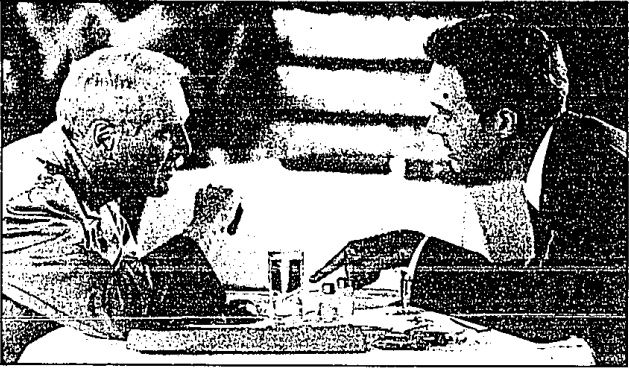


MOVING PICTURES



Paul Newman stars as Gen. Leslie Groves, commander of the Manhattan Project, and Dwight Schultz as J. Robert Oppenheimer, project director, in "Fat Man and Little Boy."

'Anatomy': College life that's slow and bland

Strangely enough, "Gross Anatomy" (C, PG-13, 105 minutes), a film about first-year medical students, isn't all macabre. That's rather surprising these days, when filmmakers seem to be intent on gross images and gross dollars.

One expects such a film to be filled with grisly black humor — at least in today's market. But "Gross Anatomy" is quite bland and, for a romantic comedy, rather slow.

The film centers on five diverse, unlikely lab partners, freshmen at Chandler University's College of Medicine — Joe Sivak (Matthew Modine), the hot-shot son of a fisherman, Laurie Rorback (Daphne Zuniga), the demure, intense student who wants to be a surgeon like her mother, the stressed-out David Schreiner (Todd Field), the very snooty Miles Reed (John Scott Clough) and Kim McCauley (Alice Carter), an Oriental woman whose husband just wants her to have lots of kids.

In an overwhelming, overburdened year, "Gross Anatomy" is their major trauma. By working together, they survive and achieve. But it didn't seem as hard as they said it was.

Their instructors are Dr. Rachael Woodruff (Christine Lahti) and Dr. Ramundra (Zakes Mokea). Lahti's fine acting talent is lost in a poorly conceived and weakly directed characterization, while Mokea looks slightly gully, as if he were a refugee from a zombie movie caught with all these cadavers. (He was in "The Serpent and the Rainbow.")

DESPITE PR protests to the contrary, the model cadavers looked like the plastic from which they were constructed and had as much impact as any other non-biodegradable debris.

The pregnant Kim wears a respirator mask sometimes. Does this mean formaldehyde odors are only occasionally dangerous to her fetus? The intermittent use of surgical gloves during dissecting procedures also strikes a discordant note. It may be all very authentic, but it doesn't matter. How it looks is the main consideration in movies and none of this seems right.

Audience need not worry if the slow pace and lack of tension calls for a nap. "Gross Anatomy" plods along intermittently, so little is missed when the eyes close. Most of the characters will be in the same position when the eyes open. Characterizations are well-drawn initially but their potential is frittered away and tense interaction never materializes — in considerable part because of excessively long takes. Not too much happens a lot of the time. That just isn't exciting.

Like a TV soap opera, in case you miss an episode, you won't feel left out. Whether mooning over each other, their cadaver or their medical ethics, these five students flunk out of the School of Dynamic Behavior.

"NEXT OF KIN" (R) sounds like a film about people whom one is relieved to discover are not related. Patrick Swayze continues to build



the movies Dan Greenberg

**Grading the movies**

|                         |                                  |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A+                      | Top marks - sure to please       |
| A                       | Close behind - excellent         |
| A-                      | Slight 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 |                                  |

his reputation for violent movies. This time he's a down-home country boy who comes to the big city (Chicago) to avenge his younger brother's death.

"Fat Man and Little Boy" (A, PG-13, 120 minutes) is a well-crafted, superbly acted film. It is one that makes you think and question the big picture.

The movie chronicles the development of the atomic bomb and raises overwhelming issues — and it doesn't stop there. "Fat Man and Little Boy" — the nicknames for the two bombs dropped on Japan — also tells the personal stories of the men who developed "the gadget."

Paul Newman as General Leslie "Dick" Groves is nearly flawless in his performance. Groves, the man in charge of the Los Alamos project, was so far out on a limb, there was barely a twig to support him as he had to maintain a confident, demanding demeanor toward the scientists, particularly their leader, Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, portrayed impeccably by Dwight Schultz.

Despite long-standing communist sympathies, Oppenheimer was a very American American. The clash of wills between Groves and Oppenheimer as the project draws to a close amidst a developing crisis of conscience among the scientists creates a tense drama.

THE FILM is narrated by Michael Merriman (John Cusack), a young scientist whose daily journal narates and comments on the action, and in so doing very pointedly keeps "Fat Man and Little Boy" from becoming just another political soap box on the horrors of atomic warfare.



