

MOVING PICTURES

'The Bear' pleasant, but lacks continuity

"The Bear" (B, PG, 93 minutes) may very well be the major motion picture achievement its press materials claim it to be. In general, it is a pleasant story of an orphaned grizzly bear cub in late 19th century British Columbia. However, the film often lacks continuity and sometimes gets pretty sappy.

Exceptional cinematography by Philippe Rousselot ("Diva," "Dangerous Liaisons" and "Hop and Glory") is the saving grace of "The Bear" and its best feature, although pretty scenery and excellent, natural images only go so far.

Among the problems with "The Bear" are human voices gurgling to represent baby bear's emotional crises. Up to a point that's cute, but the heavy breathing when momma and poppa bear are messing around in the bushes — well, that gets rather tacky.

Continuity suffers because different bears were used in the filming. While necessary, the net result is that Kaar and Youk (Bart and Douce — them's bears, folks) grow, shrink and change their coloration as the film progresses. It is not at all smooth nor is the shifting relationship between the two hunters, Bill (Jack Wallace) and Tom (Theby Karyo).

Least credible is the moment of truth when Tom, the hunter, and poppa grizzly, Kaar, reject their inherently aggressive natures and neither bite nor shoot. While it may be touching and beautiful, it just doesn't strike a credible note.

Despite all these complaints, "The Bear" is a nice movie and may well enjoy its photography and cute animals.

AMC's LAUREL Park Theaters opened in Livonia Wednesday with a pretty slick press preview, attended by numerous civic dignitaries. After the delightful refreshments, five films were screened.

One of the better ones, "Immediate Family" (B+, PG-13, 95 minutes) is well worth your time and money.

Whereas years ago the only solution to childless couples was adoption, today's newspapers carry stories of other answers: surrogate parenting, in vitro fertilization and artificial insemination.

When none of these modern strategies are successful, Linda (Glen Close) and Michael Spector (James Woods) revert to old-fashioned adoption procedures, with a modern twist — they meet the natural mother, Lucy Moore (Mary Stuart Masterson), through their adoption lawyer.

"Immediate Family" is a poignant comedy about the trials and tribulations a middle couple face when they are unable to conceive a child. Their dilemma is a bittersweet counterpoint to the young couple who conceive a child they cannot support.

The instant rapport between the two couples creates the dramatic tension that is at the core of the appeal of "Immediate Family." In particular, Close develops a warm, maternal relationship with Masterson that goes far beyond what one might expect of a woman who is adopting another woman's child. That relationship is the real family in this "Immediate Family."

BY NOW YOU'VE heard the rumblings about "Dad" (B, PG, 119 minutes) — how Jack Lemmon won an Academy Award nomination, how he endured three hours of makeup daily, how he had his head shaved for this role so he looks 20 years older than his actual sixty-something. Rest assured that the nomination will be deserved and that the makeup people will win.

Lemmon may also win. His characterization is the cornerstone of this emotional portrait of contemporary familial values. Olympia Dukakis is wonderful as Bette Tremont, Dad's well-meaning, overly controlled and controlling spouse. In fact, all the acting is first-rate and Ted Danson projects an unexpected emotional depth and a gently moving portrayal of a son's internal life.

"Zakes Mokae is particularly effective as the medical specialist who helps Dad in his final days. There is a lot about this movie that is wonderful, but it loses its edge and focus just when it has the opportunity to say something new about the nature of aging and its effect on the relationships between children and parents. Gary David Goldberg who adapted William Wharton's book and directed wisely infuses the film with humor and warmth.

GOLDBERG STRETCHES believability into incredulity with several plot contrivances which only serve as stumbling blocks in an otherwise fine script. Perhaps the most telling line of "Dad" comes near the conclusion when Lemmon says with the



Hours of makeup and his acting talents turn Jack Lemmon into 78-year-old Jake Tremont who rediscovers a zest for life with the help of his son in "Dad."



the movies
Dan Greenberg

wisdom, "Dying is not a sin, not living is."

