



Loretta (Sissy Spacek) tells her loving daddy (Levon Helm) she wants to get married, in Universal's "Coal Miner's Daughter."



the movies

Louise Snider

Natural quality succeeds in bio of Loretta Lynn

"Coal Miner's Daughter" (PG), the rags to riches film biography of country singer Loretta Lynn, is so many cuts above the usual show biz story that it's in a class by itself.

Everyone fits smoothly into his or her part. There is a naturalness about each character that meshes with the locale and the pace of events.

The surprise among this cohesive group is Tommy Lee Jones. After his resolutely rotten performance in "The Betsy," his convincing and colorful portrayal of Mooney, Loretta's husband, is an unexpected and pleasurable development.

Considering that he has to measure up opposite the extremely talented and accomplished Sissy Spacek, who plays Loretta, that's a major feat.

Spacek is the central focus, and she is marvelous. She spans the years from 13 to 33 and is just as credible as a gangling teenager running barefoot in Butcher Hollow, Ky., as a mature, successful singer, "the first lady of country music."

ADDING TO the credibility is the observant camera eye catching details of life in this little coal mining community in Appalachia. It defines the ugliness of the ruts and slag heaps as well as the beauty of the mountains and forests.

It pokes into the mines and hovels, and it lingers on the food-laden tables and boisterous dancers at a social.

Careful attention to authentic re-creation of the social environment gives a background to the leading characters that makes them more interesting and makes their actions more comprehensible.

Loretta married before she turned 14. Mooney was a swaggering ex-GI, a worldly person compared with others in Butcher Hollow. By the time she was 18, Loretta had four children. Mooney complained that she couldn't cook or clean house or make love, but he recognized her vocal ability. He bought her a guitar, encouraged her singing and launched her career.

THEY PERSEVERED, plugging Loretta's first privately made record at every little transmitting station throughout the South. It's a thrilling moment when they get to Nashville and Loretta makes her debut at the Grand Ole Opry.

From then on, the tenor of the film changes as their lives become more complicated. The simple decisions and clear-cut values of the earlier days are gone forever. Recognition and financial rewards are offset by strained personal relations and a punishing schedule of appearances that eventually lead to Loretta's on-stage breakdown.

The nobody-to-somebody route often ends here, on a downbeat note of disaster (as in "The Rose"). Fortunately, in the film and in real life, the gritty singer who made it from Butcher Hollow to Nashville to No. 1 country music star is made of sterner stuff.

That's one more factor that sets "Coal Miner's Daughter" apart from other film bios of entertainers and makes it a richly rewarding experience.



Before singing one of her hit records, Loretta talks to her expectant fans.

what's at the movies

NEW RELEASES

ALL THAT JAZZ (R). Tour de force by writer-director Bob Fosse. Roy Scheider plays hard-driving, fast-living choreographer (Fosse) in "behind the scenes" 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). Al Pacino is a young trial lawyer dedicated to his profession and profoundly troubled by the legal system.

BEING THERE (PG). Peter Sellers is a TV-educated economist in satire that pokes fun at our political and social concerns.

BLACK HOLE (PG). Disney's expensive entry into sci-fi, space adventure with strong cast and action story.

BLACK STALLION (G). Story about a boy and a horse told in rich visual images. Terrific performance by Mickey Rooney as an ex-jockey who befriends the boy.

CHAPTER TWO (PG). Autobiographical Neil Simon story about a man starting over after death of his wife.

COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER (PG). Sissy Spacek is outstanding as Loretta Lynn in movie bio of country singer's grueling early years and troubled success.

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

ELECTRIC HORSEMAN (PG). Jane Fonda is a reporter and Robert Redford an ex-convict champion in satirical romance.

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 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.

FOXES (R). Four teen-aged girls in California coping with the adult world and parental neglect.

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.

THE IN-LAWS (PG). Hilarious comedy with Peter Falk and Alan Arkin as near-relatives who not only plan a wedding but rip off 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.

THE LAST MARRIED COUPLE IN AMERICA (R). George Segal and Natalie Wood in sometimes abusive comedy about problems of staying married in the midst of friends who are divorcing.

1941 (PG). John Belushi and host of others in comedy about mythical Japanese attack on Los Angeles.

THE ROSE (R). Bette Midler as '60s rock star living life of emotional extremes that suggest some parallels with career of Janis Joplin.

THE SEDUCTION OF JOE TYNAN (R). Familiar story about the pressures of a "decent" politician, Alan Alda. Hackneyed situations are redeemed by the acting of Barbara Harris, Meryl Streep and Rip Torn.

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.

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