

LOUISE SNIDER



Dustin Hoffman plays a divorced father who takes on the responsibility of a son, played by Justin Henry, in "Kramer vs. Kramer."

## Dustin Hoffman gives fine performance in 'Kramer vs. Kramer'

The thought of a film about a divorce and an ensuing custody battle brings to mind a host of soapy tearjerkers. "Kramer vs. Kramer" (PG) isn't one of them.

The film takes up the subject, but avoids the clichés. It wends its way through a lot of sentimental opportunism and emerges clean and unscathed.

Substantial credit for accomplishing this near miracle goes to director and scriptwriter Robert Benton. He adapted Avery Corman's novel, writing controlled scenes that bring out the best in each performer.

Benton is especially good with young Justin Henry, who comes across as a real child (sullen moods and all), and not just an adorable kid in short pants.

THE FILM SHOWS us the evolution of Ted Kramer (Dustin Hoffman) in brief episodes defining his character. He is a confident, even smug, director of a Madison Avenue advertising agency. At some with his wife (Meryl Streep) and six-year-old child (Justin Henry) he is still the same self-absorbed executive. Indeed, it doesn't occur to him that his family has any life except as satellites to his star.

When Ted's wife, Joanna, leaves him and their son, Billy, it's the beginning of Ted's development as a complete person. His initial reaction is hurt, confusion, and "She'll be back" attitude.

When Joanna doesn't return, Ted's reaction changes to anger and frustration, as he tries to cope with daily problems such as preparing Billy's breakfast, getting him back and forth to school, and generally becoming involved with his life.

Hoffman, in one of his finest screen performances, depicts every aspect of Ted's character. He convinces us of his ego and self-centeredness.

HE VISIBLY DEMONSTRATES his impatience, guilt and anger. And he reveals his change and growth as Billy becomes part of his life, not just an obligation.

When Joanna returns after 15 months to seek custody of Billy, it's a major blow to Ted. Joanna's character is the one weakness in the film's development. Streep gives an intense, perceptive performance. However, it can't compensate for lack of scenes that would help to establish her feelings and attitudes.

What we learn about Joanna from courtroom testimony is that she has pulled herself together after being unable to cope with raising a child. She has always loved Billy. Now that she has regained her mental health and self-esteem, she would like him back.

The story's climax is the courtroom confrontation between Ted and Joanna. It's a dramatic encounter in which two people who once loved each other are forced to tear each other apart for the sake of what is best for the child.

It is a measure of the film's maturity that audiences are moved to sympathize with everyone — there are no villains.

The strength of "Kramer vs. Kramer" is that Ted, Joanna and Billy act and talk like real people, decent people, and we care about what happens to them.



Meryl Streep portrays a young wife and mother who faces a bitter custody struggle and must make some difficult choices.

### NEW RELEASES

ALL THAT JAZZ (R). Bob Fosse's rowdy, autobiographical musical about hard-working, hard-driving choreographer.

AND JUSTICE FOR ALL (R). Al Pacino is a young trial lawyer dedicated to his profession and profoundly troubled by the legal system.

APOCALYPSE NOW (R). Francis Ford Coppola's epic film of the Vietnam war interwoven with the characters and stunning impact of Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness."

AVALANCHE EXPRESS (PG). Adventure-suspense drama about KGB agent defecting to the West. Filmed in Italy and Germany; climactic scene is, you guessed it, avalanche.

BEING THERE. Peter Sellers is a TV-educated economist in satire that pokes fun at our political and social concerns.

BLACK HOLE (PG). Disney's expensive entry into sci-fi, space adventure with strong cast and action story.

BLACK STALLION (G). Excellent film about a boy, a horse and much more. Mickey Rooney gives terrific performance as seedy, ex-jockey.

CHAPTER TWO (PG). Autobiographical Neil Simon story about a man starting over after death of his wife.

CUBA. Sean Connery and Brooke Adams in romantic adventure during last days of Batista regime in Cuba.

THE DEER HUNTER (R). An emotionally gripping and violent film about the lives of three friends from a small steeltown as they are affected by the Vietnam war.

ELECTRIC HORSEMAN (PG). Jane Fonda is a reporter and Robert Redford an ex-rodéo champion in a satirical romance.

THE FISH THAT SAVED PITTSBURGH (PG). Actors and pro-athletes abound in comedy about a water boy who revitalizes a slumping basketball team.

GOING IN STYLE (PG). Offbeat comedy about three pensioners who decide to "go in style."

HOT STUFF (PG). Dom DeLuise directed and stars in slick comedy about undercover police fencing operation.

THE IN-LAWS (PG). Hilarious comedy with Peter Falk and Alan Arkin as near-relatives who not only plan a wedding but ripoff the U.S. Mint.

THE JERK (R). Steve Martin in comedy about a white boy raised by black sharecroppers.

KRAMER VS. KRAMER (PG). Perceptive, well-acted drama about a broken marriage and a custody battle. Dustin Hoffman and Meryl Streep star.

