

MOVING PICTURES



VIDEO VIEWING

By Dan Greenberg
special writer

Two major motion pictures debut this week on video cassette — "Lawrence of Arabia" (1962, restored version, 1989, 218 minutes, PG, color) and "A World Apart" (1988, 115 minutes, PG, color).

Winner of seven Oscars, including the academy's best picture citation, the original "Lawrence" was cut by 35 minutes. Amidst much publicity it was restored for a nationwide tour, which included Detroit's Fox Theatre earlier this year. On Oct. 19, that restored version is available on video for home viewing.

The all-star cast, headed by Peter O'Toole and Alec Guinness, includes Omar Sharif, Anthony Quinn, Jose Ferrer and Claude Rains. It's priced at \$29.95 and will be available for rental as well. Although a copy was not received for this review, it will be interesting to see just how David Lean's magnificent wide-screen epic looks on a small TV at home.

It's an interesting coincidence that Media Home Entertainment is releasing "A World Apart" on video just one week after the premiere of "A Dry White Season."

Both are poignant stories that effectively personalize the tragically large, but often abstract, casualty lists when black demonstrations are repressed by the South African government.

"A WORLD APART" chronicles Diana Roth's (Barbara Hershey) fight against South African apartheid policies in 1963 just after the 90-Day Detention Act became law. That legislation allowed imprisonment for

such a period without charges being filed. It had been enacted in response to black aspirations and the rising strength of the African National Congress.

By 1963, ANC leader Nelson Mandela was already in jail but others continued the struggle — and the South African government responded brutally. Diana Roth was a journalist for the Rand Daily Mail — the same paper Susan Sarandon works for in "A Dry White Season." Roth had seen great injustices through her work and had become an active participant in ANC activities.

Based on a true story of the first woman imprisoned under the 90-day act (Ruth First), "A World Apart" relates the sad, divisive impact such policies have on family life. Conflicting duties tear at the family structure — is one responsible only to immediate kin or must one also answer to the agency of strangers?

The story largely develops through the reactions of Roth's 13-year-old daughter, Molly (Jodhi May), who must contend with a parentless home after her mother is imprisoned and her father, Gus (Doreen Krabbe), flees to avoid jail on treason charges as a communist.

NATURALLY, in the repressive world of apartheid, anyone who advocates freedom and equality is part of the world-wide communist menace. Molly remains at home with her grandmother (Yvonne Bryceland) and the housekeeper, Elsie (Linda Mvusi), whose brother, Solomon (Albee Lesotho), is a leading political activist.

Slowly and painfully, Molly learns

'Talking:' Cute but not credible

When Mollie (Kristie Alley), the CPA, gets pregnant by Albert (George Segal), the neurotic entrepreneur, she needs to find a father for her baby, Mikey (a whole bunch of kid actors — Jason Schaller, Jaryd Waterhouse, Jacob Hain and Christopher Aydon plus stunt double, Mikey "Mikey" Messner and plain double Amanda Blasko).

Schaller has most of Mikey's screen time and therein lies one significant problem in "Look Who's Talking" (C+, PG-13, 97 minutes): Mikey's supposed to be a year old, and there's no way that Schaller is close — he's 31 if a day.

The entire sequence with the four child actors — plus two doubles — representing Mikey from birth to one year is unclear and simply doesn't ring true. It's symptomatic of a strained, gimmicky film with questionable continuity.

Albert thinks Albert is going to divorce his wife and marry her, but it turns out that Albert is going through another phase. He's carrying on with his interior designer, Melissa

(Joy Doushall), while Mollie is carrying his child.

THAT ALBERT and Melissa should be found in hot embrace in the shop where Mollie and her friend Rona (Twink Caplan) are shopping strains one's credibility.

But it does keep the plot limping along as Mollie is now on her own because Albert is moving in with Melissa. Just about then, Mollie goes into labor and a rather interesting guy, James (John Travolta), pulls up in his cab to drive her to the hospital.

James winds up as Mollie's baby-sitter, and you can pretty much figure out what happens from there on. There's quite a bit of funny stuff, but on the whole it's stymied and obvious. Mollie has a Harold Lloyd hanging from the clock nightmare when the doctor notes that her biological clock is ticking.

The adult voice-overs speaking mature ideas representing babies is clever but quickly gets old. Bruce Willis is Mikey's voice. There also are cameos — Olympia Dukakis as Mikey's mother, Rosie, and Abe Vigoda as James' grandfather.

