MOVING PICTURES

Starring as The Five Heartbeats are Leon Harold Nicholas (from left) as J.T., Robert Townsend as Duck, Tico Wells as Choirboy, Harry J. Lennix as Dresser and Michael Wright as Eddie.

'Five Heartbeats' scores with its story line, music

the movies

Dan Greenberg

Between Oscar's big night and Easter weekend, there's not much new film fare but one offering should catch the eyes and, most particularly, the ears of music lovers.

"The Five Heartbeats" (A+, PG-13,) traces the career of a fictious black singing group from New York, whose trials and tribulations before, during and after their rise to stardom in the '60s and '70s' says a lot about the American scene in those years.

Like many groups and artists of the Soul Era, the Heartbeats are victimized by their success. Racism, drugs, groupies and exploitation by a music industry bent on polishing them for white audiences bring on tensions that destroy the group's friendship and comraderie. Their own corrupt recording company turns dreams into mistrust and fear with gangster-like tactics to keep artists in line.

Robert Townsend directed and co-wrote "Heartbeats" along with "In Living Color" producer Keenan Ivory Wayans. Townsend also stars as Duck, the group writer and would-be conscience who strives to maintain their integrity. The other four Heartbeats are Michael Wright, Leon Harold Nicholas, Harry J. Lennix and Tico Wells. Diahann Carroll also appears.

"Heartbeats" is filled with infectious original soul music, which in and of itself should insure the film's success. The original score was written by bassist-composer Stanley Clarke with George Duke and Steve Tyrell as supervising music producers.

"THE FIVE Heartbeats" has all the ingredients of good entertainment: action, drama, romance, comedy, a sensitive story line and great music. If the story doesn't grab you, the music certainly will, and the soundtrack is sure to be a hit. *(Reviewed by Eric Phillips.)*

Let's hear it for the night shift at Target Stores coast to coast where Jim Dodge (Frank Whaley) is employed as a night watchman in "Career Opportunities"(*, PG-13).

This position is his last opportunity to avoid getting thrown out of his parents' home. Among the surprises in store for Jim are the town beauty, Josie McClellan (Jennifer Connelly), and a pair of incompetent thieves (Dermott and Kieran Mulroney).

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

STILL PLAYING:

"Awakenings" (B, PG-13, 121 minutes).

Robin Williams and Robert DeNiro as doctor and catatonic patient call to mind too many other films. The doctor's special care and sensitivity lead to temporary recovery but the film lacks the spark expected from these talented actors.

"Book of Love" (B, PG-13, 90 minutes).

Nostalgic look at high school in the '50s and the problems of adolescence in those "good ole days."

"Cadence" (C+, PG-13, 95 minutes).

Unrealistic, cliched story about unruly soldier (Charlie Sheen) in the stockade.

"Class Action" (C+, R, 100 minutes).

Father-daughter attorneys, Gene Hackman and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, are not a team.

"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.

"The Doors" (C, R, 135 minutes).

Oliver Stone's overly long, repetitious story of Jim Morrison and rock musical group, "The Doors." Excessive attention to Morrison's drug, booze and sex problems are neither attractive nor entertaining. Doubtful, as well, that it will serve as a cautionary lesson.

"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 (Demi Moore). Spiritualist (Whoopi Goldberg) helps him and this romantic comedy/thriller.

"GoodFellas" (B+, R, 145 minutes).

Martin Scorsese's intense, compelling saga of three mobsters returns after receiving a half-dozen Oscar nominations. Despite good acting and fine technical values, the film is to be condemned for glorifying vicious and violent gangsters.

"Guilty by Suspicion" (A, PG-13, 100 minutes).

Robert DeNiro's superb performance energizes this blend of fact and fiction describing the terrible pain caused by anti-communist hysteria inflicted on Hollywood in the '50s.

"The Hard Way" (B, R, 105 minutes).

James Wood as tough cop doing comedy doesn't match Michael J. Fox's excellent spoof of movies and movie people in this entertaining, unusual buddy film.

Please turn to Page 4

Frank Whaley stars as Jim Dodge, an over imaginative young man, happily embarking on his first night as a custodian at a Target store in "Career Opportunities."

ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

'Baxter:' A dog's eye view

By John Monaghan
special writer

"I am Baxter the dog who thinks that my life would doubtless be much easier if I didn't need the company of man. Cats and birds, they don't need anyone. They trust nothing, birds especially. Perhaps one day I'll kill one."

Baxter, the very philosophical pit bull in the French film of the same name thinks such things as he travels from one owner to another over his confused canine life. His bizarre story unreels this weekend at the Detroit Film Theatre.

