

## MOVING PICTURES

## 'Men Don't Leave:' Just a Hollywood soap opera

Soap opera on film may be the new wave of the '90s. First "Stella" gives up everything for her daughter's happiness, then the Widow Iris (teaches Stanley to read. Now, in "Men Don't Leave" (B, PG-13, 100 minutes), another widow, Beth Macaulay (Jessica Lange), copes with economic woe and raises two sons, Chris (Chris O'Donnell) and Matt (Charlie Korsmo), after her husband, John (Tom Mason), is killed on a construction accident.

In several carefully structured sequences as the film opens, Beth is portrayed as the stereotypical, helpless mother while living but macho hubby-father, John, wrestles with the younger son, Matt, and is a buddy-buddy/one-of-the-boys with teenage Chris. If soap operas are characterized by simple, emotional melodrama, "Men Don't Leave" is off to a good start.

Having been set-up thusly, Beth has a much tougher struggle and the room for growth of character is greater. That seems to be the pattern for Lange's roles of late, in "The Music Box," for which she received a best actress nomination, she is a divorced attorney with a young son, forced to defend her father on war crime charges.

As well, in "Everybody's All-American," "Country" and "Sweet Dreams" Lange explores one facet or another of the female role to mature and accept responsibility as her man falls her in one sense or another. After a while, this pattern of dramatic roles tends to appear as a dramatic political position.

That is not to say they weren't fine performances by Lange; they were, but they are repellent unlike the strength and diversity of her roles in "The Postman Always Rings Twice," "Frances" and "Tootsie."

IN ANY EVENT, after John Macaulay's death, the family begins to disintegrate. Beth and the boys sell the house and move to Baltimore where their problems mount. Chris



the movies  
**Dan Greenberg**

meets a X-ray technician, Jody (Joan Cusack) in the elevator and that chance encounter evolves so that Chris leaves "home" and moves into Jody's apartment.

Matt hangs out with Winston Buckley (Cory Carter) whose family gradually is substituted in Matt's life for his own. Meanwhile, Beth has gotten a job in an upscale food store and is getting a relationship going with an unusual musician, Charles Simon (Arliss Howard).

So there you have enough plot material for at least 13 maudlin episodes. The Baltimore apartment settings are pretty sterile, certainly not gritty enough for the Macaulay's down-side status. The film mostly is slow-paced although there are a couple of energetic moments that bring things together, particularly the polka party and whenever Jody takes charge.

Fortunately, the occasional moments of energy and strong supporting performances, particularly Chris O'Donnell, Charlie Korsmo and Joan Cusack, pull the whole thing together. After a while, "Men Don't Leave" grows on you. Have a good cry.

Hardly worth mentioning is "Basket Case 2" (\*), a film about a disturbing descent into madness. No doubt, "abnormal" describes the film as well as the characters. For the blood and guts fans, Rutger Hauer and Joan Chen are opening this week in "The Blood of Heroes" (\*)(R).

**STILL PLAYING:**  
"All Dogs Go to Heaven" (B+) (G) 90 minutes.  
Well-known voices back this animated

## 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

story about Charlie the German Shepherd and his doggy pals.

"Always" (B)(PG) 110 minutes.  
Sometimes poignant, sometimes sappy story of airborne fire fighter who returns from death as a spirit.

"Back to the Future Part II" (B+) (PG) 90 minutes.

All your favorite time-travelers are in other dimensions once again.

"Born on the Fourth of July" (A) (R) 144 minutes.

Touching, graphically disturbing, poignant, frightening autobiography of Tom Kovic (Tom Cruise), a paraplegic Viet Vet.

"Courage Mountain" (A+) (PG) 100 minutes.

Heidi's story retold in an exciting, entertaining film.

"Crimes and Misdemeanors" (A+) (PG-13) 100 minutes.

Woody Allen at his best in this romantic comedy about family life with all its joy and sadness.

"Driving Miss Daisy" (A) (PG) 100 minutes.

Fine acting highlights personal drama of Jewish widow (Jessica Tandy) chauff-



jeered by a black man (Morgan Freeman) set against southern changes from 1948-1972.

"Eternals: A Love Story" (R).  
Man emotionally involved with second wife and mistress is distressed when his first wife - presumed dead in the Holocaust - turns up.

"Flashback" (B)(R) 105 minutes.  
Lightweight entertainment about 60s radical (Dennis Hopper) on his way to jail under guard of 80s yuppie FBI Agent (Nedra Seater).

"Glory" (A)(R) 110 minutes.

The glory of the first black infantry regiment during the Civil War is captured in this outstanding film.

"Hard to Kill" (\*) (R)

Martial arts film.

"Heart Condition" (B-)(R) 95 minutes.

Racist detective (Bob Hoskins) receives heart transplant from black donor whose spirit turns up to help solve crime.

"Henry V" (unrated).  
Kenneth Branagh's superb new adaptation of Shakespeare's play. The director stars in the title role.

"Intervist Affairs" (B-)(R) 80 minutes.  
Cop show never fulfills its initial promise.

