New York two seasons ago, critics were unanimous in their praise for the script. Harold Clurman wrote that "all its characters... are honestly, incisively and often humorously drawn," and Cive Barnes noted that "the play is never for a moment weighted down with history... the results are fascinating."

HISTORICALLY several companies of crack, experienced black troops stationed in Brownsville in August 1966 were accused of shooting up the town, killing one man and raping a woman. Evidence against the men was flimsy; and clues pointed to a frameup by townspeople who wanted the black soldiers out of Brownsville because they were bad for business.

The play becomes more, however. It is the tragedy of Sgt. Mingo Saunders and a drama of conscience for him and his men.

In the role of Saunders is Fred Bennett, with Yvette M. Jenkins as his wife Dolly. Other major roles are played by C. T. Harper, Jeffrey Scott, Neal Steele, Richard Gilbert, David L. Glover, James Palmer and John Frank.

Tickets are available at the WSU Theatre Box Office, Cass and Hancock, Detroit (577-2960), at Hudson's and at local college and university ticket services.

'Chalk Circle' opens

An elaborate folk tale complete with original music is being presented as the second offering in The Theatre's (University of Detroit) season. "The Caucasian Chalk Circle" by renowned dramatist Bertolt Brecht opened Friday and is running for two consecutive weekends.

"The Caucasian Chalk Circle" tells the story of a girl named Grusha and the perils of doing a good deed. The play opens in the wake of a military overthrow. The governor's wife is so concerned with saving her jewels and dresses that she forgets to take the child with her.

Left behind, Grusha cannot resist the temptation to care for the abandoned child, even though it means great hardship for herself. She must carry the child to safety through mountains and deserts, dodging the military police—looking for shelter and jeopardizing her own true love.

The play-within-a-play technique is employed to tell the story. Each performer often plays more than one character. "The rogue's gallery of characters provides more than 70 roles, and each one is worth an actor's loving care," said the director, Arthur Beer.

MARY ELLEN SHINDEL plays the role of Grusha, the girl whose life is changed when she is tempted to do good.

"The Caucasian Chalk Circle" is staged in The Theatre, on the Marygrove College campus in the Liberal Arts building. General admission tickets are available. For reservations, brochures and additional information, call the U-D Theatre box office at 927-1130 during regular business hours.

Meadow Brook Theatre

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"That Championship Season" by Jason Miller

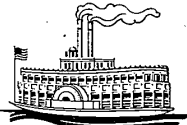
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