Put it all together and it adds up to very little. Symptomatic are the music sequences thrown in whenever the plot falters. Still and all, lots of people will walk out of the theater saying, "That was cute."

"BREAKING IN" (R) features Burt Reynolds as Ernie, an older professional safe-cracker whose young protégé, Mike (Casey Siemaszko), does it for kicks. It's a slightly different kind of story, a comedy about a couple bad guys who aren't all that bad, just on the wrong side of the law.

"The Fabulous Baker Boys" (R) stars the fabulous Bridges boys, Beau and Jeff, as cocktail lounge piano-playing brothers. Their act takes off when they hire a beautiful young singer, Michelle Pfeiffer, to work with them.

Finally this week, "Halloween 5" (R). It's a bit early for trick or treat, so rate it somewhere between 4 and 6.

STILL PLAYING:
"The Abyss" (D) (PG-13) 135 minutes. Despite excellent underwater



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

sequences, this muddled and murky sci-fi sea saga sinks.

"Batman" (C+) (PG-13) 120 minutes. Michael Keaton is a dud in the title role, but Jack Nicholson's Joker is terrific.

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

"Cookie" (C+) (R) 90 minutes. A couple of confusing stories run together as mobster Peter Falk tries to reconcile with daughter, Cookie (Emily Lloyd) while scamming mob and feds.

"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.

"Honey, I Shrunk the Kids" (B+) (PG) 103 minutes.

It's fun, but it ain't easy to be small. "In Country" (B+) (R) 110 minutes.

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

"Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (B+) (PG-13) 120 minutes.

Good entertainment, but enough already.

"An Innocent Man" (B-) (R) 90 minutes. Tom Selleck is unjustly imprisoned and must come to grips with the vicious penitentiary world.

"Johnny Handsome" (F) (R) 90 minutes.

An ugly movie that proves criminals are incapable of reforming.

"Kickboxer" (F) (R). Vengeance and rescue are in order as an American kickboxer travels to Thailand.

"Lethal Weapon II" (B+) (R) 115 minutes.

Glover and Gibson do it again in high, albeit violent, style.

"Nightmare on Elm Street V" (R). Freddie's back.

"Paradise" (A-) (R) 120 minutes. Large, talented cast in complex but entertaining story about a family that includes Jason Robards, Steve Martin, Tom Hanks, Martha Plimpton and Diane West, among others.

"Relentless" (F) (R). Judd Nelson, Robert Loggia, Leo Rossi and Meg Foster in story of driven young man who becomes a killer.

"Romero" (A) (PG-13) 105 minutes. Disturbing and frightening but provocative story of El Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero and the events leading to his assassination. Superb performance by Paul Julian in title role.

"Sea of Love" (C) (R) 110 minutes. Al Pacino as a burned-out detective adds nothing to the cliché nor does a very weak script.

"Sex, Lies, and Videotape" (R). Everyone's talking about this romantic comedy with James Spader.

"Shirley Valentine" (A+) (R) 110 minutes.

Superb, comic, romantic, lovely statement about human worth.

"Tanner & Hoock" (D) (PG) 95 minutes. Man and slobbery dog bonding against background of confusion — and confusion — murder investigation.

"Weekend at Bernie's" (C) (PG-13). A one joke film about convincing boss of insurance company.

"When Harry Met Sally" (A+) (R) 99 minutes.

Fine comic, romantic story of an unlikely couple — Billy Crystal and Meg Ryan — and well directed by Rob Reiner.

ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

'Vera' uncovers Soviet life

By John Monaghan
special writer

Soviet films aren't ordinarily known for their subtlety, sense of humor or frankness.

"Little Vera" is no ordinary film. Playing for a second weekend at the Detroit Film Theatre, this may be the screen's most intimate glimpse into Soviet life.

Vera (Natalya Negoda), a high school graduate, is constantly hounded by her parents about her wild lifestyle and a college acceptance that never comes. She hangs out late nights with her girlfriend Lena.

"Little Vera" begins as a film about alienated youth — comrades without a cause. In a startling early scene, an outdoor rock-and-roll dance is surrounded by police in riot gear and with German shepherds.

VERA MEETS Sergei (Andrei Sokolov) in the impending violence and immediately falls for him. After

announcing their marriage plans, Sergei moves in with Vera's family and the movie starts to look like a Soviet "All in the Family."

