

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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(ORA)

Taking an unromantic look at tragic lovers

British film imports have been quite successful recently — witness the rather long "A Room with a View," the Ivory-Merchant tour d'force of social comedy which has just moved from the Maple to the Eastland Mall Theatres. If you haven't seen "A Room with a View," put this charming film on your calendar.

Another long-running British import is "Mona Lisa," (R) a vivid gripping look at the seamy side of things. Starring Bob Hoskins — he was the insecure writer in Alan Alda's "Sweet Liberty" — and Michael Caine, "Mona Lisa" realistically dissects the lives of mobsters, pimps and prostitutes without the offensive gore so common in the sleaze and slime films this side of the Atlantic.

George (Hoskins) is released after serving seven years in prison. He expects the mob, personified by Mortwell (Caine), to take care of him, particularly since his wife will have nothing to do with him. Only friend Thomas (Robbie Coltraine), a strange inventor-mechanic friend, comes to George's aid.

Mortwell is away but his lieutenant finally puts George to work chauffeuring Simone (Cathy Tyson), a light-skinned black prostitute, from job to job. George generally waits in plush hotel lobbies while Simone is at work.

George and Simone develop a very close, tender relationship but it turns out that, in spite of her affection for George, Simone is using him to track down her girlfriend, Cathy (Kate Hardie), a 15-year old prostitute whose drug habit enables the mob to

exploit her with dirty and despicable old men.

While the subject matter is seamy, the treatment is not — and that makes all the difference. The screenplay never wanders from its intent and, with heavy, measured tread proceeds to its inevitable conclusion, both tragic and rewarding.

In particular, however, the photography and acting engage our senses. Roger Pratt's slightly softened, dingy gray views of London's porno shops in contrast to the yellowed, nostalgic look of the posh hotel lobbies, where George waits while Simone works, strike just the right note: "Here, friends, is the look of the wealthy, but we know the dirty, gray things they're doing." It's just that the rich don't have to do it in public.

Michael Caine and Bob Hoskins

are masterful actors, but this film belongs to the scenes played between Hoskins and Cathy Tyson. In her film debut, Tyson, niece of American actress Cicely Tyson, draws a remarkable portrait of a successful prostitute living in fear of the beatings administered by her former pimp.

The dramatic tension in her relationship with George touches our sensibilities. Most important of all, however, are the ways in which their love affair underscores the film's realistic and often overlooked message: all human beings have feelings.

Pimps, prostitutes, gangsters and every other unfortunate individual, all are human beings with feelings, no matter how seamy and sordid their lives may be. It is a lesson in humanity we all need re-taught from time to time.



the movies
Dan Greenberg

If all the reels were delivered, "The Girl in the Picture" (PG-13) opened Friday, Sept. 5. Two reels were lost so it was not screened in time for this column but based on advance publicity, the British import looks interesting. Set entirely in Glasgow, Scotland, it's billed as a lighthearted, realistic comedy about the disappointments, disillusionments and ultimate discovery of true love.

ON THIS SIDE of the Atlantic our worst fears, our most distorted nightmares, have come to pass: the son of Chuck Norris meets the bride of the Soviets in "Born American" (R), the latest in the action-fantasy films where indomitable American heroes single-handedly destroy entire battalions of communist soldiers — without even trying.

Savoy (Chuck's son, Mike) and two buddies, Mitch and K.C. (Steve Durham and David Coburn), get drunk and limbo under the Russo-Finnish border. That's right, this is just another dance party. They embark on a

dangerous adventure that is so confused and confusing that watching the film is a deadly experience. Try to avoid it. If, however, you do have the misfortune to screen "Born American," don't admit it.

On a more encouraging note, this weekend The Detroit Film Theatre will screen two films by and about the other side of the Pacific Ocean.

At 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday, Sept. 12-13, Peter Wang's 1985 film, "A Great Wall," will be shown in the Detroit Institute of Art auditorium.

"A Great Wall" is the first American movie filmed in China in recent years. It is a sophisticated comedy about an assimilated Chinese-American family from San Francisco who decide to visit their relatives in Peking.

Continuing the oriental flavor, at 7 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 14 the DFT will screen Kurosawa's 1946, "No Regrets for Our Youth," the emotional story of a Kyoto University professor forced to resign because of his alleged communist activities.

Restaurant proves its panache

Your traveling taster visits area eateries and rates them on a 100-point scale. Up to 30 points are awarded for ambience, which includes general atmosphere and service; 55 points for food and 15 points for price value/rating. A total count of 59 points or less indicates a restaurant is not recommended; 60-74 points signify from passing to good; 75-89 points designate very good with some extraordinary features; and 90-100 points show that a very special dining experience awaits you.

Service was attentive — overly so, at times. On several occasions we stopped the waiter or busman from clearing plates while people were still eating. Our waiter was friendly and trying hard to please. He was informed about the dishes and specials although we were misled in ordering the duck entree which was not at all what we expected. Serving and clearing (with the above exception) were handled professionally with clean silverware and ample water as needed. Service — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 12.

All three appetizers that we ordered were excellent. The chicken pate (\$3.95) was attractively presented; the tastes blended nicely, with the sweet peanut butter sauce adding a zesty taste. The duck, liver and pork mousse pate was expensive (\$7.75), but very enjoyable. The smooth, mild taste was especially pleasing in the mousse form. The smoked Canadian rainbow trout (\$5.95), served with a sweet mustard sauce was fresh and full of flavor. Drinks were reasonable and good and the fresh baked rolls, especially the onion rolls, were eaten quickly and too often, but they were so good. Drinks, Appetizers and Bread — 10 points maximum. Points awarded — 10.

The Caesar salad which is included in the entree proved disappointing. It was not chilled and lacked flavor. The garden salad, too, seemed ordinary, especially in comparison with other food categories.

Salad — 5 points maximum. Points awarded — 3.

An excellent veal piccata (\$14.50) was prepared just right with a rich lemon caper flavor. It was tender and delicious. The Lake Erie pickerel (\$14.50) seemed fresh from the water and had a mild, delightful taste. The one disappointment was the duck in orange sauce (\$14.75) which we ordered "crisp." Thinking it was a half duck, instead we received duck breast filets which were tough and had a very gamey taste. The garbanzo, your choice of a potato with mushroom and cheese or cucumbers with dill, were both very good. Entree, vegetables and garnishes — 30 points maximum. Points awarded — 25.

Finally, the hazelnut cheeseecake tasted light and right. It was an excellent taste combination that we thoroughly enjoyed. The raspberry liner torte had a nice hint of cinnamon to give it a refreshing and pleasing flavor. The strawberry shortcake also hit the spot. It too,

was light and creamy, with a rich strawberry taste. At \$3.50 each, these desserts were well worth the price. Dessert — 10 points maximum. Points awarded — 10.

The full meal for two, with tip, totaled about \$65 per couple. In view of the appealing atmosphere and good food, this seemed reasonable although not inexpensive. Price/Value — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 13.

A COUNTING FOR TASTE — 100 points maximum. Total points awarded — 88. New management and a new menu have made Panache worthy of consideration when you are wondering where to eat in Birmingham.

D. Gustibus welcomes your reactions, comments and suggestion of favorite restaurants in the Observer & Eccentric communities. Write to D. Gustibus, in care of Observer & Eccentric, Entertainment department, P.O. Box 3303, Birmingham 48012.

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