



'Manhattan' looks at contemporary life with a sharp eye

Woody Allen's film "Manhattan" seems to synthesize the intensity and seriousness of "Interiors" with the trendy and bittersweet humor of "Annie Hall." What has been omitted are the broader forms of comedy, the gaffes, the slapstick and the visual jokes.

"Manhattan" is much more cerebral. The comic core of the film rests entirely on the dialogue, probably the wittiest and sharpest of any Allen film.

Once again Woody, who directed the movie and co-authored the script with Marshall Brickman, is cast in a role that is a continuation of the Alvey Singer persona. He's a Jewish intellectual umbilically attached to The Big Apple.

As Isaac "Ike" Davis, he is an unemployed TV comedy writer who quit his lucrative job in a "self-destructive" moment. He is both romantic and realistic, neurotic and clear-headed.

IKE CIRCULATES within an over-sophisticated, over-analyzed group of friends among whom there is a constantly changing pattern of pairings and partings.

He is having an affair with Tracy (Mariel Hemingway), a 17-year-old girl "who does homework," he tells his friends. His ex-wife (Meryl Streep) has left him for another woman with whom she lives in a lesbian relationship.

His best friend Yale (Michael Murphy), who has an "ideal" marriage with Emily (Anne Byrne), is having an extra-marital affair with Mary (Diane Keaton), a brittle, key-up writer who comes from Philadelphia and writes serious pieces about rock groups.

When the relationship between Yale and Mary deteriorates, Ike steps in and leaves Tracy for Mary, one in a series of regroupings and alignments which are always in flux.

As director, Woody again has demonstrated his ability to inspire and effectively utilize an excellent cast. Further, working with Gordon Willis' handsome black-and-white cinematography, he's put together a striking collage of New York City, measurably enhanced by a lush George Gershwin score played by the New York Philharmonic. The music is less a nostalgic touchstone than a pulsating wave capturing the rhythms of the city.

THE BLACK AND WHITE photography and the Gershwin melodies add a great deal of texture and zest to the didactic sparrings of the educated young professionals who are the regular customers of Woody's cultural cafeteria.

While the numerous and frank discussions about sexual hang-ups and prodigiousness will be clear to anyone, how many movie-goers will grasp references to Diane Arbus or even August Strindberg?

Perhaps the wide net Woody casts accounts for his great popularity and charm. He can explore universal themes of love and friendship and, at the same time, be devastatingly funny about esoteric and specialized subjects.

He seems to be developing a harsher, less compromising kind of comedy, which is still life-affirming and brilliantly funny. It includes metaphysical humor — man as the butt of a cosmic joke — and demonstrates Woody's uncanny ability to laugh at his own collection of cultural props (i.e., Ingmar Bergman, psychoanalysis).

"Manhattan" is a beautiful cinematic package where the wrappings and the contents complement each other. The places are as important as the people in what comprises a romantic comedy and a homage to the city.

Glimpses

NEW RELEASES

BOULEVARD NIGHTS (R). Authentic-looking drama about life in the barrio. Set in East Los Angeles.

CALIFORNIA DREAMING (R). More of that laid-back living in story about kids who make the California beach scene. Glynnis O'Connor and Seymour Cassel star.

THE CLAMP (PG). Good cast in remake of old tearjerker about a down-and-out boxer and his adoring son. Jon Voight and young Ricky Schroder are the touching twosome.

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

DAWN OF THE DEAD (R-rated). George Romero's zombies are the ultimate consumers in this gory, satirical sequel to his cult classic "Night of the Living Dead."

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

THE DREAMER (PG). Bowling version of the "Rocky" story. About as exciting as watching bowling on TV.

THE FIFTH MUSKETEER (PG). Your average swashbuckling tale with heroes, villains and court intrigue. Beau Bridges deftly handles dual role as nasty king and his noble twin.

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

THE HURRICANE (PG). Windy film about stormy love affair and lovely storm on Pago Pago. Mia Farrow and Dayton Ka'Ne are the drenched lovers.

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.



Kane (John Hurt), Dallas (Tom Skerritt) and Ash (Ian Holm) plan their descent on an uncharted planet in "Alien," opening Friday, May 25, at metropolitan Detroit theaters.



Kathryn Crosby stars

"Ladyhouse Blues," poignant story of a mother and her four daughters' struggle against loneliness in wartime, will star Kathryn Crosby when the play by Kevin O'Morrison opens Monday, June 4, at the Birmingham Theater. The fourth and final production of the theater's second season, the show runs through Saturday, June 16. Ms. Crosby's acting career has included more than a dozen movies, many TV specials, and performances in stage productions by the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco.

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Opera's 'Phantom' becomes musical

"The Phantom," a new musical adapted from the classic film "The Phantom of the Opera," will have its world premiere performance Friday, June 1, in the Barn Theater of Oakland University.

Collaborators on the new work are OU graduates Paul Marvin and William McCarty on music and book, respectively.

"The Phantom" is set on the contemporary stage. The action centers around the rehearsal of a revival written in the 1960s, which is brought to a crashing halt when the Phantom drops

a huge chandelier and scenery on the middle of the stage during dress rehearsal.

The student production will be repeated Saturday and Sunday, June 2-3, and Friday-Sunday, June 8-10 and 15-17. There are 8:30 p.m. curtains each night except Sunday when the show is at 2:30 p.m. on June 10 and 17. General admission tickets are available and a special ticket price is offered for OU students and senior citizens. For information call 377-2245.

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