

Outdoor dining lights up scene



The Midtown Cafe attracts customers gathered round umbrella-topped tables in an open-air courtyard.

The season for outdoor dining is a short one in metropolitan Detroit, but restaurants and lounges in the northern suburbs take advantage of the summer as best they can.

This year Birmingham's Midtown Cafe has joined the sunshine crowd with tables placed behind the cafe to accommodate 45 more diners.

Dining and drinks continue through to sunrise.

Another Birmingham restaurant, Richard and Reiss, is a small one, with a light menu and no liquor, but there's still a couple of tables outdoors for customers.

Even Marty's Cookie Factory in Birmingham has some tables and chairs outside, where you can sit and snack or have a cup of coffee.

Area hotels are natural for dining around the pool. Dewey's Poolside Cafe has reopened for the season at Southfield's Michigan Inn, and Fanny's Outdoors is a new poolside cafe at the Troy Hilton.

A buffet-style meal is available at Dewey's Poolside for weekday lunch, continuing into early evening on weekends.

At Fanny's Outdoors, a fashion show is a feature at Tuesday luncheon and during Thursday's "Happy Hour." Mini-kabobs for a mini-price are served evenings.

The fun continues there Friday nights, with shell-a-shrimp free, to enjoy with cocktails.



Fanny's Outdoors uses Cinzano umbrellas and checkered chairs to set the dining-cocktail scene next to the swimming pool.



Mr. Ages asks Mrs. Brisby about her son's illness in "The Secret of NIMH," adapted from prize-winning children's book.

the movies
Louise Snider

'Secret of NIMH' appealingly offers classic animation

The animated feature film "The Secret of NIMH" (G), was created by former Disney artists who left that studio to pursue their own projects. They describe "NIMH" as being in the "classic style of animation."

There is no doubt about it. It is in the classic style of animation. Catch the Saturday morning cartoon on television and you'll see how primitive the TV offerings are by comparison.

"The Secret of NIMH" is beautifully crafted and springs from an artistic tradition that Disney made famous. Characteristics of this tradition are richly detailed settings, wide range of colors, handsome drawings, great variety of expression and fluid movement of the characters.

This last quality especially stands out when you notice the jerky movements of the animated figures on TV, often with only one part of their body moving.

"THE SECRET OF NIMH" also was made with special attention given to using camera techniques that enhance the art work and create a greater illusion of depth. Achieving this look is a lengthy and expensive process, but the results warrant the effort.

To make all this worthwhile, the creators of this film chose a worthy story on which to expend their effort. "The Secret of NIMH" is based on the book "Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH" by Robert C. O'Brien, which won the Newberry Award for children's literature in 1971.

Action and a sense of impending danger are present throughout the movie and help maintain a high level of interest. The heroine is a courageous widowed mouse (her name has been changed to Brisby) with four children.

They live in a cinder block in a farmer's field. Like the other small field animals, they are endangered each year at the spring thaw when they must find a new home before they fall victim to the farmer's plow.

This year, the spring thaw creates a terrible crisis for Mrs. Brisby. She can't move her family because one of the children has pneumonia and mustn't be exposed to the chill, damp air.

THE MOVIE follows her adventures as she desperately seeks a solution to save her family. She even consults the dangerous (because he eats mice) Great Owl. He sends her to the rats for help where her plea becomes a factor in an international power struggle among the rats.

I don't want to reveal the "secret" of NIMH, but it is revealed, almost casually, fairly early in the film and leads to some confusion about the main theme of this film.

At one point, it looks as if the movie might develop a strong argument about the use of animals in research, but this line is not pursued. Also, the movie just touches on another theme of significance, the organization of the rat society and its plan to establish a kind of Utopia.

If we put aside these elements of the plot — which are introduced and then dropped like red herrings in a mystery — "The Secret of NIMH" holds its own as a fine piece of animation and a fine film for children.

The voices of the characters are well cast: Elizabeth Hartman is Mrs. Brisby, John Carradine is the Great Owl, Hermione Baddeley is Auntie Shrew and, offering considerable comic relief is Dom DeLuise as the klutzy crow, Jeremy.

Don Bluth, John Pomeroy and Gary Goldman are the principal animators and creative force behind "The Secret of NIMH." They have done a splendid job, but I think they might have done an even better one.

what's at the movies

ANNIE (PG). The successful Broadway musical is expanded and brought to the screen by director John Huston with talented Aileen Quinn as Annie and Albert Finney and Carol Burnett.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR (PG). Wife walks out on Broadway playwright leaving him with five children (from different marriages) to raise and vice versa.

BAMBI (G). Re-release of Disney's classic film about a young deer and his forest friends.

BLADE RUNNER (R). Harrison Ford is a detective hunting four defective human replicants who have become killers. Set in Los Angeles in the year 2020.

DAS BOOT (THE BOAT) (R). Realistic and powerful drama of experiences of a German submarine crew during World War II.

DINER (R). Comedy drama set in 1959 about five friends and their difficult transition into manhood.

E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL (PG). Steven Spielberg's best film yet and probably the best film of the year develops story of an alien being stranded on earth and befriended by a young boy.

FIREFOX (PG). Clint Eastwood is an American pilot of an espionage mission to steal the Soviet Union's most sophisticated warplane.

GREGORY'S GIRL (PG). Romantic comedy about an unlikely 16-year-old Romeo whose recent infatuation with the opposite sex has caused him to relegate any other considerations to unimportance or nonexistence.

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