But the film grows darker. Sergei treats her parents like dirt.

When he asks Vera why her parents are so dumb, she says, "They're the only ones I've got." She starts making strides toward adulthood while he grows more and more bored.

Natalya Negoda stazes in her unglamorous but sexy role. Heavily made up and dressed in the same red striped shirt for much of the film, she has few options in or out of her dead-end industrial town. Aside from rock-and-roll, Sergei is the only thing that hasn't bored her to tears.

Vera's parents, meanwhile, are tired, hard working and completely at a loss in dealing with a teenage daughter. The father gets into whiny drunken fits. The mother yells from the kitchen where she spends count-

less hours canning and pickling fruits and vegetables.

"Little Vera" shows us plenty about life in the Soviet Union, especially about cramped living conditions and family tension. Director Vasily Pichuk can never get his camera far enough away. Things are always close up and claustrophobic in the tiny apartment.

THE LANDSCAPE outside isn't much better. The entire town seems to be built on piles of rusted parts and scrap. The beach is all gravel and jagged iron poles. At one point, Vera crouches beneath the shell of a beached World War II submarine.

"Little Vera" won best film and best actress awards at the Chicago Film Festival and has been viewed by more than 60 million Soviets.

Although its conflicts are never fully resolved, it asks for acceptance and co-existence in a world that is much too small.

SCREEN SCENE

CENTER FOR JAPANESE STUDIES, Lorch Hall, 909 Monroe, Ann Arbor. Call 764-6307 for information. (Free)

"My Love Has Been Burning" (Japan — 1949). 7 p.m. Oct. 20. With "Miss Oyu" (Japan — 1951) at 8:45 p.m. Two films by Kenji Mizoguchi as part of the continuing series of rare Japanese films.

CINEMA GUILD, Lorch Hall, 909 Monroe, Ann Arbor. Call 994-0037 for information. (\$2.50 single, \$3.50 double feature)

"Summer Interlude" (Sweden — 1950). 7 and 10:20 p.m. Oct. 20 in Modern Languages Building Auditorium 3. An early film by Ingmar Bergman recounts the joys and tragedies of a ballerina's first love. With "A Lesson in Love" (Sweden — 1954) at 8:40 p.m. only, about a married obstetrician who has an affair with one of his patients.

"The Marriage of Maria Braun" (Germany — 1978). 7 and 9:30 p.m. Oct. 21 in Modern Languages Building Auditorium 4. Hanna Schygulla plays a destitute soldier's widow who amasses a vast empire after the war. Directed with great melo-

dramatic flourishes by Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

DETROIT FILM THEATRE, Detroit Institute of Arts, 540 Woodward Ave. Detroit. Call 832-2310 for information. (F)

"Little Vera" (USSR — 1988) Oct. 20-21 (call for show times). This gritty and compelling look at life in an industrial town has been the most controversial and exciting Soviet film since glasnost.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY, 16301 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 942-2310 for information. (Free)

"The Great Gatsby" (USA — 1974). 7 p.m. Oct. 16. Faithful, if singularly uninspired, filming of the F. Scott Fitzgerald novel. Robert Redford and Mia Farrow star, but it's Bruce Dern and Karen Black who shine in supporting roles. Francis Ford Coppola wrote the screenplay.

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

"Les Girls" (USA — 1957). 10 a.m. Oct.

17. In-between musical numbers, song-and-dance man Gene Kelly falls for each of the three gorgeous women in his act. With Mimi Gynor. As part of the mall's monthlong tribute to American musicals.

MICHIGAN THEATRE, 16301 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. For information, call 669-8397. (\$4 regular and \$3.25 students and senior citizens)

"Who Framed Roger Rabbit" (USA — 1988). 5 p.m. Oct. 22. Animation and live action mix in last year's box office smash.

"Variety" (Germany — 1925). 7 p.m. Oct. 22. A classic of silent German Expressionism, about an aging trapeze artist (Emil Jennings) who falls for a young gypsy to whom he teaches his craft. Directed by E.A. DuPont.

"Blue Velvet" (USA — 1986). 9:15 p.m. Oct. 12. Arguably the best film of the 1980s, this dark, dark film by David Lynch explores the underside of life in smalltown USA. Dennis Hopper in the role of a lifetime as the psychotic Frank Booth.

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