



LOUISE SNIDER

## Envelope, please—here are winners

The Observer & Eccentric's third annual Oscar Contest to name Academy Award winners resulted in a seven-way tie for first prize.

Although no one guessed the winners in all seven categories comprising the contest, seven entries from more than 100 submitted correctly identified five of the Oscar winners.

Since some of the entries had illegible postmarks, it was not possible to use dates as a criterion for breaking the tie. Therefore, the tied entries were placed in a container and a winner was chosen at random.

The lucky winners and astute filmgoers are Marlene Perrod of Livonia and Mike Kraft of Southfield. They will each receive two movie tickets valid at any of numerous metropolitan Detroit theaters.

Overall, our readers' choice, by percentage, paralleled that of the Motion Picture Academy in the following areas:

**BEST PICTURE:** "The Deerhunter"; Best Actor, Jon Voight ("Coming Home"); Best Supporting Actor, Christopher Walken ("The Deer Hunter"); Best Actress, Jane Fonda ("Coming Home") with a large segment of Observer & Eccentric readers voting for

Ingrid Bergman for "Autumn Sonata."

Other choices were Best Supporting Actress, Maggie Smith ("California Suite") with readers dividing their votes almost equally among Smith, Dyan Cannon ("Heaven Can Wait") and Maureen Stapleton ("Interiors"); Best Director, Michael Cimino ("The Deer Hunter") with Hal Ashby ("Coming Home") a solid second among our readers.

For cinematography, Nestor Almendros ("Days of Heaven") received the award, but the overwhelming choice among our readers was Vilmos Zsuzmond for "The Deer Hunter."

"Heaven Can Wait," a delightful fantasy with broad appeal had a loyal cadre of followers who voted for every category in which it was nominated. However, like "An Unmarried Woman" and "Midnight Express," it bumped up against very heavy competition in the form of the two Vietnam war films which dominated the Oscars.

"The Deer Hunter" and "Coming Home" are tough acts to follow, but there is still another major film on Vietnam headed for the theaters. Francis Ford Coppola's long-awaited epic, "Apocalypse Now," now is scheduled for release this year. Will that be an Oscar winner in '79?



Jane Fonda won for "Coming Home."



Christopher Walken starred in "The Deer Hunter."



Jon Voight also starred in "Coming Home."



Maggie Smith took "California Suite" award.

## Glimpses

### NEW RELEASES

**AGATHA (PG).** Sketchy characters but intriguing story and fine acting by Vanessa Redgrave and Dustin Hoffman carry film based on Kathleen Tynan's speculations about the 11-day disappearance of Agatha Christie.

**THE BELL JAR (R).** Crack-up of a young poet, torn between life and art, is presented in somewhat flattened film version of Sylvia Plath's autobiographical novel.

**THE BRINK'S JOB (PG).** William Friedkin directed this comic adventure about the big heist with Peter Falk, Peter Boyle, Warren Oates and Gene Rowlands.

**THE CHINA SYNDROME (PG).** A gripping melodrama about an accident at a nuclear power plant and the potential danger. Jane Fonda is a television features reporter, Jack Lemmon's the plant engineer.

**FAST BREAK (PG).** Gabriel Kaplan is a N.Y. deli clerk named to coach a motley crew of basketball players at an obscure college.

**GET OUT YOUR HANDKERCHIEFS (R).** Eccentric view of male-female relations as woman's husband and lover work toward her happiness in unconventional way.

**THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY (PG).** Adventure caper in 1855 as three attractive crooks plan the first robbery of a moving train.

**HAIR (PG).** The counterculture musical of the '60s, directed by Milos Forman, comes to the screen with amazing vitality and musical energy—if a decade late.

**MOVIE, MOVIE (PG).** Expert and entertaining spoof of past double bill movies with George C. Scott in fight movie and Busby Berkeley-type musical.

**MURDER BY DECREE (PG).** Christopher Plummer and James Mason play Holmes and Watson as they stalk Jack the Ripper in foggy London.

**NORMA RAE (PG).** Sally Field is outstanding in contemporary story of union organizing activities in southern textile mills.

**THE PASSAGE (R).** Cliche-ridden film about family's flight from Nazi persecution during World War II.

**QUINTET (R).** Paul Newman and Burt Reynolds play deadly game of survival in Robert Altman's icy, bizarre film.

**SAME TIME, NEXT YEAR (PG).** Alan Alda and a radiant Ellen Burstyn in warm, witty tale of an extramarital affair that persists for 26 years.

