



the movies

Louise Snider

'Mirror Crack'd' appeals to fans of light mystery

Recent movies based on Agatha Christie's mystery novels seem to be establishing a tradition of quality productions. Along with an impressive bevy of stars, they're characterized by handsome embellishment in settings, costumes and location, all smartly photographed.

"The Mirror Crack'd" (PG), the latest entry, continues to maintain these standards. Although it is not as picturesque as "Death on the Nile," or as crackling as "Murder on the Orient Express," if you enjoy the conventions of the genteel murder mystery, it might be your cup of tea.

This time the super sleuth is Christie's observant spinster, Miss Jane Marple of St. Mary Mead. The Marple character was once the sole domain of the late Margaret Rutherford, who played her in a charming series of films made 20 or more years ago.

Angela Lansbury is the current Miss Marple, and she wisely redefines the character to suit her own interpretation. Lansbury doesn't mug as outrageous as Rutherford; there's less of the huffing and puffing.

SHE PORTRAYS Marple as much more of a low-key person. However, as she sits, calmly knitting and talking with her nephew, the Scotland Yard inspector (Edward Fox), we know by the perceptive questions that her brain is clicking away faster than her knitting needles.

Actually, Lansbury and Fox carry this film in spite of the presence of some heavy talent. Among the cast are Elizabeth Taylor, Kim Novak, Rock Hudson, Tony Curtis and Geraldine Chaplin. They appear as members of a Hollywood production company shooting on location in England.

The situation allows for a surprising amount of humor in the form of inside jokes about movies and stars. At one time, Taylor looks in a mirror and recites, "Bags, bags, go away; come right back on Doris Day." Hudson does a double-take on that one.

Since the two leading ladies of the movie within the movie — Taylor and Novak — are presented as bitter adversaries, the situation also provides the occasion for them to square off in a battle of barbed putdowns.

Unfortunately, most of the dialogue never lives up to the promise of these engaging encounters, and the plot is not very mystifying. It's not difficult to figure out "who done it," or at least narrow the field considerably.

THE DIRECTOR, Guy Hamilton, has some fun with a creaking gate, a stealthy figure, an ominous shadow. But the suspense is well within tolerable limits, as Marple and Fox try to solve the mystery of a villager poisoned during a reception for the Americans.

That "The Mirror Crack'd" succeeds as well as it does is due partly to the presence of attractive vistas — the lovely English country gardens, the village green, the elegant mansion — and partly to the appeal of Jane Marple.

Is she just a small town busybody? Well, when the doctor tells her he will stop by to check on her sprained ankle and relate all the local gossip, she haughtily replies, "Gossip? I prefer to call it a healthy interest in human nature."

Since her healthy interest produces positive results, such as solving murders, who can begrudge it?

what's at the movies

NEW RELEASES

ANY WHICH WAY YOU CAN (PG). Clint Eastwood, Clyde (the orangutan) and team of "Every Which Way But Loose," united for more comic mayhem.

A CHANGE OF SEASONS (R). Superfluous film about "changing values in adult relationships," but nothing about this is very adult.

THE ELEPHANT MAN (PG). Largely true story of grossly deformed man rescued from sordid life by compassionate doctor. Fine acting by John Hurt, Anthony Hopkins and John Gielgud balances out directorial shortcomings.

FLASH GORDON (PG). Campy space fantasy intersperses a lot of laughs among the adventures of the clean-cut hero, all to the music of Queen.

THE FORMULA (R). Mystery thriller about international cartel keeping formula for synthetic fuel off the market. Stars George Scott, Marlon Brando and Marthe Keller.

THE JAZZ SINGER (PG). Ridiculous remake magnifies all the faults of the first talking motion picture made in 1927. The story doesn't get any better. The songs get worse.

NINE TO FIVE (PG). Comedy with Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin and Dolly Parton as three secretaries who scheme to get rid of their boss.

ORDINARY PEOPLE (R). Robert Redford's directorial debut is a smash in this extraordinarily well-acted, moving film about a "perfect" family trying to cope with a son's mental illness.

POPEYE (PG). It will take more than spinach to save this "Popeye" from defeat brought on by black direction, a highly forgettable musical score, and a generally mean conception of characters and situation.

PRIVATE BENJAMIN (R). Goldie Hawn joins the army to escape and find herself.

RAGING BULL (R). Top performance by Robert De Niro in brutally realistic film about boxer Jake La Motta. Two-plus hours highlighting the life of a loathsome person.

SEEMS LIKE OLD TIMES (PG). Goldie Hawn, Charles Grodin and Chevy Chase in comedy about a lawyer, her ex-husband who robs a bank, and her current husband, the district attorney.