"The Little Mermaid" (A) (G) 80 minutes.

Disney animation of Hans Christian Andersen tale of mermaid in love with human.

"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.

"Loose Cannons" (C+) (R) 85 minutes.  
Two whoa detectives, Gene Hackman and Dan Aykroyd, with a few screws loose, are occasionally funny.

"Madhouse" (Z-) (PG-13) 85 minutes.  
Ridiculous, exaggerated beyond belief, story about house guests. Neither funny nor entertaining.

"The Music Box" (C) (R) 123 minutes.

A shadow of doubt flaws this statement about the terror and brutality of the Holocaust. Jessica Lange stars as attorney defending her father against war-crime charges.

"Revenge" (D) (R) 126 minutes.

Trite plot contrivances and weak script destroy this story of revenge.

## ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

## 'Train' rolls into the DFT

By John Monaghan  
special writer

In the opening third of "Mystery Train," a young Japanese couple rolls into a dilapidated train station in downtown Memphis. Their quest - to visit the rock'n'roll shrines of Graceland and Sun Studios.

Memphis, Elvis Presley's hometown, is the physical and emotional hub of writer/director Jim Jarmusch's latest film. Playing this weekend at the Detroit Film Theatre, this may be his most exciting work yet.

Jarmusch himself has pointed out that "Mystery Train" is the final installment in a trio of films, starting with "Stranger Than Paradise" in 1984 and followed by "Down By Law" in 1986. All three have a somewhat - with foreign-born characters embracing the more bizarre aspects of Americana.

Aside from the innocent Jun and Mitoko (Masatoshi Nagase and Youki Kuroki), there's also a white widow (Nicoletta Braschi) who gets stranded en route from Rome to Chicago and an Englishman on the lam.

They all end up on the same night in the same fleabag hotel, where the radio is chained to the nightstand and a portrait of Elvis hangs over the headboard.

THE DESK clerk is wonderfully underplayed by Screamin' Jay Hawkins whose recording of "I Put a Spell on You" played a major role in "American Graffiti." As an added in-joke, the voice of Tom Waits (from "Down By Law") introduces Elvis oldies on the local radio station.

Settled in for the night, Jun and Mitoko aren't at all disturbed by their grungy surroundings. They spread and reorganize the contents of their ingeniously packed suitcase on the carpeting.

The Italian woman meanwhile gets fed a line (and almost believes it) from a local character who claims to have recently spotted Elvis. Then she shares a room with a neurotic, verbally abusive woman who has just broken up with her boyfriend.

The sound of a single gunshot links

the first two stories with the third, in which Joe Strummer (formerly of The Clash) plays a jobless factory worker nicknamed Elvis because of his shaggy sideburns. He and two other men hide out in the hotel.

Quirky touches and deadpan humor distinguish "Mystery Train" as a Jim Jarmusch film. There's slow, intentionally pointless stretches of dialogue about everything from "Lost in Space" to whether Elvis is really greater than Carl Perkins.

JUN AND Mitoko are led through Tom Studios by a fast-talking gum-chewing guide. They can't understand a word.

This is Jarmusch's first film in color and he employs a vivid palette. The red in Sean Penn's Jay's jacket and Mitoko's T-shirt and red plastic suitcase burst with color against the dingy Memphis background.

Jarmusch's first two films have been criticized because they look and feel so much the same. There's no mistaking "Mystery Train" as anything but an intensely original work.

## SCREEN SCENE

DETROIT SCIENCE CENTER, 5020 John R, Detroit. Call 577-8400 for information. (R2-35).

"Seasons" (playing through April 30) employs the center's famed Omnimax screens to take viewers on a mammoth ferris wheel ride in summer, into the heart of a rainbow after a fall shower and across icy waters in winter.

DETROIT FILM THEATRE, Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward, Detroit. Call 833-2323 for information. (R)

"Mystery Train" (USA - 1989, 7 and 9:30 p.m. March 2-3 and 5, 7 and 9 p.m. March 4. Jim Jarmusch, the director of "Stranger Than Paradise" and "Down By Law," creates a completely engaging look at the lives of three different sets of people who spend the night in a fleabag Memphis hotel. With Joe Strummer, Screamin' Jay Hawkins and the ghost of Elvis Presley.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY, 16301 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-2330 for information. (free)  
"Angel and the Badman" (USA - 1947), 7 p.m. Feb. 26. In one of his best roles, John Wayne plays an injured gun man nursed back to health by a Quaker maiden (Gail Russell). More or less made as "Winnetou."

LIVONIA MALL, Seven Mile at Middlebelt, Livonia. Call 476-1166 for information. (free)  
"Buffalo Bill and the Indians or Sitting Bull's History Lesson" (USA - 1976), 10

a.m. Feb. 27. A quirky look at the life of famed Western hero (Paul Newman) as told by director Clint Eastwood. Concluding the mall's month-long tribute to actor Paul Newman.

