

MOVING PICTURES

'Burning' paints a vivid picture of '60s tragedy

Our New Year's Resolution is to present more in-depth coverage of new releases and spend less time on what's "Still Playing." So, here it is with this week's average reaching for a 4.0.

RECENT RELEASES:

"Mississippi Burning" (A+) (R) 130 minutes.

This vivid, searing movie will reverberate in your mind long after the debate about its accuracy subsides. While history needs to be treated with care and precision, this is a political film whose statement about human greed, fear and cruelty is its most significant attribute.

Based on events in Mississippi in 1964 after the murder of three young civil rights workers — Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney — "Mississippi Burning" centers on the dynamic interrelationship of FBI Agents Ward (William Dafoe) and Anderson (Gene Hackman) with the inhabitants of the small Southern town where the three civil rights workers disappeared.

The locale is small, but photographed with great emotion by Peter Dinkus as are the weathered faces of the little people who live there. But the issues shake the earth and force every viewer to come to grips with his or her own attitudes about people who are different.

Make no mistake about it, that's an unpleasant subject and the film never shies away from these graphic, violent and bitter truths that have caused a pull over so much of American history.

"Beaches" (A+) (PG-13) 120 minutes.

Bette Midler at her best, singing, clowning (even acting) and tearing at your heartstrings with the help of a superb supporting cast.

C.C. Bloom (Bette Midler) and Hillary Whitney Essex (Barbara Hershey) meet on the beach at Atlantic City at age 11. The Blooms are from the Bronx and the Essexes are San Francisco's finest. Despite the gap, the girls click and begin a friendship that endures for 30 years.

Separated by continent, class and occupation — C.C.'s a singer, Hillary first an attorney, later lady of the manse — their letters link them emotionally and serve as an effective narrative bridge for 30 years. Through love and success, marriage and failure, they remain faithful.

Evocative photography by Dante

the movies



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 colossal bad
	No advanced screening

Spinotti with an excellent original score by Georges Delerue. "Beaches" is a nice and surreal feast. But above all, the acting of Midler and Hershey, supported by John Heard, Spalding Gray and Lainie Kazan, among others, makes this film superior.

"The January Man" (B) (R) 95 minutes.

This trite detective story is so slick that no one will mind the clichés and the bombastic acting, particularly by New York Mayor Flynn (Rod Steiger). It's fun to watch him attack at Police Captain Altona (Danny Aiello) and Police Commissioner Starkey (Harvey Keitel).

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FBI agent Alan Ward (William Dafoe) makes a point to fellow agent Rupert Anderson (Gene Hackman) in *On Point Pictures'* recent release, "Mississippi Burning," the story of the 1964 dis-

appearance of three civil rights workers in a small Mississippi town.

even told you about corruption in high places and a serial killer. There's no point in explaining because it's the same old story — just told so well that it's fun except for an unfortunate and unnecessary racial comment at the end.

"Talk Radio" (B) (R) 110 minutes.

Barry Champlain (Eric Bogosian), a talk-show host who keeps his listeners attention by offending and attacking their beliefs, is on the way up. Director Oliver Stone ("Platoon") successfully builds the same tensions in his audience that Barry does in his.

The setting — with two short exceptions — is the radio station and that tends to wear in a claustrophobic way. But nonetheless it has impact.

The script by Stone and Bogosian was based on the latter's play, staged by Joseph Papp for the New York Shakespeare Festival. As well, the scenario draws on a book based on the murder of Denver talk show

host Alan Berg. If nothing else, and there's a lot more, "Talk Radio" demonstrates the talent of Bogosian — a name that soon will be a lot more familiar than it is now. Reviewed by Kim Brown.

If all these films don't keep you off the street, there's few more releases this week, albeit they don't help the class average.

"Cameron's Closet" was announced with nothing more than a title, while "Dopstar Six" is an R-rated epic about underwater aliens. If that doesn't turn you on or off, there's "Gleaming the Cube," PG-13. It's all about skateboards. Whoopee!