Michelle Pfeiffer and Jeff Bridges star in "The Fabulous Baker Boys."

ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

'Sorceress' conjures boredom

By John Monaghan special writer

He's the son of a wealthy count, pledged to the rocky life of a Dominican friar; he roams the countryside, weighed down by a heavy conscience, hunting for heretics in the name of the Lord.

She's a beautiful herbal healer leading a simple, fulfilling life in the woods. The good friar, however, accuses her of devilish witchcraft and insists that she be burned at the stake.

The film chronicling this meeting could have been powerful stuff. But in the French-made "Sorceress" — playing this weekend at the downtown Tele-Arts Theatre — it's handed in the clumsiest way possible.

"Sorceress" started with good intentions. First-time screenwriter Pamela Berger, an art history professor at Boston College, has long been fascinated with the Middle Ages. She based her story on the writings of Etienne de Bourbon, a

13th Century country friar who kept vivid accounts of his travels.

ONE OF the more unusual passages concerns a dog, only begun by superstitious villagers. The film's opening scene shows a greyhound mistakenly killed after saving an infant from a poisonous snake. The villagers bury the dog in sacred ground and worship him as a saint.

This infuriates Bourbon, who arrives in the tiny village preaching a piety brand of fire and brimstone. He's too blind to see that the local real problem doesn't include the dog saint or Erida the healer, but the sadistic landowner who constantly taxes and preys upon them.

"Sorceress" is directed by Susanne Seiffman, a frequent collaborator of Francois Truffaut. It's easy to see the similarities between this and the late director's work, especially in the simplicity of her images.

Unfortunately, the effect here is something less than poetic and certainly more trudging and dragging

than Dungeons and Dragons.

The actor who plays Bourbon may look a little like Gerard Depardieu, but he's as wooden as the cross that hangs from his neck.

Remember the crazed heretic hunters in Ken Russell's "The Devils" or the emotion of Carl Dreyer's "Passion of Joan of Arc." You'll find little of that here, with the saintly Erida so easily resigned to her fate and Bourbon walking around in a trance.

PART OF the problem may be the dubbed video version I saw. Tele-Arts owner Carl Anhorn assures me that the print screening this weekend will be the English language version that was shot simultaneously with the French.

Still, I can't imagine that French actors stumbling through a foreign language will help the stilted proclamations that pose as dialogue. "Sorceress" would be difficult viewing in any language.

SCREEN SCENE

CENTER FOR JAPANESE STUDIES, Lorch Hall, 909 Moore, Ann Arbor. Call 764-4307 for information. (Free)

"The Little Prince" (Japan — 1953, 7 p.m. Oct. 23. An early sound film about a young boy who is stranded on a tiny planet. (Reviewed by Susan Finckham)

STILL PLAYING:

"Batman '82" (PG-13) 120 minutes. Michael Keaton is a dud in the title role as Jack Nicholson's Joker is terrific.

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

"Breaking In" (R). Bert 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 to their cocktail lounge playing act.

"Halloween 2" Donald Pleasence and others in more of the same.

"Honey, I Shrunk the Kids" (B+) (PG) 105 minutes. It's fun, but it ain't easy to be small.

"In Country" (B+) (R) 110 minutes. Older protagonist, sometimes maudlin 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.

"Lethal Weapon II" (B+) (R) 115 minutes. Glover and Gibson do it again in high, often violent, style.

"Look Who's Talking" (C+) (PG-13) 97 minutes. Contrived, poorly structured story of pregnant CPA (Kirstie Alley) and her search for a perfect father for her baby. Bruce Willis is the baby's voice.

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

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

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

"See, Love 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.

"Weekend Update" (PG-13). A one-joke film about convincing boss of insurance company.

"When Harry Met Sally" (A+) (R) 90 minutes. Fine comic, romantic story of an unlikely couple — Billy Crystal and Meg Ryan — and well directed by Rob Reiner.

ing a Pennsylvania steel town for the last 15 years — with surreal, surprising and often profound results.

"Wild Swans" (USA — 1964, 5 and 7 p.m. Oct. 23. Another knockout in wide screen, this from Otto Preminger about the havoc that breaks loose when the great general is a controversial secretary of state. With Charles Laughton, Henry Fonda and Burgess Meredith.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY, 1421 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 948-2330 for information. (Free)

"The Perils of Pauline" (USA — 1917). 7 p.m. Oct. 23. Retrospective look at the old days of movie serials, with Betty Hutton playing daredevil actress Pauline White.

LIVONIA MALL CINEMA, 25415 Secor, Livonia. Call 476-1164 for information. (Free)

"My Fair Lady" (USA — 1964) 10 a.m. Oct. 24. Rex Harrison and Audrey Hepburn star in the film adaptation of the much loved Broadway musical. George Cukor directed.

MICHIGAN THEATRE, 1631 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-1337. (\$4 regular and \$3.25 students and senior citizens)

"The Asphalt Jungle" (USA — 1950) 7

p.m. Oct. 25. John Huston's naturalistic thriller explores the relationship of a group of jewel thieves plotting a crime. With Sterling Hayden and an early performance by Marilyn Monroe.