True enough, but the trouble here is that that's the kind of trite clichés that would be accepted, even expected, in a television movie of the week. But it just doesn't cut it in a multi-million dollar motion picture with such a talented cast. (Reviewed by Susan Fincham.)

Try as it might, "Worth Winning" (C+, PG-13, 95 minutes) can't overcome the fact that its script hinges on a wager predicated on the most adolescent male fantasies.

Taylor Worth (Mark Harmon) bets he can get three women to accept his marriage proposals and, of course, the women just happen to be beautiful, shapely and impossibly sexy.

The embarrassing fact is that this film was written by two women. And despite some witty moments, it is incredibly predictable.

Taylor wows all three successfully and, in the process, falls in love with the most prickly and accomplished of them, Veronica (Madeline Stowe). Of course, Elaineore (Leslie Ann Warren) and Veronica discover they share the same Taylor with Erin (Marla Holvoo).

Naturally, the three women then get together to plot revenge. Yawn, yawn, yawn. Yet, one keeps hoping that "Worth Winning" will offer some surprises because so many of the characters are likeable in spite of themselves. The saving grace is that, in spite of poor writing and meandering direction, the performances are interesting.

All in all, "Worth Winning" is kind of like Rock Hudson with three Doris Days and a yuppie Tony Randall in 1959. That means they get to do more than just talk about sex and have incredibly glamorous careers. Welcome to the '80s. (Reviewed by Susan Fincham.)

STILL PLAYING:
"Blues" (G) (PG-13) 120 minutes. Michael Keaton is a dud in the title role but Jack Nicholson's Joker is terrific.

"Black Halo" (D-) (R) 120 minutes. Unpleasant, trite detective story stars Michael Douglas.

"Breathing Life" (R). Burt Reynolds is an older, "professional" burglar teaming up with larcenous newcomer Casey Siemaszko.

"Dead Poets Society" (A+) (PG) 124 minutes.

Robin Williams' sensitive portrait of a fine teacher is complemented by excellent young actors as his students.

"A Dry White Season" (A+) (R) 100 minutes.

The worst of South African apartheid and the best of human sacrifice for brotherhood in this excellent story of one man coming to grips with government terror.

"The Fabulous Baker Boys" (R). Two brothers — Jeff and Beau Bridges — add Michelle Pfeiffer for their cocktail lounge piano playing act.

"Fat Man and Little Boy" (A-) (PG-13) 120 minutes.

Well-crafted, superbly acted film about the Manhattan Project during World War II.

"Gross Anatomy" (C-) (PG-13) 105 minutes.

Bland, slow, weakly structured romantic comedy about five, first-year med students.

"Halloween 5". Donald Pleasence and others in more of the same.

"Honey, I Shrank the Kids" (B+) (PG) 101 minutes.

"It's a Boy" (B+) (R) 110 minutes.

Often poignant, sometimes maudlin drama of a young girl searching for an image of her father, a casualty in Vietnam.

ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

'Petting': Not too heavy

By John Monaghan
special writer

Whether the subject is sex, drugs or communism, vintage "educational" films have long appealed to fans of camp and kitsch.

"Heavy Petting" edits archival footage into a hilarious look at acceptable behavior with the opposite sex. The entertaining new documentary plays for the full weekend at the Detroit Film Theatre.

Filmmakers Oble Benz and Josh Walecky have worked on other documentaries, including the similarly goofy "Atomic Cafe" (1982) and the "Parisian of Vilna" (1984). They get big laughs from the material combined in "Heavy Petting," most of it dating from the 1940s and '50s.

A 1951 epic, called "What to Do on a Date," shows teenagers engaged in woe-is-me and taffy pulls. In another, a stern narrator warns: "Controlled, the sexual impulse, like

a horse, may be a source of power and service."

IN "THE DO'S and Don'ts of Dating," a young teenager named Woody embarks on his first date. The film sets up situations — from asking a girl out to saying good night — and gives you choices of the right and wrong ways to handle those situations.

At the conclusion, our young Beaver Cleaver-type hero escorts his date to her door. You guess the acceptable behavior — lunging, simply walking away without a word or saying what a nice time you had and how you'd like to do it again.

