

## MOVING PICTURES



Sally Field plays Betty Mahmoody, an American woman who makes a daring escape from Iran where with her young daughter, played by

Sheila Rosenthal, she is held against her will by her husband in "Not Without My Daughter."

## 'Daughter:' A Chronicle of remarkable courage

Despite daily tension and the many concerns residents of our area face, by comparison with much of the world we are secure and comfortable. "Not Without My Daughter" (A, PG-13, 115 minutes) dispels any doubt about that premise, particularly for women here who enjoy civil rights unparalleled in many countries.

The film chronicles the story of Betty Mahmoody, played perfectly by Sally Field. Mahmoody, a former resident of Albania who now lives in Owosso, was married to an Iranian doctor (Alfred Molina). Although he had lived in this country for 20 years, he maintained close contact with his family in Iran.

In 1984, in order to please her husband Moody, she agreed to a two-week vacation in Iran so that he could see his family. They took their then five-year-old daughter Mahtob (Sheila Rosenthal) with them.

When the two weeks ended, Moody refused to return and became extremely abusive. Under Iranian law, Betty had no rights as we know them, and Moody could beat her with impunity, lock her up and separate her from her daughter.

The only escape possible from this life was divorce which, again under Iranian law, meant Betty would have to leave Iran without her daughter who automatically reverted to her father's custody.

There was one alternative — illegal (by Iranian law) escape through an interesting underground over the mountains into Turkey. Betty ended two years of captivity in Iran by just such an arduous trip, returning to the United States in 1986.

"NOT WITHOUT MY DAUGHTER" is an excellent chronicle of her remarkable courage. Since her return to this country, she has become an outspoken advocate of the rights of children involved in international divorce/custody cases.

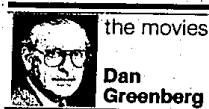
The film is powerful and poignant, especially with Field's ability to project so realistically the seemingly contradictory qualities of strength and vulnerability. As a matter of fact, that is just how it was. Mahmoody was extremely vulnerable in Iran, but she summoned great personal strength to escape with her daughter and return to this country.

"Not Without My Daughter" speaks eloquently about the terrible tragedy thousands of American families undergo when one parent wants to take children overseas to live while the other parent wishes to remain at home.

It also is a powerful film which effectively and realistically portrays the tragedy and terror of children torn by parents from different cultures and clashing cultures.

**ANOTHER LONG-STANDING** international political problem area. Northern Ireland, doesn't fare well at all in "Hidden Agenda" (D, R, 110 minutes), a rather long and very boring "talkumentary." Despite its advertising to the contrary, it is not a political thriller.

Rather, "Hidden Agenda," preaches at great length and the only screen thrill is "The End." The film contends that the "people" and IRA revolutionaries are good while



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                     |

the British establishment is evil.

While such political speculation is interesting, filmmakers need to do more than preach political viewpoints. Every film must be entertaining in order to attract attention. Without that quality, ideas are lost — and so are audiences. Inevitably viewers and critics alike will compare "Awakenings" (B, PG-13, 121 minutes) to "Charly" and "Rainman." While such comparisons are commonplace, in this case they signal a lack of originality in style and presentation, even though the film is well-done.

The major bone of contention here is that "Awakenings" has no fresh insights, no brilliant new techniques, nothing to distinguish it from other films. In the final analysis, despite fine performances and excellent production design, "Awakenings" is nowhere near as good as it ought to be.

Dr. Malcolm Sawyer (Robin Williams) is a shy, retiring research scientist who was involved in what sounds like a Monty Python comedy routine — extracting chemicals from five tons of earthworms. It couldn't be done so now he needs a job and turns up as a psychiatrist at the Bainbridge Hospital for chronic patients in the Bronx. The film is based on a true story.

Dr. Sawyer becomes obsessed with helping catatonic patients who, he soon discovers, developed their catatonia after bouts with encephalitis. Chief among these patients is Leonard Lowe (Robert DeNiro).

As good an actor as Robin Williams is, his shy, bumbling routine is an obvious act through which Williams' sophisticated persona constantly emerges.

AT THE SAME time, DeNiro's all the moves down pat from catatonic to suave to nervous-spastic and

back to catatonic — but somehow humanity is missing from his technically excellent performance. It's not clear whether that's his fault or whether Director Penny Marshall's vision is flawed. Whatever the reason, the bottom line is pedestrian humanism.