STILL PLAYING:

"The Accused" (C+) (PG) 120 minutes. Long, slow but poignant drama about mistandied rape cases.

"Child's Play" (B) (R). Horror story about possessed doll given as birthday present.

"Cocoon: The Return" (B-) PG 115 minutes. Sentimental rerun with the old gang back to save a cocoon-being.

"Crossing Delancey" (A) (PG) 95 minutes. A liberated young New York gal, but grandma's got old world ideas.

"A Cry in the Dark" (C+) (PG-13) 120 minutes. True, but unceremoniously told story of mother falsely accused of murdering her own child.

"Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (B+) (PG) 127 minutes. Super-slick con men on the Riviera are lots of fun.

"Ernest Saves Christmas" (C+) PG. Jim Varney is "Ernest." Knowledgeline, Verne!

"Everybody's All American" (A-) (R) 127 minutes. A fine, sentimental look at people, places and football.

"Heavenly Creatures" (R). A cast of unknowns in torment and terror.

"I'm Gonna Get You Socks" (C+) (R) 95 minutes. Slow-paced satire of B-movies from the black point of view.

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

past.

"Land Before Time" (A) (G) 75 minutes. Touching story of a group of young dinosaurs. Excellent animation.

"My Stepmother Is an Alien" (B-) (PG-13) 108 minutes. When extra-terrestrial Kim Basinger touches down, this comedy takes off.

"Mystic Pizza" (A) (R) 102 minutes. Warm comedy about three young women working in a pizza restaurant.

"Naked Gun" (D) (PG-13) 90 minutes. Overly broad farce never gets off the ground floor of the police squad room.

"Oliver and Company" (A) (G) 70 minutes. Disney animation at its best.

"Tom Cruise and Dustin Hoffman star as brothers in every sense."

"Scrooged" (B+) (PG-13) 90 minutes. Updated romp through Dickens' "Christmas Carol."

"Tequila Sunrise" (B+) (PG-13) 115 minutes. Slick, glib production gets high, trying for high-concept, high-tech look in an old-fashioned, hard-boiled detective story.

ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

'Liaisons:' A powerful tale

By Anne Sharp
Special writer

"Dangerous Liaisons" is a tale two centuries old, but it's as timely as yesterday's surgeon general's report. It's a powerful, perversely entertaining, cautionary tale about what happens to people who try to use love and sex as play toys. And what happens, needless to say, isn't pretty.

Stephen Frear's film is an adaptation of Christopher Hampton's recent stage hit, "Les Liaisons Dangereuses," which in turn is based on a notorious 18th century novel by Choderlos de Laclos.

Laclos' story concerns two jaded aristocrats, the Marquise de Merteuil and the Vicomte de Valmont. Like their contemporary, the Marquis de Sade, Merteuil and Valmont are sexual psychopaths who take pleasure in abusing and degrading others. The tangle of their violence, however, is not the bodies of their victims, but their emotions.

For a giggle, these monsters make a wager. Valmont will seduce the innocent 16-year-old fiancée of Merteuil's ex-lover and also lure the virtuous Madame de Tourvel into an adulterous liaison. As his reward, Merteuil will renew her affair with him.

WHILE ACTING out this crude, cruel series of sexual pranks, the pair not only wreak havoc on the physical and mortal well-being of others, but destroy whatever shreds of happiness that remain in their own love lives.

Several adaptations of "Liaisons" have been made before Hampton's, and it's a wonder. It's a great, twisted tale of epic villainy like "Sweeney Todd." Watching the unrepentant actions of Merteuil and Valmont, you get the urge to hiss and cheer at the same time.

Stephen Frear is a director who tends toward the lewd ("Sammy and Rosie" and "Prick Up Your Ears"). Interestingly, however, he plays up the psychological rather than biologi-

cal aspects of the story (either the print I saw was censored, or the film is even less explicit than the stage version).