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

**THE WARRIORS (R).** Police and street gang hunt down teenage gang from Coney Island as they fight their way out of Manhattan.

### 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.

# Veronica's Room lacks life

By BARBARA MICHALS

As a thriller, "Veronica's Room" falls considerably short. The Birmingham Theater production of the Ira Levin play is intriguing, but as an exercise in terror it is as disappointing as some of the performances.

The mystery of "Veronica's Room" is reasonably well-crafted. Susan, a young college girl, is lured to an old mansion by an elderly couple calling themselves John and Maureen. They ask her to humor the dying wish of their employer and briefly impersonate her sister Veronica who died in 1931.

No sooner has Susan donned Veronica's dress than the key turns ominously in the lock and she is propelled back to 1931. Susan fights to hang on to reality, but after a while even she begins to doubt herself.

John and Maureen change persona, and the mystery focuses on the couple's real identity and the motivation for their behavior.

KIM DARBY is a disappointing Susan. Though she eventually warns somewhat to the role, Ms. Darby starts out as awkward and unconvincing when she is supposed to be a natural, ebullient teenager. She is much more credible as the terrorized victim struggling to maintain her reason and control in an insane situation. However, her weak beginning makes it difficult for the audience to become emotionally involved with Susan's misfortunes. Also, her physical struggles look terribly fake.

As the young man in Susan's life, Jack LaRue is consistently wooden. Though parts of the script justify his seeming uncomfortable in the part, the overall effect is one of ineptitude.

Grayson Hall and Tony Lincoln as the older couple carry the show. Ms. Hall's rich, resonant voice makes her a commanding stage presence at all times, and she is able to rescue the final scenes from wallowing in melodrama—but just barely.

Lincoln's character is the most credible, a weak man led astray by his domineering partner, and his is the most polished performance of the cast.

DIRECTOR AUBREY BERG keeps the background music mercifully low key. Pacing could be a bit tighter but is never a serious problem. John Morris set has a nice touch of the gothic without being overwhelming. Costumes are fine for everyone except Susan, whose 1931 dress seems quite inappropriate to the period.

By the end of "Veronica's Room" the pieces fall neatly into place like keys of the jigsaw puzzles Veronica was so fond of working. The final revelations, though, are frankly sick. It's as if the playwright, following up on his enormously successful novel "Rosemary's Baby," felt compelled to plumb the depths of depravity by consulting a dictionary of perversions.

Ultimately "Veronica's Room" seems a cheap shot, seeking to titillate

with such unsavory tidbits as incest, fratricide, and necrophilia. There's a mention of infanticide for good measure and a vague suggestion of patricide and matricide if one reads between the lines. It's a smorgasbord of horror, but the characterizations are too limited, the motivations too insufficient to be effective.

The play is set in 1969, and the 1931 characters are ostensibly shocked by Susan's liberated demeanor and foul language. "That's clean language in 1969!" Susan explains. "If that's the way they talk in '69, it makes one wish to have died in '68," the older woman responds.

That suggests a parallel with the play itself, for in 1979 it takes more than the mention of taboo subjects to genuinely shock an audience saturated with daily reports of real-life depravity. It's a sad comment on the nature of our times.

"Veronica's Room" continues at the Birmingham Theater through April 21.

## Playwrite topic for newsletter

A new publication, "The Tennessee Williams Newsletter," has begun with a complimentary issue funded by the University of Michigan college of engineering and the college's humanities department.

"The newsletter hopes to encourage lively discussion and a diversity of opinion about Tennessee Williams' work," said editor Stephen S. Stanton,

professor of English in the U-M humanities department.

"A COLORFUL personality in American theater for 35 years, Williams is increasingly praised as our greatest living playwright. Besides plays, he has written many short stories, essays, poems, and two novels."

After the first complimentary issue,

the "Newsletter" hopes to be supported solely by subscriptions, which will start with the second issue in September or October.

With two issues a year, spring and fall, the newsletter will carry short interpretive notes, reviews of published books and articles on Williams, reports on dissertations, reviews of productions, as well as interviews and discus-

sions with actors and directors. Readers will also learn about forthcoming productions and of new works by or about Williams.

For subscription information, write to "The Tennessee Williams Newsletter," college of engineering humanities department, the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan 4819.



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