STIR CRAZY (R). Comedy with Richard Pryor and Gene Wilder as a couple of stranded show biz types who get framed for a bank robbery.

MOVIE RATING GUIDE

- G General audience admitted.
- PG Parental guidance suggested. All ages admitted.
- R Restricted. Adult must accompany person under 18.
- X No one under 18 admitted.



Chevy Chase stars as Nick Gardenia, a novelist who becomes an unwilling accomplice in a bank robbery in "Seems Like Old Times."

Edith Piaf's life staged in Windsor



Phyllis Cohen stars as the "little sparrow," Edith Piaf, in musical portrait at Windsor's Cleary Auditorium.

A musical portrait of the great chanteuse of the '40s and '50s, Edith Piaf, will be presented by Producer Henry K. Martin of Birmingham at 8 p.m. Sunday in Cleary Auditorium, Windsor.

Canadian vocalist Phyllis Cohen, in the title role, will portray the loves and life of the "little sparrow" across 30 years of discovery and fame singing the songs that made Piaf the toast of two continents.

The show "Edith Piaf: Her Songs, Her Loves" is bilingual. The dialogue is English and the songs are sung in French. Also featured in the production are Mel Bricksen, Nicholas Rice and Lloyd Nicholson.

Tickets are available at Hardcastle Music, 130 Pitt St., West Windsor. For further information call (519) 256-5047.

PHYLLIS COHEN's stage, TV and radio credits have taken her across Canada. Her most recent stage credits include Ruth in the world premiere of "Cornucopia," a musical by Richard Ouzounian and Patrick Roach, and revues "A Bistro Car" and Joanne in the comedy "Vanities."

The multi-talented Ms. Cohen composed the scores for two original musicals. "Mr. Cappeldeoper's Dilemma" premiered at Theatre London at Christmas and "Everything But Anchovies" was workshoped at Young People's Theatre in Toronto.

Currently CBC audiences can hear her on radio's "True Detective" and on television as the French voice over animation on "Sesame Street."

New cabaret production slated at Cooper's Arms

"Black Coffee, White Coffee," a new cabaret entertainment, will open Friday in the After Nine Room at Cooper's Arms Restaurant in Rochester.

Roger Knapp, owner of Cooper's Arms, made the announcement, which follows a policy of a new show every eight weeks. In keeping with the cabaret custom, food and liquors are served

throughout the performance. "Black Coffee, White Coffee" is a Metropolitan Repertory Company presentation produced by Robert Casemore of Birmingham. The show was conceived and directed by Walter Kozicki.

It is an affectionate, humorous, tuneful evocation of the '60s, with cabarets

recalled from The Cavern in Liverpool to below-the-street bistros in Paris, and from Manhattan to Montreal.

SONGS ARE by Paul Simon, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Gorton Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell, Jacques Brel and others of the era.

Featured in the cast of seasoned revue performers are singer-guitarist Phil Perenchio, Eric Jones, Sue Chetkaway, John Beem and pianist Frederick Bickel.

The current production at Cooper's Arms, "Sailor Beware!" will have its final performances Friday-Saturday. For information and reservations, phone 651-2266.

Lecture program coming

Martin Agronsky, veteran commentator and news analyst, will appear Wednesday at Pontiac-Oakland Town Hall.

His talk "Agronsky and Company," titled after his current weekly news discussion program, will begin at 10:30 a.m. at Roma's of Bloomfield.

A celebrity luncheon at Roma's will follow for season-ticket holders only at noon. Luncheon arrangements can be made by sending a \$6 check to Mrs. David Parker, 127 Illinois, Pontiac 48053, or Mrs. Thomas Everitt, 1756 Statford, Pontiac 48053 by Saturday, or by calling 352-2343 or 682-5517.

Martin Agronsky has won television's three most coveted awards. In 1952, he received the George Foster Peabody Award for his coverage of the activities of the late Sen. Joseph McCarthy.

HE RECEIVED the Alfred I. Dupont Award for Distinguished Reporting and Commentary in 1962 for his coverage of the nine-month Adolph Eichmann trial in Jerusalem and the same year was presented the National Headliners Award.

In 1965, Agronsky joined CBS, where he produced a television dramatization of the Supreme Court's landmark Decision. In 1968, his 60-minute conversation with Justice Hugo Black won the National Academy of Television and Sciences Emmy Award.

Twin plays staged

"The Private Ear" and "The Public Eye" by Peter Shaffer will share the stage beginning on Jan. 23 at the Fourth Street Playhouse in Royal Oak.



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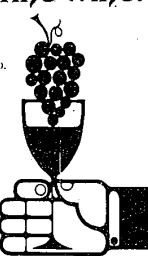
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