Even the filmmakers were surprised that beyond the bad acting and corny messages, there's poignancy and sincerity. Most of the films were produced on extremely low budgets. They employed non-actors — faces that kids could relate to more than Hollywood products (though this was probably more for financial than artistic reasons).

Interviews, interspersed throughout, discuss people's first experiences with the mysteries of sex. An occasional mechanic is interviewed, but most of the insights come from Wood, out-of-the-mainstream actors, musicians, authors and political types.

PERFORMANCE artist Spalding Gray talks about messing around with his girlfriend and drinking vanilla Cokes. David Byrne shares his early fear of French kissing. The late Abbie Hoffman discusses group masturbation. William Burroughs, seated next to Allen Ginsberg, stays characteristically evasive.

Meanwhile, we also see footage from '50s drive-in movies like "Invasion of the Sauer Men" and "High School Hellcats." Even Elvis appears, delending the controversial movement of his pelvis.

"This isn't the story of actually having sex," the filmmakers summarize. "It's the story of getting there through adolescence and all the images associated with it."

SCREEN SCENE

DETROIT FILM THEATRE, Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave. Detroit. Call 832-2750 for information. (13)

"Heavy Petting" (USA — 1989, 7 and 9:30 p.m. Nov. 3-5. Teenage passion in the 1950s as remembered by the likes of Sandra Bernhard, Laurie Anderson, Allen Ginsberg and David Byrne. With outrageous "educational" films about the do's and don'ts of dating.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY, 1630 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-2330 for information. (Free)

"Night of the Living Dead" (USA — 1959), 7 p.m. Oct. 30. Zombies rise from the dead and feast on human flesh. Filmed on a shooting in Pittsburgh by a young George Romero, it's still one of the most blood-curdling of all horror films.

LIVONIA MALL CINEMA, 29415 Seven Mile, Livonia. Call 478-1166 for information. (Free)

"It's Always Fair Weather." (USA — 1955), 10 a.m. Oct. 31. Gene Kelly leads a trio of former soldiers who meet 10 years after VJ Day to paint the town. Best re-

membered for its musical dance with trash can lids, especially incredible in wide screen. Concluding the mall's month-long tribute to American musicals.

"The Phantom of the Opera" (USA — 1925), 8 p.m. Oct. 30. The Lon Chaney silent classic presented as it should be — with live orchestral accompaniment (the Ann Arbor Chamber Orchestra). A rare treat. (\$10 admission this film only)

"The African Queen" (USA — 1952), 7 p.m. Oct. 31. Bogart and Hepburn team up as a pair of unlikely travelers attempting to sink a German gunboat in World War I.

"Eraserhead" (USA — 1977), 9:20 p.m. Oct. 31. David Lynch's bizarre film debut is a nightmarish journey into the deeper recesses of the subconscious. Equal parts repulsive, absorbing and downright brilliant. Filmed in black and white.

"Steamboat Bill Jr." (USA — 1928), 7 p.m. Nov. 5. Buster Keaton's hit and miss

short feature about a young man who must prove himself to his steamboat captain father. With Keaton's best short, "Cops" (1922) and live organ accompaniment. A U-M Film and Video Studies presentation. (Free admission this film only)

SOUTHFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY, 26600 Evergreen, Southfield. Call 354-9100 for information. (\$5 membership, \$2.50 student and seniors)

"Les Miserables" (USA — 1935), 7:30 p.m. Nov. 2. Frederic March and Charles Laughton bring Victor Hugo's story alive. Minor thief Jean Valjean is bonded for years by a per-severant police inspector. Shown on large screen video.

TELE-ARTS, 1540 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 963-3318 for information. (\$3.50 for adults, \$2.50 students and senior citizens)

"War Requiem" (Britain — 1988), 5:30 and 7:30 p.m. Nov. 1-4 and 1, 5 and 7 p.m. Nov. 5. Laurence Olivier's final film, chronicling the creation of Benjamin Britten's celebrated Oratorio, commissioned in 1962. A Detroit premier.

— John Monaghan

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