

'1969' captures feeling, turmoil of Vietnam era

RECENT RELEASES:

Film distributors are limiting releases again this week because they know most everyone is engaged in holiday shopping and family affairs. So, Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year to you all. Watch for lots of new films next year.

"1969" (R)

A lesson about friendship and freedom as Scott (Kiefer Sutherland) and Ralph (Robert Downey, Jr.) trek across the country as national turmoil about Vietnam and the greening of America create conflict on every family and social level. With Bruce Dern, Mariette Hartley, Winona Ryder and Joanna Cassidy.

"Hellbound — Hellraiser" (R). A cast of unknowns in torment and terror. Do you wonder why I skipped the screening?

"Lair of the White Worm" (R). Ken Russell's out there with the archeologists uncovering a strange skull with a bizarre past.

"Working Girl" (B) (R) 115 minutes.

Tess McGill (Melanie Lynskey) finds a few obstacles on the road to success in big business. After boss (Sigourney Weaver) steals her ideas, Tess grabs them back and collects Sigourney's boyfriend, Jack Traven (Harrison Ford). In the process, well-written, nicely acted and occasionally humorous story of the little person beating the system. Reviewed by Kathy Guyer.

STILL PLAYING:

"The Accused" (C) (R) 109 minutes.

Sara Tobias (Judy Foster) is gang-raped by three men, but Deputy D.A. Kathryn Murphy (Kelly McGillis) sells out to defense, realizes her mistake and prosecutes spectators who encouraged the rape. This poignant drama about misbehavior in court is too long and slow to be effective. Rape scene is particularly horrible. Reviewed by Kim Brown.

"Child's Play" (B) (R)

Horror story about a mother who buys possessed doll for son's birthday. Plot is a bit corny at times, but film makes up for it with great special effects and unintentional humor. Reviewed by Fred Baker.

"Cocoon: The Return" (B-) (PG) 115 minutes.

Highly unlikely, overly sentimental, bordering on the dippy — but pleasant enough family entertainment for the holiday season as all the old gang are back to save a cocoon-being.

"Crossing Delancey" (A) (PG) 95 minutes.

Isabella "Izzy" Grossman (Amy Irving) is a liberated young New Yorker with her eye on author Anton Minton (Steven Kravitz). But sewer mind that modern stuff, Grandma Ida (Rita Borsky) hires matchmaker Hannah Mandelbaum (Sylvia Miles).

Bountiful skiing, festivals highlight Michigan winter

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area snow phone at 424-8113 or 424-114. The Mountain has a new entrance; you no longer go in the old US 131 gate, but a quarter mile further north. The Boyne will charge \$10 for a lift ticket through Jan. 2 and any Saturday thereafter; Saturday-Sunday \$45.

They too are adding new snowmakers. According to the Automobile Club of Michigan, state resorts are spending \$13 million on new snowmaking equipment this year.

Crystal Mountain in Thompsonville opened a new triple chairlift as well as new condos this season. The new Main Street lift can move 1,600 skiers an hour. Sylvan Resort's \$4.5 million expansion near Gaylord includes a new lodge and restaurant.

If you prefer cross-country skiing, Shanty Creek/Schuss Mountain have remarked and renamed their trails between Mancelona and Belaire. Three trails at Norden Hem, near Gaylord, are lighted at night.

CLOSER to home, you will find 200- to 350-foot drops and lots of night skiing, at places like Alpine Valley, Mt. Brighton, Teepie Hill, Mt. Holly, Pine Knob and RiverView Highlands.

If you would really rather walk, here are the dates for some of the



the movies
Dan Greenberg

Grading the movies

A+ Top marks — sure to please
A Close behind — excellent
A- Still in running for top honors
B+ Pretty good stuff, not perfect
B Good
B- Good but notable deficiencies
C+ Just a cut above average
C Mediocre
C- Not so hot and slipping fast
D+ The very best of the poor stuff
D Poor
D- It doesn't get much worse
F Truly awful
Z Reserved for the colossally bad
* No advanced screening

to arrange things with Sam the piker. Don't worry about this love, it takes care of itself and true is a charming comedy.

"A Cry in the Dark" (C+) (PG-13) 120 minutes.

Lindy and Michael Chamberlin (Meryl Streep and Sam Neill) are camping in Australia's Northern Territory with their three children when the baby is killed by a wild dog. But police mania and public hysteria lead to Lindy's indictment and conviction for the child's murder. It doesn't matter that this story is true because the film fails to convince us that such an incredible story occurred. The police motivation in prosecuting the case and the generative force for public hysteria are poorly depicted and not at all convincing. Some Aussie accents are inaudible and camerawork leaves much to be desired. Despite good acting, the film is unpleasant with no redeeming quality, just a dippy halcyon ending.

"Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (B+) (PG) 100 minutes.

Michael Caine is super-slick as a con-man on the Riviera while Steve Martin only seems to bumble through the game of parting rich women from their money. Despite the obvious twists and turns as the two out-manuever one another, the film is polished and funny with very few slow moments.

"Ernest Saves Christmas" (C+) (PG)

Jim Varney has the role of a lifetime in "Ernest" and is wisely trying to make it pay while the market is



Kiefer Sutherland plays Scott Denny and Robert Downey Jr. his compatriot Ralph Carr in Atlantic Pictures' "1969."

hot. This time out there are consistent, but predictable, chuckles and a very earnest Douglas Seale as Santa Claus in search of a replacement. In an age when kids flock to see a man spot bleeding by exploding gunpowder (1956-1981) of America, centering on a Louisiana football hero, the "Grey Ghost" (Dennis Quaid), his sweetheart, the "Magnolia Queen" (Jessica Lange), and his scholarly nephew (Timothy Hutton). The intricacies of their relationships and social change in that period are nicely blended. Excellent acting carries this long film past soap opera and should cause a lot of sighs for the good old days.

"Everybody's All American" (A-) (R) 127 minutes.

In the best sense, a fine, sentimental, nostalgic look at a quarter century (1956-1981) of America, centering on a Louisiana football hero, the "Grey Ghost" (Dennis Quaid), his sweetheart, the "Magnolia Queen" (Jessica Lange), and his scholarly nephew (Timothy Hutton). The intricacies of their relationships and social change in that period are nicely blended. Excellent acting carries this long film past soap opera and should cause a lot of sighs for the good old days.

"I'm Gonna Get You Socka" (C+) (R) 85 minutes.

The satire is not as swift nor as funny as "Hollywood Shuffle," but it is rewarding that Keenen Ivory Wayans was able to spin off from that film and do his own feature. Plot is end-up of a million "B" movies, this time from the Black point of view, but the pacing is too slow and much of the acting unconvincing.

"Land Before Time" (A) (G) 75 minutes.

Touching story of a group of young dinosaurs and their journey to the promised land. Excellent animation combined with many heart-warming scenes make this film great entertainment for all ages.

"Madame Sousatzka" (A) (PG-13) 122 minutes.

Lush, sensuous photography, inspired music and brilliant acting plus John Schlesinger's fine direction equal an excellent film. This touching portrait of Madame Sousatzka (Shirley MacLaine) and her obses-

sive piano-teaching techniques also tells the story of a young genius, Marek Sen (Navin Chowdhry). His desire to please his mother (Shabana Azmi) and his teacher, Madame Sousatzka, tears at him as does his desire for success and his awakening sexual impulses focusing on a slightly shapely singer, Jenny (Twiggy).

"My Stepmother Is an Alien" (B+) (PG-13) 108 minutes.

A blasted Dan Aykroyd slows pace, particularly at opening, but some extra-terrestrial Celeste (Kim Basinger) touches down, this comedy takes off. Basinger's sexy visitor from another galaxy saves production from its own silliness and her performance is well worth the trip.

"Mystic Pizza" (A) (R) 102 minutes.

Warm, wonderful comedy about three young women dealing with a pizza restaurant where they work, sharing the joys and pain of love and friendship. Reviewed by Kathy Guyer.

"Naked Gun" (D) (PG-13) 90 minutes.

Obviously David Zucker doesn't know the difference between comedy and mugging. Satire takes more than repetition of clichés so miss this

childish, overly broad farce, which never gets off the ground.

"Oliver and Company" (A) (G) 70 minutes.

Wide range of voices — Billy Joel, Bette Midler and Cheech Marin, for example — place this film with the best of Walt Disney animation. It's sensitive, heart-warming and entertaining with good music to boot. Reviewed by Patrick Harris.

"Rain Man" (A+) (R) 130 minutes.

Tom Cruise and Dustin Hoffman star as brothers — one a fast-talking sports car salesman, the other an autistic savant. Cruise looks young again, he's ditched the unseemly fat that slowed him down in "Cocktail." More important, however, he demonstrates forcibly that he can act. We all knew Hoffman could and together they present a sometimes sad, sometimes funny, but always touching story of two very diverse characters who become brothers in every sense.

"Scrooged" (B+) (PG-13) 90 minutes.

Get in the holiday spirit and try this updated romp through Dickens' "Christmas Carol" starring a very off-beat Bill Murray. He's the modern-day Scrooge, Frank Cross, a television network executive who doesn't know the meaning of nice.

Star-studded cast includes Karen Allen, Buddy Hackett, Mary Lou Retton, Robert Mitchum, Michael Pollard, Carol Kane, John Forsythe and Bobcat Goldthwait.