MICHIGAN THEATRE, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call 668-8397 for information. (R) general, \$3.25 for students and senior citizens.

"Dawn of the Dead" (USA - 1978), 4 p.m. Feb. 27-28. George Romero's sequel to "Night of the Living Dead" creates an even more offbeat, sometimes humorous exercise in horror. This time a group of survivors battle zombies in a shopping mall. Funny thing is the creatures don't act much different than when they were alive.

"Depeche Mode" (USA - 1989), 9:45 p.m. Feb. 28. The fashionable rock group captured in a concert film directed by the legendary D.A. Pennebaker.

SOUTHFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY, 26000 Evergreen, Southfield. Call 354-9100 for information. (\$2.50 membership)

"Funny Face" (USA - 1957), 7:30 p.m. March 1. Fred Astaire and Audrey Hepburn team up in this stylized musical about a fashion photographer who turns a young woman into a chic Paris model. Directed by Stanley Donen, with a knockout George C. Scott score. Shown on large screen video.

TELE-ARTS, 1540 Woodward, Detroit. Call 953-3818 for information. (\$3.50, \$2.50 students and senior citizens).

"Machine Dreams" (West Germany - 1986), 7:30 p.m. Feb. 28. A documentary look at man's love affair with the machine. Including profiles of Marvin Minsky, "the father of artificial intelligence," and Shunichi Minato, the Japanese inventor of a Marilyn Monroe robot. (A City-Wide Cinema presentation)  
"Penn and Teller Get Killed" (USA - 1989), March 2-4 (not for show time). The popular humorists in a feature directed by Arthur Penn ("Bonnie and Clyde"). When Penn states in a talk show someone is trying to murder him, suspicion inevitably falls on Teller.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN, Room 113 Classroom Administration Building, Evergreen at US-12, Dearborn. Call 593-5000 for information. (Free).

"The Adventures of Baron Munchausen" (USA - 1989), 7:30 p.m. March 7-8. From director Terry Gilliam comes this inventive epic adventure about a baronial teller of tall tales who waltzes with Venusa, gets blown out of a cannon and even spends some time in the belly of a monster fish. Great fun.

Abbott and Costello - A double feature teaming the popular comedians with Universal movie monsters, starting at 8 p.m. March 2. In the surprisingly clever "Meet Frankenstein" (USA - 1948), they encounter the wolfman (Lon Chaney Jr.) and Dracula (Bela Lugosi) as well. With "Meet the Mummy" (USA - 1955).

## WIN A TRIP TO HOLLYWOOD

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1. If more than one entry contains the most correct winners, the Grand Prize winner and subsequent prizes will be selected by random drawing.
2. Entries should be mailed to the address listed above the entry blank, deposited in the entry boxes in the lobby of any AMC theatre or at any Observer & Eccentric office.
3. Employees of The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, AMC Theatres, Budget Rent A Car or Your Man Tours and immediate families are not eligible.
4. Entry deadline is midnight Friday, March 23, 1990.
5. Limit one entry per person.
6. No purchase necessary to enter.
7. Judges decisions are final.
8. Winners will be announced Monday, April 9, in The Observer & Eccentric STREET SCENE section.
9. You must be 18 or older to enter.

**OSCAR CONTEST ENTRY BLANK—CLIP AND MAIL TO:**  
AMC Theatres, 26028 Greenfield, Suite 411, Oak Park, MI 48237

**BEST PICTURE**

☐ Born on the Fourth of July

☐ Dead Poets Society

☐ Driving Miss Daisy

☐ Field of Dreams

☐ My Left Foot

**BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR**

☐ Danny Aiello (Do the Right Thing)

☐ Dan Aykroyd (Driving Miss Daisy)

☐ Marlon Brando (A Dry White Season)

☐ Martin Landau (Crimes and Misdemeanors)

☐ Denzel Washington (Glory)

**BEST ACTRESS**

☐ Isabelle Adjani (Camille Claudel)

☐ Paulina Collins (Shirley Valentine)

☐ Jessica Lange (Music Box)

☐ Michelle Pfeiffer (The Fabulous Baker Boys)

☐ Jessica Tandy (Driving Miss Daisy)

**BEST ACTOR**

☐ Kenneth Branagh (Henry V)

☐ Tom Cruise (Born on the Fourth of July)

☐ Daniel Day-Lewis (My Left Foot)

☐ Morgan Freeman (Driving Miss Daisy)

☐ Robin Williams (Dead Poets Society)

**BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS**

☐ Brenda Fricker (My Left Foot)

☐ Anjelica Huston (Enemies, A Love Story)

☐ Lena Olin (Enemies, A Love Story)

☐ Julia Roberts (Steel Magnolias)

☐ Dianne Wiest (Parenthood)

**BEST DIRECTOR**

☐ Oliver Stone (Born on the Fourth of July)

☐ Woody Allen (Crimes and Misdemeanors)

☐ Peter Weir (Dead Poets Society)

☐ Kenneth Branagh (Henry V)

☐ Jim Sheridan (My Left Foot)

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