Working with a largely American cast, the British Frears wisely made no attempt to get his actors to assume accents or put on 18th century manners. The result is a relaxed, natural bit of ensemble acting.

It seemed a little perverse of Frears to use John Malkovich as his Valmont. Malkovich has always seemed to me to possess the erotic appeal of a plover, and one would think he's too weird looking to convincingly play the charming seducer. But, by God, he pulls it off!

HIS VALMONT is a half-social-

ized misfit, presentable, yet out of place in his powdered wig and lace fichu, prowling the elegant drawing rooms and bedrooms like a starving cheetah.

Glenn Close also seemed oddly cast as Merteuil. She looks so much older than Malkovich, more like his mother than his lover. But this is a brilliant, Freudian move on Frear's part; it explains her irresistible hold on him.

They say Michelle Pfeiffer had something going with John on the set of this one. Ick, Michelle! But she does turn in a radiant performance as Tourvel, the delicate personification of goodness in "Liaisons'" evil universe.



Glenn Close, John Malkovich and Michelle Pfeiffer star in "Dangerous Liaisons."

SCREEN SCENE

AFTERNOON FILM THEATER, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit. Call 832-2730 for information.

"Such Is Life" (1939), 1 p.m. Jan. 17-22. Social realist film about a Czech washer-woman's struggle to survive. Directed by Carl Jungmann. Double feature with "Brothers" (1929), Werner Hochbaum's melodrama about a woman's uprising in Hamburg in the late 19th century.

"The White Hell of Pitz Palu" (1928), 1 p.m. Jan. 24-25. Drama about a perilous mountain climbing expedition. Directed by Arnold Fanck, with Leni Riefenstahl and Gustav Diesel.

DETROIT FILM THEATER, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit. Call 832-2730 for information.

"Pelle the Conqueror" (1987), 7 and 10 p.m. Jan. 20-21 and 5 and 8 p.m. Jan. 22. Rich, satisfying epic about a small boy whose intelligence and decency enable him to survive in an unjust world. Max Von Sydow gives a funny, touching performance as the boy's weak-witted father.

MICHIGAN THEATER, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call 668-8307 for information.

"We the Living" (1942), 6:30 p.m. Jan. 18, 7:30 p.m. Jan. 19, 8:30 p.m. Jan. 20 and 9 p.m. Jan. 21. Recently unearthed Italian version of Ayn Rand's novel about sex, power and all that objectivist jazz.

"Desperate Living" (1977), 9:30 p.m. Jan. 18. John Waters' slem-shock comedy about a suburban housewife turned out-law.

"Fontainehead" (1949), 6:45 p.m. Jan. 18. Epic tripe, based on Ayn Rand novel about a heroic architect who risks all to follow his dream. Directed by King Vidor, with Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal.

"Patty Hearst" (1988), 6:45 p.m. Jan. 19. Based on Hearst's own account of her transformation from sheltered heiress to revolutionary terrorist.

"Dr. Strangelove" (1964), 10 p.m. Jan. 20. Stanley Kubrick's black comedy about a deranged general who starts World War III may be the best film ever made about nuclear war. It's certainly the funniest. With Peter Sellers, George C. Scott and Slim Pickens.

"Gorillas in the Mist" (1988), 6:45 p.m. Jan. 21. Bland biopic about the life and mysterious death of gorilla expert Dian Fossey. Directed by Michael Apted, with Sigourney Weaver.

"The Thin Blue Line" (1988), 7 p.m.

Jan. 23 and 25, 6 p.m. Jan. 24 and 9:15 p.m. Jan. 26. Errol Morris' stunning documentary about a man unjustly convicted of murder is like a "60 Minutes" episode made in heaven.

"Polyester" (1981), 9 p.m. Jan. 23. The morally ambiguous John Waters' first film for halfway nice people, this is the tender tale of Francine, a Baltimore housewife more slamed against than kissing.