In a film, starring two technically perfect principles, only three ladies in support project the sympathy that the film lacks — Julie Kavner as nurse Eleanor Costello, Ruth Nelson as Leonard's mother and Penelope Ann Miller as the girl, Paula, to whom Leonard is attracted.

All three have the emotion of great films. Unfortunately, their roles are limited — and so is "Awakenings."

### STILL PLAYING:

"Almost an Angel" (C, PG, 95 minutes). A slow, elderly Paul Hogan doesn't make as a groundbreaking angel.

"Boatline of the Vealies" (C+, R, 120 minutes). Unbelievable caricatures and jumbled sub-plots detract from discussion of the politics of justice.

"Child's Play 2" (\*, R). "Ducky" returns.

"Dances With Wolves" (A, PG-13, 180 minutes). Kevin Costner's magnificent ode to brotherhood and brutality on America's western frontier during and after the Civil War.

"Edward Scissorhands" (C, PG-13, 100 minutes). Unusual young man with scissors instead of hands shakes up the suburbs after moving in with the Avon lady and her family.

"Ghost" (A, PG-13, 105 minutes). Banker's ghost (Patrick Swayze) hangs around after life to protect loved one and "Rainman." Spiritualist (Whoopi Goldberg) helps him and this romantic/comedy/thriller.

"The Godfather, Part III" (C+, R, 161 minutes). Disappointing repeat of formula established in Parts I and II albeit slick production and winning.

"Havana" (B, R, 135 minutes). Robert Redford is high-stakes poker player in Havana just before Cuba became Castro's.

"Home Alone" (B, PG, 100 minutes). Engaging comedy about young boy (Macaulay Culkin) left at home by accident.

"Jacob's Ladder" (A, R, 115 minutes). Sensational, riveting film experience redepicts and rewards in story of Jacob Singer's (Tim Robbins) re-entry to civilian life after Vietnam trauma.

"Kluge's Cop" (B, PG-13, 105 minutes). Schwarzenegger is macho and the kids are cute but the plot isn't.

"Look Who's Talking Too" (F, PG-13, 75 minutes). Stupid sequel has little to offer.

"Mermaids" (A, PG-13, 110 minutes). Fine romantic comedy features Cher as an unusual matriarch. Winona Ryder is excellent as her teenage daughter.

"Misery" (C+, R, 100 minutes). Story of writer and obsessed fan waits back and forth from psychotic thriller to slacker eye.

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## ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

### DFT continues with 'Cyrano'

By John Monaghan  
special writer

With more than 70 films to his credit, French actor Gerard Depardieu deserves the title "the hardest working man in show business." He's certainly no stranger to the Detroit Film Theatre, which has premiered many of his films.

One of Depardieu's latest, "Cyrano de Bergerac," continues its two-weekend run at the Detroit Institute of Art's popular film program. Cyrano is "the role Depardieu was born to play," DFT director Elliot Wilhelm said.

"He's not traditionally good looking," Wilhelm said. "In fact, he

didn't need that much makeup because he's got such a big nose anyway. He doesn't don the kind of incredibly long nose that Jose Ferrer wore when he played Cyrano."

THE REST of the DFT season, which continues through early May, focuses on premieres from faraway places. Most are offbeat titles from (for now) little-known directors.

"Tilal (The Law)" (Feb. 1-2) is the latest from Indrissa Ouedrigo, the African director of "Yabba." In it, a young man returns from two years away to discover that his fiancée has become his father's second wife. "Baxter," a surreal canine come-

dy from France, views the world through the eyes of a supremely ugly and highly opinionated pit bull. It plays April 5-7.

"Superstar: The Life and Times of Andy Warhol" (April 19-21) contains never before seen documentary footage of the late artist, along with interviews from Lou Reed, Dennis Hopper, Liza Minnelli and Shelley Long. Clips from Warhol's films and his legendary appearance on TV's "The Love Boat" are among the highlights.

THE DFT evening screenings have moved away from older titles. Please turn to Page 4

## SCREEN SCENE

DETROIT FILM THEATRE, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 832-2730 for information. (\$4)

"Cyrano de Bergerac" (France — 1990). Jan. 18-20 (call for show times). Gerard Depardieu stars as the romantic hero with a large schnoz who woos a fair maiden (Anne Bouchet) from behind the scenes. This acclaimed new version of Edmond Rostand's play was directed by Jean-Paul Rappeneau.