We don't see much of his first owner, a sadistic breeder who gives the dog to his mother-in-law (Lisa Delamare) to keep her quiet. The dog grows weary of the senile woman, especially after she overcomes her initial fear ("I could tell it immediately, just by her scent.") and grows morbidly fond of him.

In a section titled "The Happy Days," Baxter resides with young marrieds. The arrival of the couple's first child and a near-fatal "accident" leads to a final owner, a young boy (Francois Driancourt) who apparently shares the dog's distaste for other humans.

THIS IS not your typical episode of "Timmie and Lassie" by any stretch. The boy has developed an obsession with the final days of Hitler and Eva Braun and even builds a junkyard bunker where he and Baxter spend much of their free time.

Baxter, oddly enough, finds himself at ease with the boy, whose constant authoritarian commands to sit, heel and attack keep the dog's mind free of troubling notions.

The filmmakers capitalize on the already mysterious qualities of pit

Please turn to Page 4

SCREEN SCENE

DETROIT FILM THEATRE, 5200 Woodward, Detroit. Call 832-2730 for information. ($5)

"Baxter" (France — 1988), 7 and 9:30 p.m. April 5-6 and 7 p.m. April 7. Life as seen through the very opinionated eyes of Baxter, a confused but sensual pit bull. His relationships with a series of owners has plenty to say about the standard role of master and obedient animal. ($5/auditorium)

"Where's My Man Tonight" (USA — 1938), 1 p.m. April 4-7. In this inventive comedy, a young recruit goes AWOL when he hears his girlfriend dedicate a song to his drill sergeant over the radio. By pioneer black director Spencer Williams. As part of an ambitious series of independent African-American films. ($3.50/recital hall)

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

"Young and Innocent" (Britain — 1937), 7 p.m. April 1. A favorite among the early English Hitchcock thrillers, this one about a young woman who becomes involved with a wrongly accused killer on the run. Their fates both hinge on the discovery of a man with a severe eye twitch.

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

"The Manchurian Candidate" (USA — 1962), 10 a.m. April 2. Frank Sinatra lends perhaps his best performance to John Frankenheimer's legendary thriller. He plays a Korean War veteran trying to piece together the strange actions of his friend (Laurence Harvey), which point to a presidential assassination attempt.

MAPLE THEATRE, 4135 W. Maple, Birmingham. Call 855-9090 for information. ($6, $3.50 twilight)

"Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead" (Britain — 1990). Playwright Tom Stoppard, in his first attempt as a director, brings his most famous work to the screen. Gary Oldam and Tim Roth embellish on the lives of minor characters from Shakespeare's "Hamlet." With Richard Dreyfus.

"Mr. and Mrs. Bridge" (USA — 1990) Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward team up once again in this story of a Kansas City family over the course of 25 years. From director James Ivory and producer Ismail Merchant, the team who

Please turn to Page 4

VIDEO VIEWING

By Dan Greenberg
special writer

No fooling, not even today, there's more video than anyone can watch and, in many cases, it's hard to imagine why anyone would want to waste time with poorly produced, low-budget films whose only attraction is sensational point-of-purchase advertising.

Academy Entertainment continues to crank out posters and stand-up cutouts that are more exciting than the films themselves, although occasionally it delivers something adventurous and fairly entertaining, as is the case with its March 21 release of "Crime Lords"(1990, color, R, 96 minutes).

Wayne Crawford and Martin Hewitt are two Los Angeles police officers in trouble with their superiors and hot on the trail of an Oriental car theft ring.

There's plenty of action as the two take off for Hong Kong on their own to clear their names. Location footage, an attractive Dragon Lady and lots of action make this "not bad for TV."

THE SAME cannot be said for another Academy release (April 4), "Alligator Eyes" (1990, color, R, 101 minutes). This features four newcomers in a labored story of two former lovers, a lover without his beloved and a blind girl seeking revenge against her mother's murderer.

Despite some nice Southern scenery, the dialogue and delivery are weak, pretentious, boring and predictable, although Annabelle Larsen in her feature film debut as the blind Pauline shows some promise.

But given the videos available, skipping "Alligator Eyes" will not damage anyone's viewing pleasure.

CONNOISSEUR VIDEO continues to release significant foreign films on video cassette.

This Thursday's schedule includes Hiroshi Teshigahara's "Woman in the Dunes" (1964, black and white, no rating, 123 minutes). This Japanese film won a special jury prize at Cannes and two Oscar nominations (best director and foreign film). While it has been available on video cassette, Connoisseur now has reduced it to $29.95.