"Tequila Sunrise" (C+) (R) 115 minutes.

Slick, glib production gets lost trying for high-concept, hi-tech look in an old-fashioned, hard-boiled detective story. Retired drug dealer, Dale McKuskie (Mel Gibson), and best friend, Lt. Nick Prescia (Kurt Russell) of L.A. Narcotics Squad, tangle over beautiful restaurateur, Jo Ann Vallenari (Michelle Pfeiffer). There's also a big shipment of drugs, lots of money, the shadowy Carlos, a Mexican policeman, Commandante Escalante (Raul Julia), and an unpleasant, bumbling drug enforcement officer, McGuire (J.T. Walsh). Despite good acting and slick surface, this tequila doesn't rise above complicated clichés that are sometimes confusing and seldom work well.

"Twins" (B+) (PG) 95 minutes.

Danny DeVito is super-funny. Arnold Schwarzenegger ain't had either in this happy, but improbable story — do you believe they're twins? Well, they are and the film is marred only by occasional slow pacing and an unconvincing villain who is out of step with the rest of the movie.

GET ON THE RIGHT TRACK

with the Observer & Eccentric NEWSPAPERS CROSS-COUNTRY SKI SCHOOL!



Cross-country skiing is a fun, exciting and healthful way to enjoy the outdoors this winter. You can learn to cross-country ski at the Observer & Eccentric Ski School at several neighborhood locations in Oakland and Wayne Counties. Clinics begin in January (weather permitting).

*12" includes equipment rental and 1½ hour ski lesson

*8" (with your own equipment)

Due to limited space availability, pre-registration is required. For complete registration information, call any nearby site listed below, Monday through Friday, at least one week in advance of lesson.

Observer & Eccentric Cross Country Ski School locations:

ADDISON OAKS COUNTY PARK
1480 West Romeo Road
Oakland, MI 48051
693-2432

BEECH WOODS RECREATION CENTER
c/o Southland Parks & Recreation
22200 Beech Road
Southfield, MI 48034
354-9603

HERITAGE PARK
c/o Farmington Hills Parks & Recreation
31555 Eleven Mile Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48018
473-9570

INDEPENDENCE OAKS COUNTY PARK
c/o Oakland County Parks & Recreation
9501 Sashabaw Road
Clarkston, MI 48016
625-0877

MAYBURY STATE PARK
c/o Northville Community Recreation
303 West Main Street
Northville, MI 48167
349-0203

WARREN VALLEY GOLF COURSE
c/o Wayne County Parks & Recreation
33175 Ann Arbor Trail
Westland, MI 48185
261-1990

The first week in February is a biggie. Feb. 3-5 you can attend the Sno-Blast Festival in East Jordan, Perchville USA in East Tawas, Winter Sports Carnival in Grayling, Winter Carnival in Lewiston or the White Lake SnoFari in Montague.

great winter events in our state: Superior Snow Challenge in Copper Harbor and Maastio Hilo Race in Hancock Jan. 11; Grand Marais 500 Mile Jan. 19-21; Tip-Up Town USA on Houghton Lake Jan. 21-22 and 23-25.

In February there's the Winter Carnival in Houghton Feb. 1-5; Les Cheneaux Winter Carnival in Cedarville Feb. 11-12; Pine Mt. Ski Jumping Tournament in Iron Mountain Feb. 18-19; Copper Peak Ski Flying Competition in Ironwood Feb. 24-26; Torch Lake Fiskefest Feb. 25 and the Brockway Challenge in Copper Harbor Feb. 24.

In the Lower Peninsula, you'll find the Winter Games in Muskegon Jan.

14-28; Polar Ice Cap Golf Tournament at Spring Lake and Michigan Cup Cross Country Ski Races in Grayling Jan. 21; Doped Races at Delta College in Flint Jan. 21-22.

There's also the Special Olympics in Buchanan Jan. 26, Gun Lake Winter Festival in Shelbyville, Winter Sports Festival in Jackson Jan. 27-29 and Feb. 3-12, Winter Festival in Boyne City and Silver Creek Challenge in Tawas City Jan. 28, Winterfest in Fremont Jan. 30-Feb. 11.

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FEB. 3-12 It's the Winterfest in Manistee, Feb. 4-11 Winterfest in Grand Haven, and Feb. 4 the Polar Bear Festival and Ice Harvest at Crossroads Village near Flint. Feb. 10-12 add the winter carnival in Alpena and Gobles, Feb. 11 Carlevoit and the Cross Country VASA race at Grand Traverse Resort in Traverse City.

There are more, but they never get their acts together soon enough to be listed in the various Michigan winter events calendars. Call the state tourist bureau toll-free at 543-3-YES, or the Southeast Michigan Travel and Tourist Association locally at 524-3230.