



the movies

Louise Snider

'Cuba' stays cool despite theme of high adventure

Melodramas seem to have gone out of fashion, yet their contents are literally the stuff that movies are made of — action, romance, adventure. One of the few current entries in that category is "Cuba" (R).

In addition to the usual ingredients, it offers some very dry British humor, striking photography and historical perspective on a major political event.

The paradox of "Cuba" is that in spite of all its excitement, it's a cool film, which perhaps accounts for the cool reception it seems to have received.

Richard Lester directed with a detachment that may be too sophisticated for an audience anticipating sex and violence with their romance and adventure. The film has these components; it simply doesn't dwell on them.

THE STORY is set in Cuba in 1959, just as the Battista regime is toppling. Lester has the benefit of 10 years' distance, and he uses that advantage well. Neither the Castro rebels nor the regular army win any laurels. The government is corrupt, repressive and brutal. The Fidelistas terrorize and murder.

The moral (or immoral) position of both sides creates an interesting situation for the hero, Sean Connery. He plays a British officer, a specialist in counter-insurgent warfare from Malaya, hired by the army to help them quash the rebels.

It's too late for that. Nevertheless, Connery is there. The interesting facet of his character is his steadiness. He is not radicalized and won over to the rebel cause. Neither does he apologize for the Battista regime nor for his role as a mercenary. He is paid to do a job and, he emphasizes, he does his job for "any legitimate government." He's a man of principle.

Lester, far from moralizing, has a great deal of fun with the character and situation. When Connery, the gentleman, renews a romance with an old flame, he discovers that she was only 15 when they first met, not a respectable 17, as he thought. With typical underplaying, a stifled phrase and startled expression tell us of his discomfort at the revelation.

Brooke Adams plays the long-lost love, but not very well. She is a dreadful actress. Perhaps this explains an otherwise puzzling scene in which Connery abandons her in a rebel camp.

FORTURNATELY, others in the cast compensate for such shortcomings. Chris Sarandon is handsome and convincing as Adams' philandering husband. Hector Elizondo stands out as a loyal, beleaguered army officer. Jack Weston is excellent as a gross American businessman trying to make a profit out of the chaos. And Martin Balsam has fun with his role as a cunning and greedy general.

Most impressive of all is the atmosphere which the film catches. In an almost offhand way, impressions of an elegant dinner party, a cigar factory, an urban slum present a vivid, if casual, documentary of life in Cuba in 1959.

The warm colors, contrasts, and low-key humor make for an oddly interesting, hot/cool film.



All that jazz

Bob Fosse's "All that Jazz" focuses on the many-faceted character of Joe Gideon, a stage and film director, portrayed by Roy Scheider (below). Ann Reinking (above) plays the role of Katie, one of Joe's girl friends. The film is presented by Twentieth Century-Fox and Columbia Pictures. It will open in the Detroit area on Feb. 15.



what's at the movies

NEW RELEASES

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

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

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 Battista 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 satirical romance.

THE EUROPEANS (PG). Exquisite period film of Henry James' witty novel. Lee Remick is seductive adventuresome who returns to New England to seek a secure marriage.

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). Don 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). Barbra Streisand is a perfume manufacturer

who manages a retired boxer, Ryan O'Neil, in comedy about the fight game.

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, exploitive, downgraded rip-off of "Mondo Cane."

PEPPERMOON 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 suggest 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 TYNNAN (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 tenured roommate, Julie Andrews, in his search for the perfect "10."

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