LOST AND FOUND (PG). George Segal and Glenda Jackson are paired again in romantic comedy about a "fractured" couple who meet in the Swiss Alps and decide to yodel on through life together.

LUNA (R). Uneasy and self-conscious film of widowed opera singer (Jill Clayburgh) in incestuous relationship with her teenage son.

THE MAIN EVENT (PG). Barbara Streisand is a perfume manufacturer who manages a retired boxer, Ryan O'Neal, in comedy about the fight game.

## 'Pinnocchio' to be put on at the Community House

"Pinnocchio" will be performed at the Community House at 1 and 3 p.m. Jan. 5 by the Mime Ensemble of Oakland University.

Music and magic used in the production will help stir the imagination of the young audience. Tickets are available now at The Community House in Birmingham. Adult chaperones will be in attendance at all times with the children.

"Pinnocchio," the puppet created by Gopetto, Jimmy Cricket and Altescuro the Fire Eater are anxious to meet the children in this new mime production of the all-time favorite story.

THE AGELESS STORY of the doll that came to life unfolds before eager eyes: the Spirit Ariel visits the sleeping Gopetto to grant his greatest wish and amazing events follow.

Pinnocchio, along with the keeper of his conscience, Jimmy Cricket, is kidnapped by a mean circus owner and is swallowed by the Giant Whale. Wisdom, love and hope help make Pinnocchio become a real boy, and the story ends happily ever after.

Ticket information can be obtained by calling The Community House at 644-5832.

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## Glimpses

MANHATTAN (R). The inhabitants are somewhat frayed, but the Big Apple looks glorious in Woody Allen's witty peek at the pairings and partings among New York literati.

METEOR (PG). Disaster movies aren't big this year, but this is a big disaster movie about a five-mile-wide meteor on a collision course with Earth. Sean Connery, Natalie Wood, Karl Malden and many others in the large, competent cast.

MR. MIKE'S MONDO VIDEO (R). TV film is collection of bizarre events in continuing, explosive, downgraded rip-off of "Mondo Cane."

1941 (PG). John Belushi and host of others in comedy about mythical Japanese attack on Los Angeles.

PEPPERMINT SODA (PG). Charming account of two adolescent sisters growing up in Paris in 1936.

PROMISES IN THE DARK (PG). Well-acted film with Marsha Mason as a doctor dealing with a terminally ill, young patient.

QUODROPHENIA (R). Story of disillusioned young man during '60s era of mods and rockers in England. Music by The Who.

ROCKY II (PG). Sylvester Stallone as Rocky Balboa, the over-the-hill boxer, returns for a rematch with the heavyweight champ.

THE ROSE (R). Bette Midler as '60s rock star living life of emotional extremes that suggests some parallels with career of Janis Joplin.

RUNNING (PG). Susan Anspach is the wife of Michael Douglas who is training to qualify for the Olympic marathon.

SCAVENGER HUNT (PG). Cloris Leachman, Richard Benjamin and Tony Randall in comedy about an elusive inheritance.

THE SEDUCTION OF JOE TYNAN (R). Familiar story about the pressures on a "decent" politician, Alan Alda. Hackneyed situations are redeemed by the acting of Barbara Harris, Meryl Streep and Rip Torn.

SKATETOWN U.S.A. (PG). The roller-disco craze gets its due in film about a championship derby and the hot rollers participating.

STAR TREK — THE MOTION PICTURE (G). Space-film epic brings together familiar faces of Enterprise crew in semi-new setting and with razzle-dazzle special effects.

STARTING OVER (R). Romantic comedy with toned-down Burt Reynolds torn between his ex-wife, Candice Bergen, who records a hit song, and his new love, Jill Clayburgh, an independent schoolteacher.

SUNBURN (PG). Poorly written, edited and directed detective-comedy that should leave the participants red-faced.

10 (R). Comedy with Dudley Moore who tosses out his tenuous roommate, Julie Andrews, in his search for the perfect "10."

WISE BLOOD. Film version of Flannery O'Connor novel about a religious zealot and effect on his grandson. Directed by John Huston.

### 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.

## Buddy Rich featured at Hyatt Regency's New Year's Eve show

Folks who like to dance to the music of the all-time great drummers, Buddy Rich, and his band are in for their kind of New Year's Eve at the Hyatt Regency Monday, Dec. 31.

In addition to the band in the Hubbard Ballroom, four other groups will be doing their best to usher in the new decade. Chet Bogan's Dixieland Band opens the Lobby Bar at 6:30 p.m. and plays until 9:30 p.m. Then drummer J.C. Heard and his Jazz Quartet keep the Lobby Bar jumping from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.

Top Brass play big band sounds at the Club on the second floor from 9 p.m. until well into the New Year.

The Buddy Rich Grand Buffet Dinner Show in the Hubbard runs from 7 to 10:30 p.m., when there will be open dancing with Buddy playing several sets.

For those who like disco, the Other Brothers Disco Show begins at 8 p.m. in the Exposition Hall.

Complete details are available by calling the WOW reservation center at the Hyatt Regency, 593-1234.

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