



Gypsies remain a mystery after unrevealing film

My grandmother told me about the Gypsies: They would move through a town, steal everything in sight and kidnap stray children. Separating fact from fiction in any of my Grandmother's stories always was difficult, but when it came to the Gypsy stories, it was impossible and still is. How many educated adults today know anything about Gypsy life? That is why I find "King of the Gypsies" (R) a film that is both fascinating and disappointing.

It's fascinating because of its exotic subject matter. The Gypsies constitute a colorful but alien culture living in the United States but outside the mainstream of American life. Born without birth certificates, they are a romantic anomaly in our industrialized, computerized society, and they arouse our curiosity. "King of the Gypsies" never stretches to satisfy our curiosity, and that is why it is a disappointing film, a missed opportunity. It presents tantalizing glimpses of Gypsy life, but no clear vision based on compilation of details, critical observations and astute studies of character.

INDEED, SOME of the scenes of celebration are so poorly handled that the viewers might be mistaken for extras left over from "The Godfather."

The film, written and directed by Frank Pierson from the book by Peter Maas, loosely chronicles the lives of three generations of a Gypsy family in the United States.

Sterling Hayden makes an impressive and commanding figure as the family patriarch and the King of the Gypsies of New York and eastern Pennsylvania.

Shelley Winters as his wife Queen Rachel and Judd Hirsch as his son are unconvincing and an embarrassment as Gypsies. Susan Sarandon as the daughter-in-law shows more flair for her role in two of the movie's better scenes. In one she is a fortune teller conning money from a superstitious widow; in another she is an elegantly dressed lady working a scam on a Fifth Avenue jewelry store.

She has just one strike against her. She is not believable as the mother of Eric Roberts. Roberts (the one you see in all the advertisements) plays the grandson whom Hayden names as his heir, thus bypassing his drunken and sadistic son.

ROBERTS REJECTS Gypsy life and the responsibility of leadership. He has a WASP girlfriend (Annette O'Toole), a job as a singing waiter in an Italian restaurant and a dream of surfing in southern California.

The film ends with an inevitable, violent confrontation between father and son. Roberts with his sullen, good looks and capable performance almost wins our endorsement, but not quite. He talks of leading the Gypsies into the 20th century, but his beach-bum dreams make us doubt the seriousness of his aspirations and the maturity of his leadership.

On balance, we must note several outstanding contributions to this film: The lush photography of Sven Nykvist; the dazzling Gypsy-jazz violin playing of Stephane Grappelli; and the eloquent dancing of a silent, dapper figure, Daniel Spira, who provides an agile transition between major episodes.

Channel 4 looks at Motown

Philip LeStrange, guest artist-in-residence for The University of Michigan Professional Theatre Program (PTP), heads the cast of Nikolai Gogol's "The Inspector General" as the mayor.

"The Inspector General" is the third PTP Guest Artist production of the 1978-79 season and will be presented Wednesday-Sunday, Feb. 14-18, at the Power Center for the Performing Arts in Ann Arbor with 8 p.m. curtain Wednesday-Saturday evenings and a single 2 p.m. performance Sunday. The play will be part of the Russian Arts Festival at U-M.

LeStrange, not Frederick Coffin as previously announced, will portray the mayor in the comical satire about the plight of the citizens of a Russian village who, abounding with civic greed and dishonesty, mistake a young opportunist for the government inspector.

The varied background of LeStrange includes performing major roles with several regional theaters; among them, he has performed Dracula in "Dracula" and Hale in "The Crucible" at Asolo

State Theatre in Sarasota, Fla., and Mercutio in "Romeo and Juliet" at Olney Theatre in Olney, Md.

LeStrange has acted in off-Broadway productions including Frank in "Judgment Day" and Catalin in "The Playboy of Seville." "The Doctors," "As the World Turns" and "Ryan's Hope" are a few of his television daytime drama credits. He has also appeared as Alexander Hamilton in WNCT's Theatre in America production of "The Patriots." Tickets for "The Inspector General" can be purchased at the PTP ticket office in the Michigan League, Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. and 2-5 p.m. Tickets also are available through all Hudson Ticket Services and Central Travel and Ticket in Toledo. For further information, call 764-0450.

Show 'Annie' adds matinees

"Annie," the Fisher's long-running attraction, for which tickets are available through Feb. 28, will add Wednesday matinees to its playing schedule. Beginning Wednesday, Jan. 24, the show will start matinee performances at 1 p.m. The Sunday evening 7 p.m. performance will be eliminated. The final Sunday evening show will be Jan. 21.

Wednesday matinees will be given

Jan. 24 and 31 and Feb. 7, 14, 21 and 28. The usual Saturday and Sunday matinees will continue.

Effective Jan. 23 the playing schedule for "Annie" will be: Tuesday-Saturday evenings at 8 p.m.; Matinees: Wednesday at 1 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m.

Tickets for the Wednesday matinees are available at the box office.



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Glimpses

NEW RELEASES

BRASS TARGET (PG). Accident that killed General Patton was no accident, according to suspense film with George Kennedy and Sophia Loren.

CALIFORNIA SUITE (PG). Neil Simon's comedy of four episodes about guests at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Starry cast includes Jane Fonda and Walter Matthau.

FORCE 10 FROM NAVARONE (PG). High-powered thriller with Edward Fox and the late Robert Shaw on a team whose target is a vital bridge.

KING OF THE GYPSIES (R). Three generations of gypsy life in America are chronicled in film of best-selling novel. Sterling Hayden is the patriarch and Shelley Winters the queen.

LORD OF THE RINGS (PG). Hobbits and the creatures of Middle Earth are energetically recreated in Ralph Bakshi's animated version of J. R. Tolkien's classic fantasy.

MOMENT BY MOMENT (R). Contemporary love story of young man (John Travolta) and older woman (Lily Tomlin).

OLIVER'S STORY (PG). Sponge sequel to "Love Story" with Ryan O'Neal and some new playmates, Candice Bergen and Nicola Pagett.

SUPERMAN (PG). Christopher Reeve plays Big S, Marlon Brando his father and Gene Hackman the villain in this humorous fantasy.

WATERSHIP DOWN (PG). Animated adventures of a group of rabbits who leave their doomed warren to seek a safe home. Multi-leveled story of interest to adults and children.

THE WIZ (G). Lushly filmed version of the Broadway musical presenting Diana Ross in an updated black "The Wizard of Oz."

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.



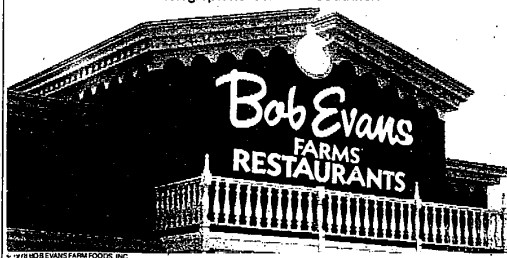
Trisha (Lily Tomlin) makes her first public appearance with her young lover, Strip (John Travolta), in "Moment by Moment."

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