"Citizen Kane" (USA — 1940), 9:15 p.m. Oct. 25 and 9 p.m. Oct. 26. Orson Welles was only 25 years old when he constructed this brilliant story of a powerful newspaperman, based on the gaudy life of William Randolph Hearst.

"Dead Poets Society" (USA — 1989), 7:15 p.m. Oct. 25 and 9:15 p.m. Oct. 27. Peter Weir's literate and literary story about an unconventional English teacher in a traditional New England boarding school. Set in the 1950s.

"Harold and Maude" (USA — 1971), 7:30 and 11:45 p.m. Oct. 27. Bud Cort and Reis Gordon carry on their crazy May-December romance in everyone's favorite cult film. Music by Cat Stevens.

TELE-ARTS, 1540 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 563-3918 for information. \$3.50 for adults, \$2.50 students and senior citizens)

"Sorceress" (France — 1988), 5:30 and 7:30 p.m. Oct. 25-28 and 1, 5 and 7 p.m. Oct. 29. A parable set in the Middle Ages, about the clash between a dedicated herbal healer and a gut-ridden friar trying to end the countryside of such heretics.

— John Monaghan

VIDEO VIEWING

Film chronicles 1919 riot

By Dan Greenberg special writer

"The Killing Floor" (1984, mostly color, PG, 118 minutes) is an important chronicle of the black experience in America.

It's the story of Chicago's 1919 race riot and the background to those riots — racial segregation, economic deprivation and attempts to organize labor in Chicago's stock yards and meat-packing plants, the site of Union Sinfclair's "Jungle" 15 years earlier.

An expanded economy and depleted labor pools characterized the World War I home front. Big cities throughout the country desperately needed labor for the war machine. Blacks from the south and numerous ethnics fleeing persecution and destruction in Europe were attracted to northern factories and their substantial wages.

Based on actual events, "The Killing Floor" is a social docudrama that rises above normal expectations of that genre. It is a dramatic, compelling and highly personal look at the people behind the headlines — the people who make the news but seldom appear in it.

Hearing of good jobs and high wages, Frank Custer (Damien Leake), a southern sharecropper, leaves his wife, Mattie (Aki Woodard), and hops a freight north with his best buddy, Thomas Joshua (Ernest Rayfield).

They settle in a Chicago flop house and look for work. The stock yards are hot, blacks as well as whites since labor was at a premium and getting meat to the troops fighting in Europe was the priority. Frank is hired, but Thomas is not. Finally, losing hope, Thomas joins the Army and goes off to fight in Europe.

"The Killing Floor" is an absorbing drama peopled by characters who incidentally represent some pretty significant times in American history.

Frank I. to keep the meat moving from the front, the U.S. Government appointed a federal judge, Samuel Alschuler (Nathan Davis), to arbitrate between union and management. This limited union victory is central to "The Killing Floor" plot.

Frank Custer is torn by his acceptance into the union by whites, particularly a German-American shop steward, Bill Bremer (Clarence Felder) who helps him become a teacher, a considerable step up from his cleaning job.

That acceptance by whites must have had a considerable psychological impact on a southern black sharecropper. But why the acceptance in a period when the north was still segregated?

Some blacks mistrusted whites, be they union or management, and were certain they were being used. Austin "Heavy" Williams (Moses Goswami) was one such individual and, of course, he was right to some considerable extent as the meat packers used black labor to break strikes.

Frank is propelled into this maelstrom as he joins the union and becomes an organizer. But his wages are high enough for him to bring Mattie, their children and her father north.

FRANK CUSTER'S voice-over narration and period newsreels (in black and white) effectively link "The Killing Floor's" rather involved 1980s setting covering the 71 years from early 1917 when Frank and Thomas come north through late 1919. Because of these two techniques, one personal and intimate, the second general and historical, there is no question about what's going on and when. Nor does the film ever lose its personal touch and intimate focus.

That's the bottom line on "The Killing Floor." It's personal touch. Frank Custer is an engaging young man, someone to care about. He and the others in this film are human beings caught up in difficult times. Most of them deal with their problems with strength and courage.

Excellent acting and an intelligent script skillfully personalizes the ethnic and economic conflict that tormented their lives.

"The Killing Floor" is an absorbing drama peopled by characters who incidentally represent some pretty significant times in American history. You can take your history or leave it, but there's no doubt about the people in this drama, they will affect you.

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| Kansas Steak                         | 7.95  | Dinner include |
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SWIRLING IN in the background of Frank's dedication to bringing Mattie and the kids north is conflict — racial and labor. Under the leadership of famed Chicago labor leader, John Fitzpatrick (James O'Rielly), union organization of blacks, Poles, Lithuanians, Germans, everyone who worked in the meat packing plants, continued until full management recognition in the '30s.

Union struggles in this period were fierce with only occasional, partial victories. During the World