

MOVING PICTURES



Woody Allen and Mia Farrow star in a scene from Allen's film, "Crimes and Misdemeanors."

'Crimes, Misdemeanors:' Woody Allen at his best

"Crimes and Misdemeanors" (A+, PG-13, 100 minutes) is one of the decade's better films because at one and the same time it is an entertaining, romantic comedy and a profound statement about moral choices and ethical behavior.

That's a pretty tall order, but Woody Allen fills it, because you can take the ethical debate or leave it. Whatever you choose, the film is still a very entertaining, romantic comedy. Woody Allen at his best — and he never mentions his mother.

Cliff Stern (Allen) is an obscure documentary filmmaker, working on a documentary about Professor Leo L. Levy (Martin Bergman), an Auschwitz survivor modeled after Primo Levi. Cliff's marriage is crumbling, apparently because his wife, Wendy (Joanna Gleason), is unhappy with Cliff's failure and with his cynical view of materialistic success.

Wendy's brother Lester (Alan Alda) is the antithesis of Cliff — and the butt of a good many, very funny and very typical Woody Allen on-line. "Crimes and Misdemeanors" is enriched throughout by the wry, ironic vision associated with Allen's humorous self-deprecation. Lester is a lecherous but extremely successful television producer.

There's another brother, Ben (Sam Waterston), a rabbi who is going blind. Ben's ophthalmologist, Dr. Judah Rosenthal (Martin Landau), is an incredibly successful medical practitioner, businessman and philanthropist. His trappings of success include a marvelous country home, a lovely wife, Miriam (Claire Bloom), a daughter, Sharon (Stephanie Roth), and a neurotic girlfriend, Delores Paley (Anjelica Huston). Judah also has a brother on the fringes, Jack (Jerry Orbach).

CLIFF IS TRYING to educate his niece Jenny (Jenny Nichols) in the ways of the world, so he promised her father before the father died. This education involves a lot of old movies. Cliff also spends a lot of time at the movies with a TV producer, Halley Reed (Mia Farrow). They met while Cliff was directing a documentary about Lester for public television.

Got all that? Sounds pretty complicated, doesn't it? But it plays better than it reads because of the skill and clarity with which Allen tells this complicated story about a lot of very interesting characters.

This accomplished cast, both stars and supporting members, are excellent, as is Sven Nykvist's photography — lots of warm colors and an integration of the eye/camera imagery. But clearly Woody Allen's talented writing and directing make a difference. The naturalism of every aspect of the film is its great strength. There are never any real, significant moral dilemmas.

As Professor Levy says in one of the segments in Cliff Stern's documentary: "We give meaning to the universe by the choices we make. We define ourselves by the choices we make."

Woody Allen has given meaning to a particularly corner of the universe by creating a very fine film, one which discusses at any price, giving, taking, complaining. It is to his credit that he presents people we can care about as examples of the choices we must make.

"Dealers" (R) features Rebecca DeMornay as a brilliant securities trader at London's Whitney Paine Bank. There are big losses and major gains while everyone's love life is at stake.

A number of films are opening this



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

week without benefit of screenings so viewers are on their own. Martial arts movie fans may be interested in "Bloodfight" (R), starring Don "The Dragon" Wilson and others. (Who ya kidding?)

"After Midnight" (R) is about a woman taking a college course in the psychology of fear.

"Second Sight" (PG) is a comedy about two detectives, one of whom has psychic powers. The Cardinal of Boston and his secretary have been kidnapped and need rescuing.

While we're on the comedy kick, "Erik the Viking" (PG-13, 104 minutes) is a Monty Python style story of ancient rape and pillage with an all-star cast featuring two Python people, John Cleese and Terry Jones (director of "Life of Brian"). Jones wrote and directed this epic, whose cast includes Mickey Rooney and Eartha Kitt.

Besides the re-appearance of Eartha Kitt ("See Video Viewing") Menahem Golan has risen from the ashes of Cannon Films with the 21st Century Film Corporation's production of "Phantom of the Opera" (R). This version stars Robert Englund, best known as Freddy Krueger in the "Nightmare on Elm Street" films.

STILL PLAYING: "Animal Behavior" (PG). Romantic comedy about conflict between career and romance starring Karen Allen, Armand Assante, Holly Hunter and Josh Mostel.

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

"The Bear" (D-) 120 minutes. Excellent nature photography but film often lacks continuity and gets pretty sloppy at times.

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

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

"Dad" (PG) 119 minutes. Excellent acting by Jack Lem-

mon, Ted Danson, Zakes Mokae and Olympia Dukakis married by chiches. "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 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 first-year medical students.

"Halloween 5." 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.

"Immediate Family" (B+) (PG-13) 95 minutes. Childless couple adopting baby from young mother and her boyfriend who love, but cannot afford, the baby.

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

"Lethal Weapon III" (B+) (R) 115 minutes. Glover and Gibson do it again in high albeit 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.

"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.