At the other end of the scale, Connoisseur announces the May 1 video cassette premiere of Moliere's masterpiece about religious and sexual hypocrisy, "Le Tartuffe" (1984, color, no rating), for $79.95.

Adapted and directed by Gerard Depardieu, currently one of the best-known foreign film stars for his roles in "Green Card," "Cyrano de Bergerac" and "Jean de Florette," the film stars his wife and noted French actor Francois Perior — in French with English subtitles.

SOMEWHERE IN between those two insofar as price and reputation go is Luis Bunuel's "Illusion Travels by Streetcar" (1953, black and white, no rating), which will be on the racks this Thursday.

Bunuel is not well known in this country despite his superb and extensive achievements in motion pictures. From his sensational, experimental short, "The Andalusian Dog," made in 1928 with Salvador Dali, through his 1974, Oscar-nominated "Phantom of Liberty," Bunuel worked in a wide variety of styles and locales.

Winner of the best foreign film Oscar in 1972 for "Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie," Bunuel worked in Mexico during the early '50s when "Illusion" was produced. It's done in a crisp, straightforward, realistic style with an interesting, atmospheric use of black-and-white film.

The plot involves two streetcar conductors who get drunk and take Car 133 for its last ride before it is junked. Beneath that simple plot lurks Bunuel's rapier wit and sharp condemnation of many social evils and foibles.

ABC, ALARM, ALIEN SEX FIEND, ALTERED IMAGES, ANGELIC UPSTARTS, ADAM ANT, ART OF NOISE, AZTEC CAMERA, B-52'S, BAD MANNERS, BANANARAMA, BANGLES, BAUHAUS, ADRIAN BELEW, BELOVED, BIG AUDIO [illegible] COLE, COLOURBOX, CONCRETE BLONDE, JULIAN COPE, ELVIS COSTELLO, [illegible] GABRIEL, GANG OF FOUR, GEAR, GENERAL PUBLIC, GO-BETWEENS, GODFATHERS, ROBERT GORDON, GUADALCANAL DIARY, NINA HAGEN, HEAVEN 17, JOHN HIATT, ROBYN HITCHCOCK, ELVIS HITLER, HOODOO GURUS, HOTHOUSE FLOWERS, HOUSE OF LOVE, HOUSEMARTINS, HUSKER DU, BIL[illegible] GO GIRLS, INXS, [illegible] JAZZ BUTCHER, [illegible] KILLING JOKE, [illegible] ANG, LET'S ACT, [illegible] COLOUR, LONE [illegible] PATROL, LOVG[illegible] ADNESS, MA[illegible] WORKS, [illegible] AND THE MU[illegible] MIDNIGHT O[illegible] SPOTT MO[illegible] OLD, [illegible] ATER [illegible] MARKER, MO[illegible] ADA[illegible] MATICS, PAYOLAS, MICHAEL PENN, [illegible] POGUES, POLICE, IGGY [illegible] PREFAB [illegible] RIMATIVES, PRINCE, PSYCHEDELIC FURS, PUD[illegible] MAGE LTD., PURSUIT OF HA[illegible]NESS, DONNIE [illegible] RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS, LOU R[illegible]D, R.E.M., RE[illegible] THM CORPS, STAN RIDGEWAY, ROBIN ROBERTSON, [illegible] PILE, ROM[illegible] VOID, ROXY MUSIC, SECOND SELF, SEE DICK RUN, SELECTER, [illegible] PISTOLS, SHOES, SHRIEKBACK, SILOS, SIMPLE MINDS, SIOUXS[illegible] AND THE BANSHEES, SKINNY PUPPY, PATTI SMITH, SMITHEREENS, SM[illegible]S, SOFT CELL, SONIC YOUTH, SOUL ASYLUM, SPANDAU BALLET, SPEC[illegible]S, SQUEEZE, STEEL PULSE, STRANGLERS, STRAWBERRY ZOTS, STYLE COUNCIL, SUGARCUBES, SUNDAYS, TALKING HEADS, BRAM TCHAIKOVSKY, TEARDROP EXPLODES, TEARS FOR FEARS, TELEVISION, TEXAS, THAT PETROL EMOTION, THE THE, THOMPSON TWINS, TOM TOM CLUB, TSOL, TUBES, U2, UB40, ULTRA VIVID SCENE, ULTRAVOX, UNDERTONES, UNTOUCHABLES, VELVET UNDERGROUND, VIOLENT FEMMES, WALL OF VOODOO, WA(NOT WA), WATERBOYS, WIRE, WONDER STUFF, WORLD PARTY, X, XTC, YARDBIRDS, YAZ, YELLO, NEIL YOUNG, FRANK ZAPPA, WARREN ZEVON, ETC

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