



the movies

Louise Snider



Joe Gideon (Roy Scheider) appears in a fantasy talk show sequence in "All That Jazz."

'All That Jazz' takes audience out of ordinary

"All That Jazz" (R) is no ordinary musical and no ordinary movie. A continuous burst of musical energy — rowdy, sensuous and powerful — it redefines the form.

Directed by Bob Fosse from a script he authored with Robert Alan Aurthur, the closely autobiographical film replays Fosse's own supercharged experiences as a boozing, womanizing, hard-drinking, workaholic choreographer and director.

Roy Scheider, with a worthy role for a change, plays the choreographer Joe Gideon. Gideon is simultaneously rehearsing a Broadway play and editing a film while still maintaining his high-voltage love life.

The audience is immediately caught up in the pace. "All That Jazz" opens with an electrifying sequence of scores of dancers filling a stage as they audition for a show. Gideon winnows the lot while noting those girls whose charms merit his personal attention.

WOMEN ARE intertwined in his life and career. There is his ex-wife (Leland Palmer), a lead dancer in his new show; his 12-year-old daughter (Erzsébet Földi), who is studying dance; his mistress (Ann Reinking) and his new lover (Deborah Geffner), who also dances in his show; and finally there is a beautiful Angel of Death (Jessica Lange), who appears in fantasy scenes and to whom he seems fatally attracted.

Somewhat, he manages to maintain reasonably harmonious relationships with all these women. His flippancy toward constancy is balanced by a disarming, if not disingenuous, honesty that wins female affection and loyalty.

When the girl on the casting room couch asks him if she has the potential to be a movie star, Gideon simply says, "No."

This blunt honesty, so amusing in dialogue, becomes disturbing when expressed visually. Gideon suffers a heart attack (as Fosse did while rehearsing "Chicago") and editing his film on Lenny Bruce. This leads to one of the film's most controversial sequences involving graphic shots of open-heart surgery.

Fosse sets up a cynical counterpart as he intercuts from the operating table to the conference table, where the show's money-men discuss their alternatives in case Gideon dies. It's funny and upsetting at the same time.

IF "ALL THAT JAZZ" sounds grim, it's not. From the time Joe Gideon snaps awake with uppers and eyeprops to the time he beds down with whomever, the screen is filled with dazzling choreography, including one of the most riveting and erotic dance sequences ever filmed.

As exciting as these dances are to watch, if there is one major weakness in the movie, it is the protraction of Joe's fantasies, expressed in one glittering sequence after another, while he is hospitalized.

Whatever there is to learn about Joe has been learned. Nothing more is added once he becomes ill. In a sense, the succession of dances almost seems like a diversion, as if Fosse doesn't want to reveal anything more about Joe.

Interest shifts from the character to Fosse's innovations, which he caps with a funny, clever coda as the voice of Ethel Merman belts out a showstopper.



Gideon finds a new love in Victoria (Deborah Geffner).

'The All Night Strut' opening run March 18

The sounds of the '30s and '40s with the nostalgic musical revue "The All Night Strut," will open at 8 p.m. March 18 and run through April 13 at the Birmingham Theatre.

Before "Ain't Misbehavin'," before "Bubblin' Brown Sugar" and before "Eubie," Fran Chamas realized the popular songs of the Swing Era could be developed into a musical celebration appealing to today's audiences. After a year of research, Ms. Chamas built "The All Night Strut."

Cafe, dance night planned

Two'sy's Cafe of Birmingham and the Harbinger Dance Company of Detroit have put together a "Cafe and Dance" entertainment for Friday evening.

The evening will begin at Two'sy's, where valet parking is available. A four-course dinner, featuring cafe salad, hot appetizer, choice of entree and dessert, will be served at 5:30 p.m. sharp. Then a chartered bus will take patrons to Orchestra Hall for the Harbinger performance.

The format is simple. Four singers and a small band chug into motion with "Chattanooga Choo Choo" and move back and forth in time from "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime" to "In the Mood."

"The All Night Strut" will run Tuesday-Sunday. Matinee performances will be on Wednesday at 1 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m.

For additional ticket information contact the Birmingham Theatre box office at 644-3533.

Two works, one romantic and the other abstract, will be premiered. The romantic work is to Gustav Mahler's "Songs of a Wayfarer." The other piece is set to music by George Crumb. Both works are choreographed by Harbinger artistic director Lisa Nowak.

The price for the entire evening per person includes dinner, gratuities, bus and dance performance. Liquor and wine are additional. Reservations may be made by calling 883-1998 or 883-1151 before Tuesday.

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