VIDEO VIEWING

By Dan Greenberg
special writer

If you're in the mood for some very funny, pointed French satire, look for Claude Zidi's "My New Partner" (1985, color, 104 minutes, R) in video cassette Nov. 8.

"My New Partner" garnered Oscar (the French equivalent of Oscar) awards for best picture, director and editing. Media Home Entertainment's video cassette has excellent yellow subtitles with black outlines that are easy to read, if you don't mind occasional misspellings. The very French tone is not right at this opening moment as Rene enters France from into American dollars.

The money is important since "My New Partner" is about a corrupt cop, Rene Boissard (Philippe Noiret), who arrests his own partner, Pierrot, when they get caught robbing a pimp. Shaking down everyone they can — when they're not skimming and scamming — is their way of life.

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Pierrot wants to know why Rene should get off by arresting Pierrot. "Because," Rene responds, "I thought of it."

ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

MT screens 'Dybbuk'

By John Monaghan
special writer

In Jewish folklore, dybbuk means ghost — the tormented soul of a person who died before his or her time. A 1937 Polish film about hassidic spirits makes its own haunting return to Ann Arbor's Michigan Theater next weekend in a newly restored print.

"The Dybbuk" first surfaced as a play, written by S. Ansky between 1912-1917 and based on folk tales he collected during travels throughout small villages in Eastern Europe. It has since become the most widely produced play in Jewish theater.

Michael Waszynski worked with F.W. Murnau and Stanislawski and directed some 25 other films before tackling "The Dybbuk" in 1937. This accounts for both the German Expressionist imagery and understated performances from his talented troupe of actors.

This dybbuk is a young student, Khonnon (Leon Lieghoff), scorned by love. He asks for the hand of the beautiful Leah (Lili Liliana), betrothed to him at birth. Leah's father, forgetting the promise he made to Khonnon's father, insists that she marry a wealthy man instead.

Khonnon turns to mystic rituals and Satan worship to change his fate, only to die in the process.

The film links the everyday spiritual and even supernatural aspects of Jewish life. Leah visits the graveyard to ask her dead mother to attend her wedding. She even invites Khonnon.

He shows up — his spirit anyway — and magically enters her body. In one of the film's more bizarre sequences, astonished wedding guests look on as Leah dances in a trance-like state with a spectral hooded figure.

SCREEN SCENE

CENTER FOR JAPANESE STUDIES. Lorch Hall, 909 Monroe, Ann Arbor. Call 474-6247 for information. (Free) "Sancho the Bailiff" (Japan — 1954), 7 p.m. Nov. 10. When a family separates, a brother and sister suffer under the harsh rule of Sancho the bailiff. As part of the center's annual tribute to rare Japanese films.

CINEMA GUILD. Various locations on the University of Michigan campus. Call 924-0227 for information. (\$2.50 single, \$12.50 double feature) "Panther Panchali" (India — 1955), 7 and 9 p.m. Nov. 9 in Lorch Hall, 909 Monroe. Indian director Satyajit Ray's gripping film debut is a realistic story of a woman living in poverty with her son. The first of Ray's celebrated "Apu Trilogy."

"Medicals — The Gang's All Here" (USA — 1943), 7 p.m. Nov. 10 in the Modern Language Building Auditorium 3, 812 Washington. Busby Berkeley's madcap musical with Alice Faye, Benny Goodman and Carmen Miranda as the "Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat." Big fun. With "Follow the Fleet" (USA — 1936), 9 p.m., teaming Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers with memorable Irving Berlin songs, including "Let's Face the Music and Dance."

"The Prodigal Daughter" (France — 1988), 7, 8:45 and 10:25 p.m. Nov. 11 in Lorch Hall. Another in a series of films from understated French director Jacques Dailion.

DETROIT FILM SOCIETY. Detroit Public Library, 5201 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 833-4448 for information. (\$25 membership, \$13 students and senior citizens)

Cooper and Tracy in "Captains Courageous" (USA — 1937), 7 p.m. Nov. 10-11.

The supernatural aspects are occasionally handled with camera tricks like the mysterious Messenger who appears out of nowhere to remark on the actions occurring on the screen. Leah's transformation, however, is depicted by a subtle drop in her voice.

The film also features popular Yiddish actor Max Bozyk as the comic servant Note. His widow, Reizl, played Amy Irving's grandmother in "Crossing Delancey."

A European hit upon release, "The Dybbuk" screened in New York and toured metropolitan American cities in 1938. A year later, with Poland ravaged by World War II, original negatives of the film were destroyed.

The film has been available since, but only in incomplete and badly washed out prints.

The restored print, funded by the National Center for Jewish Film, arrives after five years of painstaking detective work. It's comprised of five different prints from the United States, Australia, Canada and England. Each provided important footage, including the rare exorcism scene that caps the film.

Those who have seen the 123-minute version during recent runs in New York and Boston call it the most artistic and gripping of early Yiddish films.



Astonished wedding guests look on as Leah dances in a trance-like state with a spectral hooded figure in "The Dybbuk."