DETROIT SCIENCE CENTER, 5200 John R., Detroit. Call 577-8400 for information. (\$5 museum admission includes ticket, \$2.4 children under 12)

"To the Limit" (USA — 1990), through April 1991. The latest Omnibus spectacular interests amazing athletic feats with an analysis of how muscles and blood meet the

challenge. Not intended for people with claustrophobia, the movie becomes a first-person "Fantastic Voyage" into the human body.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY, 13671 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-2330. (free)

"Dynasty" (USA — 1976). 7 p.m. Jan. 14. Stacy Keach and Sarah Miles star in drama.

LIVONIA MALL, Seven Mile and Middlebelt roads, Livonia. Call 476-1166 for information. (free)

"The Two Mrs. Carrolls" (USA — 1947). 10 a.m., 1 p.m., 5 p.m. Actually completed in 1945, this mediocre melodrama casts Humphrey Bogart as an insane artist who paints his wives as "angels of death" before murdering them. Barbara Stanwyck plays his next intended victim. As part of a

month-long tribute to Bogart.

MAPLE THEATRE, 4135 W. Maple, Birmingham. Call 855-9091 for information. (\$6, \$3.50 twilight)

"The Sheltering Sky" (USA — 1990), call for show times John Malkovich and Deborah Winger star in this love story, the latest from writer/director Bernardo Bertolucci.

MICHIGAN THEATRE, 16301 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. 665-8397. (\$4.50, \$3.50 students/seniors)

"The Icicle Thief" (Italy — 1989), through Jan. 17 (call for show times). Comic filmmaker Maurizio Nichetti intersperses television with reality in this surreal slapstick comedy. Nichetti plays a film director whose masterpiece is transformed by com-

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## ANOTHER VIEW

By M.B. Dillon  
staff writer

Hemdale Film Corp. gave us the Academy Award-winning "Platoon," an explosive indictment of the Vietnam War. Now it has released "Hidden Agenda," a chilling political thriller.

In the tradition of "Missing" and "Z," "Hidden Agenda" is a realistic and provocative essay on the political unrest in Northern Ireland in the early 1980s.

THE SPELLBINDING story of "Hidden Agenda" unfolds after the arrival in Belfast of four members of the International League for Civil Liberties, including league secretary Ingrid Jessner (Oscar nominee Frances McDormand) and her fiancé, American lawyer Paul Sullivan (Brad Dourif).

Movie-goers may recognize Dourif and McDormand from their co-starring roles in "Mississippi Burning" as Deputy and Mrs. Bell.

With gritty realism, "Hidden Agenda" — banned in Britain — shows the lengths, not excluding murder, to which a government, its judiciary and its secret service will go.

Awarded the special jury prize at the Cannes Film Festival, "Hidden Agenda" is an important story that "wasn't being told," said British director Ken Loach. "But we couldn't just tell the story of these unexplained shootings in Northern Ireland, because it has become common knowledge that people there are shot instead of being brought to trial."

"THE NORTHERN Ireland shootings and the aborted inquiry into them indicate how Britain operates in Ireland and how the techniques used there have wider implications about how British intelligence operates all over Britain."

Loach, an award-winning and controversial director, has had four of his television documentaries banned in Britain.

The central issue of "Hidden Agenda" is that democracy is often just skin deep," he said. "I hope the film offers a glimpse of the reality behind the parliamentary facade, if only a fictional glimpse. That's what we want people to take from the film."

Loach's partner of 20 years, Manchester-born screenwriter Jim Allen, said he believed he was obligated to

tackle the subject.

In the same way American writers are addressing the legacy of the Vietnam War, Allen said there's a "moral obligation for British writers to deal with Northern Ireland."

"It would be obscene for us not to. I want people to be aware of what's happening in Northern Ireland because what happens there has implications for Britain and the rest of the world. A lot of people are being killed there."

HEMDALE HAS made a reputation taking chances on controversial films. Rather than shy away from

controversy, Hemdale executive producer John Daly seems to thrive on it.

At the film's press conference at Cannes, "Hidden Agenda" sparked a heated debate among the filmmakers and British journalists.

Hemdale set a record for consecutive awards won by an independent company after the risky "Platoon" won four Academy Awards, including best picture in 1986. In 1987, the British filmmaker produced "The Last Emperor," winner of nine Academy Awards, including best picture.

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