

Dull gardner wows the world in 'Being There'

Frequently, we finish reading an absorbing novel and anticipate encountering the characters again in a movie.

Lerry Koninski's short, provocative novel "Being There," although absorbing to read, would not seem to prompt such a readtion, its droll humor and mocking story of a simple man's riseto prominence don't encompass the passion and adventure that are
mainstays of many movies.

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Its hero is as dull as can be — a retarded, middle-aged man wino works as a gardenier and spends all his free time watching television. That the producer, Andrew Braunsberg, recognized movie potential in this material is amazing.

Even more amazing is what the director, Hal Ashby, has wrought from Kosinski's own script. "Being There" (PG) captures the comic sensibility of the novel in one of the most disciplined, tightly controlled films ever produced.

PETER SELLERS is brilliant in his portrayal of Chance, the gardener. His calmness and restraint in developing this "underdeveloped" character demonstrate enormous acting skill and confidence. It would be so easy to succumb to temptations to broaden

dence. It would be so easy to succumb to temptations to broaden the comedy.

The circumstances provide ample material for elaboration into farce. Basically, the story interveaves two themes: a case of mistaken identity (the simple-minded person being mistaken for a wise man) and the effect of television on our culture.

In a cartoon that once appeared in The New Yorker, one person says to another. "Considering the potential of television to deducate, aren't you glad it doesn't?"

"Being There" turns the joke around and shows the learning experience from television as a springboard into a society that relishes platitudes and mediocrity.

The mental deficient who makes this leap is Chance, the garden-r. He wakes to his TV alarm and spends his days tending the Old Man's (his employer's) garden and watching television.

HE DOESN'T read or write. He has never left the Old Man's house, never ridden in an automobile. What little he knows, from shaking hands to doing joga, he has learned by minicking what he was the Wood of the Old Man dies, Chance must leave. He is struck by a car, and the owner (Shirley MacLaine), the wife of a business tyeon and political kingmaker (Melvyn Douglas), takes him to her palatial home to recover.

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Chence, dressed in the hand-tailored clothes of his late employer and reserved in manner, is accepted for what he appears to be an important person. His occasional blunt remarks and laconic comments about gardening are interpreted as displays of refreshing candor and intelligent analogy.

His references to gardens are regarded as metaphors to economic swings — a fallow season followed by growth. Thus the simple and innocent Chance becomes an economic authority and national celcbrity. He communicates instantly with everyone because he speaks the language of Everyman, television.

The black humor of "Being There" is characterized, fittingly, by the black haid who raised Chance in the fold Mars house:

"Lawdy," she says, shocked to see the retarded gardener interviewed on a talk show, "don't that prove this is a white man's world?"

what's at the movies

NEW RELEASES

ALL THAT JAZZ (R). Tour de force by writer-director Bob Fosse. Roy Schedder plays hard-driving, fast-living choreographer (Fosse) in 'behind the sceanes' story of unusual imagination and energy.

AMERICAN GIGOLO (R). Seamy tale about rich widows, dirty politics and a stud who gets framed for murder.

AND JUSTICE FOR ALL (R). All Facino 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 gussed 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.

CRUISING (R). Heavy leather story of police undercover agent (Al Pacino) looking for psychotic tiller in homosexual community.

CUBA (R). Sean Connery and Brooke Adams in romantic adventure during last days of Battists regime in Cubs.

THE DEER HONTER (R). An emotionally gripping and violent film about the view of three Teneds from a small steetlown as they are affected by the acceptance harmon on satirical romance.

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MOVIE RATING GUIDE

General audiences admitted.
Parental guidance suggested. All ages admitted.
Restricted. Adult must accompany person under 18.
No one under 18 admitted.



Travel film series eves artist's Spain

The Community House Travel Film Series will take armchair travelers to Spain, 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday when photographer Franklyn Carney narrates his color film, "As an Artist Sees Spain."

the Community House, Bates and Townsend, Birmingham. Carney's film blends many of the masterpieces that have been painted of Spain and Spaniards with a look at modern Spain. Viewers will see how the warm colors of an artist's palette are used to paint portraits of Spanish senoritas.

The Community House Travel Film item will take armchair travelers to ain, 8 pm. Friday and Saturday and Saturday and Saturday arches his color film, "As an Artist as Spain."

The audience will view Madrid's dazling night life, flowing f. titan busy large and proposed shops. Seenes so spain. The sand spain show gypsy caves at Granada and a wild, unimbible gypsy community House, Bates and Worsend, Birrmingham.

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Dinner reservations, as well as fur-ther information on programs in the se-ries, are available by calling the Com-munity House, 644-5832.





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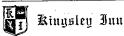




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