Spencer Tracy stars as a Portuguese fisherman who takes a snooty rich kid (Fredric March) under his wing. Followed by "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town" (USA — 1936), Frank Capra's charming story of a simple man (Gary Cooper) who inherits millions of dollars and wants to give it all away. Jean Arthur co-stars.

DETROIT FILM THEATRE. Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave. Detroit. Call 832-2730 for information. (\$3)

"Tribute to Josephine Baker" starting at 7 p.m. Nov. 10. The St. Louis cabaret performer at the height of her fame in France. Her best films, "Zou Zou" (France — 1934) and "Pinissima Tam Tam" (France — 1935) have been released in new 35mm prints.

"High School Confidential" (USA — 1958), 9:30 p.m. Nov. 11. Jerry Lee Lewis stars in this film at a fevered pitch, performing the title song from the back of a flatbed truck. The rest of the film belongs to Russ Tamblyn, an undercover narcotics agent breaking a deadly high school drug ring. With incredible Mamie Van Doren as his sexy "aunt." Shown in wide screen.

"La Dolce Vita" (Italy — 1960), 5 p.m. Nov. 12. Fellini's epic odyssey stars Marcello Mastroianni as a shallow Roman trash journalist. Still deliciously entertaining and poignant, shown here in a rare wide screen print.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY. 16301 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 624-2390 for information. (Free) "Starmans" (USA — 1984), 7 p.m. Nov. 6. John Carpenter's welcome departure from blood and gory horror films is a sweet story of a handsome alien (Jeff Bridges) who commandeers a young

woman (Karen Allen) to take him back to his ship.

LIVONIA MALL CINEMA. 29415 Seven Mile, Livonia. Call 476-1166 for information. (Free)

"Julie" (USA — 1956), 10 a.m. Nov. 7. A woman is hunted by a psychopathic husband in this tense thriller, starring Doris Day and Louis Jordan. Kicking off a month-long tribute to the popular singer/actress.

MICHIGAN THEATRE. 16301 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. For information, call 669-8397. (4 regular and \$2.25 students and senior citizens)

"Little Vera" (USSR — 1988), Nov. 6-12 (call for show times). Natalya Negoda stars as a young woman at her wits' end in a dead end industrial town. This gritty and revealing look at Soviet life is the most controversial and exciting film since glasnost.

"The Quiet Man" (USA — 1952), 7 p.m. Nov. 7-8. John Wayne's understated performance as a boxer who returns to his native Ireland. Continuing the theater's tribute to director John Ford.

"The Dybbuk" (Poland — 1937), 8 p.m. Nov. 11, 3 and 5:30 p.m. Nov. 12. A newly released print of the 1937 Yiddish-language film about a scorned lover, a dybbuk, who returns from the dead and invades the body of his beloved.

TELE-AIDS. 1540 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 963-3918 for information. (\$2.50 for adults, \$2.50 students and senior citizens)

"War Requiem" (Britain — 1988), 5:30 and 7:30 p.m. Nov. 8-11-4. Laurence Olivier's final film, chronicling the creation of Benjamin Britten's celebrated oratorio, commissioned in 1962. A Detroit premier.

— John Monaghan

temporary problems in municipal administration.

RENE REALIZES he must do something to corrupt Francois so he can get along with his business — shaking down the neighborhood and his girlfriend.

His girlfriend, Simone (Grace de Capitani), a retired hooker who is constantly enlightened about men, if not about horses, sets up Francois with a lady of the night, Natasha (Regine). The concept here is that Natasha will corrupt Francois, who will then stop hampering Rene's scams.

The plot works, even better than Simone or Rene expected, but in several different ways. The Gaille flavor is there in full force. "My New Partner" is a well-told tale guaranteed to delight all.

HAVE YOU ever wondered what's behind the ailes and ailes of lurid, suggestive video cassette covers? Have you ever leaped through a 35-page Cannon Film advertisement in Variety and imagined the sensational experience of the heroes and heroines of those impossible film worlds?

From the highest ecstasy to the grim and grisly ancient dungeons,

it's all there — at least in the advertisements. Although Golan and Globes Cannon Films has gone down the financial tubes, Monaghan Golan has resurfaced as the 21st Century Film Corporation (see "The Movies" review of "Phantom of the Opera").

Whether Cannon or 21st Century, none of the exaggerated, tantalizing promises are missing from the ad copy. It's just that anticipation is far greater than realization.

"Master of Dragonard III" (Colo., 1981, R, 92 minutes) — left over from Cannon Films — is advertised as containing "the savage passions of a land enslaved." It turns out to contain the rather trite adolescent fantasies of inept scriptwriters, the usual big-budget B-movie.

This time it's the story of 18th century St. Joseph's Island in the Caribbean, complete with obligatory pirates, rape, miscegenation, torture, frontal nudity, graphic sexuality and the old-good-guys-storming-the-castle routine.

What is surprising is that it stars Oliver Reed ("Oliver") the "Three Musketeers" as the evil Captain Shanks, noted songstress Eartha Kitt as the mistress of the local bordello,

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