"The Moderns" (1988), 9 p.m. Jan. 25. Salacious tale about love among the artists, set in Paris during the 1920s. Directed by Alan Rudolph, with Keith Carradine.

"The Barefoot Contessa" (1954), 7 p.m. Jan. 26. Heartbreak and glamour mingle in this story of a poor girl who achieves Hollywood stardom, but can't find happiness. Directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, with Humphrey Bogart and Ava Gardner.

"Metropolis" (1926), 6:30 p.m. Jan. 29. Fritz Lang's silent science fiction classic about a sinister totalitarian state ruled by an evil genius. This showing will feature a live performance of music originally written to accompany the film, performed by organist John Lauter.

REDFORD THEATER, Redford. Call 537-1133 for information.

"Guys and Dolls" (1955), organ overture at 7:30 p.m. and film at 8 p.m. Jan. 20-21. Film adaptation of Broadway musical about cute hoodlums, gamblers and Salvation Army babes in New York City. With Frank Sinatra, Jean Simmons and that versatile song-and-dance man Marlon Brando.

TELE-ARTS, 1540 Woodward, Detroit. Call 933-5918 for dates and times.

"The Wash" (1988). A Japanese-American woman in her 60s finds joy and romance after leaving her ungrateful husband. (There will be a special showing of "The Wash" at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 18 to benefit the Coalition on Temporary Shelter; admission is \$5.)

"A Winter Yarn" (1988). Controversial film, based on a true story about a New York intellectual whose "sexual for feminism" takes her on a vacation tour of Mexico.

cials finished plans for the extermination of the Jews. Directed with awesome finesse by Heintz Schickl.

"Black Narcissus" (1947), 7 p.m. Jan. 20. Mediatrics Auditorium, Angell Hall, with "Blitter Tea of General Yen" (1937) at 9 p.m. The former is based on James Golden's novel about a group of Roman Catholic nuns whose attempt to found a mission in the Himalayas is scotched by Mother Nature. The latter is a Frank Capra melodrama about an American woman's forbidden love for a Chinese warlord.

"Dead Ringers" (1988). Ann Arbor: Film Cooperative, 7 and 9:30 p.m. Jan. 20. Modern Language Building 3. Superb David Cronenberg thriller about identical twin gynecologists (played by Jeremy Irons) whose unhealthy interdependence leads to drug addiction, madness and murder.

"David Copperfield" (1935) and "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (1935). Cinema Guild, 7 and 9:30 p.m. Jan. 20. Language Building 4. The former is a quality version of Dickens' classic, directed by George Cukor, with Freddie Bartholomew, M.W. Fields and Roland Young. The latter is a Hollywoodization of Shakespeare's comedy, featuring a most remarkable cast, including James Cagney, Joe E. Brown and Mickey Rooney.

"Rope" (1948). Alternative Action, 7:30, 9:30 and 10:30 p.m. Jan. 20. Natural Science Building. Two cocky murderers try to pull off the perfect crime, but Jimmy Stewart finds them out. This is the Hitchcock film that was shot in continuing 10-minute takes. A bit tricky and unofficial, but fascinating.

"Across the Pacific" and "Key Largo" (1948). Cinema Guild, 7 p.m. and 8:45 p.m. Jan. 21, Auditorium A, Angell Hall. The former pairs up "Maltese Falcon" stars Humphrey Bogart, Marjorie Main and Sydney Greenstreet with director John Huston for a roasting bit of WWII propaganda about the war in the Pacific. The latter, also directed by John Huston, is a memorable battle of the tough guys, while being up in a small Florida hotel.

"In the Realm of the Senses." Cineplex? 7, 7 and 9:10 p.m. Jan. 21. Modern Language Building. Nagla Oshima's notorious shocker about a woman's violent, erotic obsession.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-ANN ARBOR: A select listing of showings by campus film societies.

"The Wannabe Conference" (1987), 7 and 8:45 p.m. Jan. 17, Hill Street Cinema. Engrossing drama based on actual transcripts of the meeting at which Nazi off-