



the movies

Louise Snider

Only 11 seconds of laughter in 'Chapter Two'

"Chapter Two" (PG) is a new movie from a screenplay by Neil Simon. Not only new but autobiographical, or semi-autobiographical, as they say.

James Caan plays a writer who, like Simon, is distraught after the death of his wife, Marsha Mason (this is a real-life couple, Simon's wife). She is the actress he married after a whirlwind courtship.

Knowing this is knowing all. The events in the film, few as they are, can be anticipated from the beginning. The humor, such as it is, can be lumped together for a total chuckle of 11 seconds.

The only spark of vitality comes from the presence of Joe Bologna, who plays Caan/Simon's brother. Whenever he is on the screen, no matter who he is with, you notice him. Valerie Harper delivers a few zingers in a supporting role, but she looks so gaunt that her appearance detracts from her dialogue.

MARSHA MASON, on the other hand, looks healthy and chirpy. It's her role that detracts from her appearance. She is the obnoxiously perfect "second wife."

She is never jealous of her predecessor; she is completely supportive of "her man;" she is saintly in her patience and understanding; loving, and always ready to forgive any harsh word or foul mood.

Every hurtful action of his is always understood to be a consequence of his continued grief over the death of his first wife. The movie doesn't say what his first wife died of. I suspect it was exhaustion caused by waiting on her man hand-and-foot every minute of the day.

If such blatant male chauvinism doesn't drive one from the theater, one can enjoy, I suppose, some of the other qualities of the film.

NOTICE THE SETTINGS, for example. "Chapter Two" is strong on interior decoration. Two women behind me were content to ignore the story and just concentrate on discussing the furnishings and notin'—which items they would like in their homes.

Notice it—clothes. "Don't you love the colors she (Mason) wears?" "She can wear 'em; she has such a petite figure."

Notice the scenery. "Isn't that gorgeous? (The newlyweds honeymoon in Bermuda.) Where is it?"

"I think it's someplace foreign. Mexico, maybe." Notice that it's getting late, and that you've been sitting in the theater for two hours when you could have been doing something important like checking your glassware for water spots.

what's at the movies

NEW RELEASES

- ALL THAT JAZZ (R).** Bob Fosse's rowdy, autobiographical musical about hard-working, hard-driving choreographer.
- AMERICAN GIGOLO (R).** Seamy tale about rich widows, dirty politics and a stud who gets framed for murder.
- 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 (R).** 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-ropo champion in satirical romance.
- THE EUROPEANS (PG).** Exquisite period film of Henry James' witty novel. Lee Remick is seductive adventurer who returns to New England to seek a secure marriage.
- FATSO (PG).** Anne Bancroft debuts as writer-director and co-stars opposite Dom DeLuise in comedy about fat man's efforts to get thin.
- THE FISH THAT SAVED PITTSBURGH (PG).** Actors and pro-athletes abound in comedy about a water boy who revitalizes a slumping baseball team.
- THE FOG (R).** Horror film from John Carpenter, who directed "Halloween." Supernatural fog, associated with legend of mariners rising from their graves and seeking vengeance, creates havoc in coastal village.
- GOING IN STYLE (PG).** Offbeat comedy about three pensioners who decide to "go in style."
- HERO AT LARGE (PG).** A struggling actor (John Ritter) tries to live up to image of his role as Captain Avenger.
- 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).** 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.
- 1941 (PG).** John Belushi and host of others in comedy about mythical Japanese attack on Los Angeles.
- PROMISES IN THE DARK (PG).** Well-acted film with Marsha Mason as a doctor dealing with a terminally ill, young patient.

MOVIE RATING GUIDE

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

Remembering

Booth Colman stars as Dr. Washburn in "A Summer Remembered," drama by Charles Nolte at Meadow Brook Theatre on the Oakland University campus near Rochester. The Community House in Birmingham is offering a package for theater lovers that includes a matinee performance of the play, preceded by a luncheon with Greek food at The Community House. Round-trip bus transportation from The Community House is included. For further information call 644-5832.



L.A. comics playing Raven

O'Brien and Severa, Los Angeles comedy team, return to The Raven Gallery on Wednesday. They will appear through Sunday at the coffeehouse in Southfield. The comedy duo first appeared at the Raven last year, opening for Josh White Jr. Jim O'Brien and Ken Severa combine a rapid-fire barrage of zany sketches with offbeat impressions and

vivid sound effects, during an evening's performance. Show times are Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday at 8:30 p.m.; Friday and Saturday at 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. There is a cover charge. Also appearing on the bill is Rick Reuther, with music and comedy. The Raven is at 29101 Greenfield. For reservations call 557-2622.

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A stylized illustration of a person dining at a table.

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