

'Working Girls' tells dull story



John Watson of Birmingham is Mr. Bumble in the Windsor Light Opera production of the musical, "Oliver!" at the Cleary Auditorium in Windsor.

upcoming things to do

COMEDY TIME

Birmingham Village Players will present the comedy "Invitation to a March" at 8:00 p.m. Friday-Saturday, May 15-16, 22-23, and 2 p.m. Sunday, May 17. Tickets at \$5 for adults, \$4 for students are available at the door. Reservations are recommended; call 644-2075 anytime.

CHARITY CONCERT

The father and son team of Puroshotamdas Jalota and Anup Jalota will appear in a live charity concert at 8:15 p.m. Friday, May 15, at Mercy High School Auditorium in Farmington Hills. The event sponsored by Bharatiya Family Services, a non-profit organization, is open to the general public and especially to Americans of India and Pakistani heritage. Tickets \$15-\$50 are available at the Sitar Restaurant in Farmington Hills (477-9000); the Taj Sari Palace (476-2444) and Jaydevi Sanghvi (474-7570) in Livonia; Foods 'n' Flavor (455-0160) and Regals (451-

0351) in Canton, and India Sari Palace (525-5470) and Patel Brothers (427-4445) in Garden City.

'OLIVER!' OPENING

The Windsor Light Opera production of the musical hit "Oliver!" by Lionel Bart continues Friday-Saturday, May 15-17, at the Cleary Auditorium in Windsor, Ontario. This production, as were all prior ones, is produced and directed by John Watson of Birmingham. Watson will play Mr. Bumble. For ticket information, call (519) 974-6593.

NEW SHOW

"Valerie," a new, nighttime show starring Valerie Hilsen of Bloomfield Hills, is being presented 5-10 p.m. Thursdays on radio station WPCN (1460 AM). The show will feature entertainment and personalities, with many of the segments geared for singles. Anyone interested in appearing on the show may contact Hilsen by writing P.O. Box 526, Bloomfield Hills 48013.

Two current unrewarding, unentertaining and unpleasant film experiences — "Working Girls" (unrated) and "Gothic" (R) — are guaranteed, in the first instance, to bore you with dull, repetitive images and, in the second, to disgust you with ghastly, perverted phantoms of the night.

Both films indicate just how little restraint filmmakers presently exhibit. They also demonstrate the rating system's hypocrisy, for "Gothic" with its "R" is much more disgusting than the unrated "Working Girls" which, presumably, was not submitted for rating because it would have received an "X" — bad news at the commercial box office. There is no question that both deserve to be X'ed out.

"Working Girls" was co-produced, co-written and directed by former Birmingham resident Lizzie Borden, whose first film, "Born in Flames," has been described as a controversial feminist drama. Certainly "Working Girls" presents a unique feminist view of prostitution.

Molly (Louise Smith), a sometimes photographer, is a fresh-faced prostitute whose sympathetic manner attracts customers. Part of her sprightly image involves bicycling to work. Molly lives with her black (female) lover and her daughter.

MOLLY IS ALWAYS in control in this sanitized situation which, according to the film's publicity, represents a significant trend, hygienic brothels where nice girls work their way through college under the aegis of pleasant, albeit greedy, madams — in this case, Lucy (Ellen McDuff), a rather silly caricature.

"Working Girls" intentionally avoids sensuality, eroticism and titillation, as Borden did not want to make a film "... that is sexually exciting to men. All the sex is shot from the women's point of view."

Demystifying and deromanticizing sex for sale is a very valid premise but in doing so Borden has drained not only the romance and excitement but the force and the energy of her message, leaving an empty hull.

While there are occasional moments of wit, humor and social commentary, it is hardly credible that Molly is both unaffected by

prostitution and totally in charge of her life. She seems so divorced from the entire process that viewers soon become just as indifferent as she is.

Judy Irola's camerawork is restrictive and repetitive, boring by virtue of its self-conscious, arty style. Much of the acting and dialogue falls in the same category.

BORDEN DOES the feminist movement, and women in general, a great disservice in pretending that a prostitute can control her own life and, thereby, avoid tiresome office work. "Working Girls" creates a new mystique which denies that there is a qualitative difference between hiring one's brain and renting one's body.

"Working Girls" did not convince me that it is to a woman's advantage to prostitute herself or that such women are in control. Neither can I believe that a woman can cater to male perversity and remain untouched and indifferent. If she can, what does that tell us about the contemporary scene?

Even more damaging, "Working Girls" subtly assuages male guilt by asserting that prostituted women are untroubled by the experience.

YOU DON'T HAVE to be a professor of English Poetry to be offended at "Gothic's" portrayal of Lord Byron (Gabriel Byrne) and Percy Shelley (Julian Sands) as perverse drug addicts with obscene imaginations.

However historically accurate this pretentious British film may be, it is hardly worth the unpleasantness.

Director Ken Russell fails to justify his unending display of disgusting images which, purportedly, depict the genesis of the modern horror genre at the famous ghost-story session on June 16, 1816, at Villa Diodati.

That wicked evening inspired Mary Shelley (Natascha Richardson) to write "Frankenstein" and Dr. Polidori (Timothy Spall) to write "Dracula's" literary forebear, "The Vampire."

Just as "Working Girls" performs a disservice by pretending that prostitution is OK under certain circumstances, "Gothic" falls flat in its own excrement by assuming that disgusting images equal a good ghost story.



the movies

Dan Greenberg



Louise Smith as Molly looks into the mirror in "Working Girls," a film about prostitution. In background is Marusia Zach as Gina.

Nightmares, as unpleasant as they might be, often provide interesting topics for conversation, at least with one's analyst. Some surrealist films are similar, the Bunuel-Salvador Dali "Andalusian Dog," for example, which only makes sense with careful scrutiny.

Bunuel and Dali had the good grace to keep their "Dog" under a half-hour but Russell's "Gothic" is an interminable 90 minutes and no

one in his or her right mind would watch it twice, much less try to make sense of it.

The British accents, speed of delivery and Byron's cynical romanticism are hard to follow and the film is an unpleasant trip into the darker reaches of the human mind. Not only does it give British poets a perverted image, it gives a bad name to the very horror movies it pretends to laud.

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