

Sexuality dominates 3 films

Sexuality, primarily in its perverse forms, keynotes at least three films currently featured on your local screens. It is expected in "52 Pick-Up" (R) and "Menage" (unrated) but somewhat surprising in the latest rendition of Tchaikovsky's seasonal favorite, "The Nutcracker," which opens Wednesday.

Those of us who have watched our daughters plow through Evelyn Kravson's bright and good-spirited Michigan Ballet Theatre's "Nutcracker" will be surprised to learn that Herr Drosselmayer is a dirty old man lusting after Clara.

The Carroll Ballard/Maurice Sendak version presents a lush but heavily psychological interpretation of the story's dreamer, the nutcracker/prince, and her avoidance-attraction to Herr Drosselmayer, who sometimes frightens her and sometimes pleases her with his gifts.

Performed by the Pacific Northwest Ballet and the London Symphony Orchestra, this "Nutcracker" is very good-looking, and well-performed in its modern, psychological approach.

EVERY GENERATION reiterates the past in its own terms, but it seems to me that certain standard,

traditional numbers do not wear well when they're modernized beyond their potential. No one yet has made a musical of "Oedipus" — thank goodness — and this "Nutcracker" suffers from Drosselmayer's aggressive psycho-sexuality.

The production is consciously theatrical with non-realistic scenery, quite fitting, since ballet is a non-realistic, representational form.

Wide panoramic views are integral to ballet, which is a long-shot medium. The close-ups use blur, fast-moving dancers, and that is an unfortunate characteristic as are gloomy settings, particularly in the wooden soldiers' battle with the mice. Such lighting imparts a dark and somber mood not usually associated with "The Nutcracker's" happy holiday spirit. In spite of these reservations, it is an attractive film.

"Menage" is also an attractive film but far more perverse and explicit than most things screened around here these days. Perhaps that is why it is unrated.

Michel Blanc won Best Actor at the 1986 Cannes Film Festival in his role as Antonio, whose wife Monique (Mou-Mou) is unhappy with their



the movies
Dan Greenberg

poverty. They meet Bob (Gerard Depardieu), a house burglar with lots of money and an unhealthy attraction for Antonio who, initially, is repulsed by the homosexual act.

The film is well-designed, photographed, directed and acted, which is unfortunate, for those artistic and technical qualities endorse a perverse world where existence is its own punishment, the bitter retribution one earns for pleasure.

ONLY KNOWLEDGE that death is worse motivates these pitiful creatures. Although the film opens with the spark of sharp, comic discussion of contemporary society, reminiscent of Bunuel, it closes on a dreary and depressing note.

Finally, in the American style of fast action and violence, Birmingham's Elmore Leonard has done well in adapting his best-selling nov-

el for the screen, with the help of John Stepping.

"52 Pick-Up," directed by John Frankenheimer, is a gripping, suspense-thriller centering on the blackmail of Harry Mitchell (Roy Scheider) whose wife (Ann-Margaret) is prominent in Los Angeles politics. Harry is a successful manufacturer of specialty steels who has had an affair with pretty, young Cini (Kelly Preston).

As it turns out, the affair was set up by a creepy gang of pornographers led by Alan Ralmy (John Glover) and his associates, Leo Franks (Robert Trebor) and Bobby Sky (Clarence Williams III). Bobby and his big pistol are hardly shy, and neither is Alan. Loo is a premiere sleaze-bag and, all told, three good performances by Glover, Trebor and Williams pace and support the action with interesting characterizations.



Roy Scheider as Harry and Ann-Margaret as his wife, Barbara, are the victims of blackmailers in "52 Pick-Up," movie version of the best-selling novel by Elmore Leonard of Birmingham.

Their acting, and the structure of Leonard's screenplay, hold our interest, albeit a perverse attraction. Ralmy is particularly offensive as the lead pornographer and black-maller.

Just Vacarro's photography is characterized by slightly distorted, extreme close-ups of faces in distress. This technique works well, as every character is stressed in one way or another. Scheider does well as a fool against the wall, who takes matters in his own hands. Ann-Margaret is the one weak link.

Although she is portrayed as giving of her husband's stupid infidelity, which has plunged them into great danger, she comes across as unemotionally empty and foolish until events overwhelm her. It's hard to tell whether it's the acting or writing (or both), but Ann-Margaret's character does slow things down.

This well-done thriller, although not for the shy or squeamish, is successful entertainment and very contemporary in its style, subject and treatment.

table talk

Buffet feast

A holiday buffet with more than 10 items will be served from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, at the "Top of the Pontich" at the Hotel Pontchartrain in Detroit. Roast tom turkey with chestnuts, baked Virginia Ham with mustard glaze, carved steamship round of beef and baked rabbit, country style, are among the special dishes. The buffet is \$18 for adults, \$9 for children under 12 and \$4 for children under 5. The hotel's main dining room, Elaine's, will offer a traditional Thanksgiving dinner from 5:30-10 p.m. For reservations call 965-0200, ext. 3417.

Take-out dinner

Kingsley Inn in Bloomfield Hills is

again offering Thanksgiving Dinner to go. Orders must be placed by Monday (Nov. 24). The dinner of a 14-15 pound roasted turkey with trimmings and pumpkin pie is priced at \$69.95 and serves up to 15 people. To order, call 644-1400. Traditional Thanksgiving dinner also will be served at the bungalow as a buffet from 2-8 p.m. and table service from noon to 8 p.m. The buffet is \$13.95 for adults, \$6.95 for children 7 and under. Table-service dinners begin at \$10.95. For reservations call 642-0100.

Turkey time

The Troy Hilton offers a Thanksgiving Day buffet from 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. in the Haymarket. Featured are roast turkey, prime

rib, leg of lamb, homestyle stuffing, mashed and sweet potatoes, squash, crepes and pumpkin pie. It's priced at \$14.95 for adults, \$12.95 for senior citizens, \$8.95 for children under 12. Or, you can order turkey to go — a 10-12 pound turkey, mashed potatoes, country gravy, homestyle dressing, vegetable and whole cranberry sauce, for \$49.95. Orders must be placed by 5 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 25. For more information call 583-9000.

Omni's offerings

A bountiful buffet will be served on Thanksgiving Day at the Omni International Hotel at Millender Center in Detroit. Entrees include roast breast of turkey with sausage and pear stuffing, roast bone-in ham with Traverse City cherry sauce and

baked herbal whitefish with white wine and grape sauce. Seatings will be at 11:30 p.m. until noon, 3 until 3:45 p.m. and 5:30 until 6 p.m. The buffet is priced at \$14.95 per adult, \$6.95 for children under 12.

English menu

The traditional Thanksgiving buffet at the Hotel St. Regis in Detroit will include turkey and trimmings as well as English offerings of smoked Scottish salmon, Yorkshire pudding, cranberry sauce with spiced fruit chutney and English marmalade

tarts. Price is \$21.95 for adults, \$15.95 for children 10-18; one child under 10 admitted at no charge. For reservations call 873-3000.

MRA relocating

The 1,800-member Michigan Res-

taurant Association, now headquartered in Birmingham, will move to Lansing early in 1987. Michael Newman, new president of the MRA, will oversee the relocation. Newman is former executive president of the Michigan Retailers Association.

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