



Premiere production

Lynn Kadiak and Ronald Allan-Lindblom co-star in "The Black Monk," having its American premiere in repertory at the Hilberry Theatre at Wayne State University in Detroit. The Lanterns Magika Production combines live stage action with four-camera cinematic effects. For ticket information, call 577-2872.

second runs

By Louise Okrusky
staff writer

Waiting for films to descend from the wide screen to the video cassette must be the "worst" of waiting for a new book to come out in paperback. Couch slugs will agree, not only is it cheaper to rent, one needn't dress for the occasion.

Here are a few fall releases to take your mind off raking leaves and putting up the storm windows: "Santa Claus: The Movie." This is the movie made for the sons and daughters of the TV Generation. An inside look at life at the top of the world, the North Pole, it would have been a better made-for-TV movie. It even has its own built-in commercials for McDonalds and Coca Cola when a little poor boy in the film is given a Christmas dinner consisting of those fast food staples.

Jeesh, even Scrooge managed to cough up roast duck with all the trimmings for Tiny Tim. The better for commercial life-ins, my dear. Last year Mickey's hand-out picture books based on the movie with its children's meals. Parents deserve a break today but this isn't it.

If you can really transcend your own disbelief and accept Dudley Moore as Patches, one of Santa's head elves, this is your movie. Young children of the TV Generation, say those under 6 years old, liked this movie. Why not Santa looks like he stepped off a 19th-century table decoration in this film. The sets of Santa's workshop at the North Pole are elaborate pieces of gingerbread construction — sort of reminiscent of the gone but still lamented Christmas displays at the old downtown Hudson's.

There's one problem. These are supposed to be actors, not puppets. Older children and adults will snooze

through this one. You'd be better off renting "Miracle on 34th Street." For those who insist on seeing this movie, I'll hit the cable pay stations later on this fall.

"The Magic Man." A good family movie before that category turned into a dumping ground for the insipid. When it was first released, critics groaned that the movie based on Meredith Willson's successful musical was shot as if it were still on the Broadway stage. Maybe this isn't the movie for buffs to savor breakthrough camera angles but years later this chestnut still possesses exuberance.

Robert Preston remains wonderfully convincing as he convinces the parents of River City to spell trouble P-O-O-L. Of course, we all know they invest in his bogus hand equipment to keep their youngsters off the streets and out of the pool halls, the video arcades of yesteryear. Shirley

Jones writes the book on acting demure as Marion the Librarian. Oh, what the heck, any movie that features a song rhyming Marion with carillon can't be all bad. Throw a bag of popcorn in the microwave, sit back and enjoy.

"Agnes of God." This movie, too, made the transition from Broadway stage to the screen. Along the way, it picked up a few scenes taking place outside the convent grounds where Sister Agnes lives and a newborn baby dies.

Meg Tilly gives a nice low-key performance as the other-worldly Sister Agnes. Jane Fonda is the psy-

chologist sent to investigate the incident who ends up tackling the sort of questions first raised by medieval theologians. Fonda never quite hits her stride in the role.

Generally the movie fails to sustain the tension between 20th-century values and those of a life devoted to religious seclusion. At times it just seems silly, like the conversation between Fonda's psychiatrist and the convent's superior about what brand of cigarettes different saints and ascetics would smoke.

The movie comes close to its mark, but it doesn't deserve a cigar. It can also be seen this month on HBO.

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