

MOVING PICTURES



Joyce Urbansky (Glenn Headly) and Cynthia Kellogg (Demi Moore) find their friendship put to the test in the suspense drama, "Mortal Thoughts."

Excellent performances save 'Mortal Thoughts'

"Mortal Thoughts" (B, R, 104 minutes) is one of those films that entertain in spite of itself — and the enjoyment flows from excellent performances, certainly not from the transparent plot and the nagging questions it raises.

Why does Cynthia Kellogg (Demi Moore) voluntarily appear at the local police station to be videotaped confessing she was an accessory after the fact in murdering James Urbansky (Bruce Willis), the abusive husband of her best friend, Joyce (Glenn Headly)?

Why does Cynthia refuse legal counsel and allow Detective John Woods (Harvey Keitel) to badger her as she provides a great deal of damaging information about her best friend?

There aren't a lot of options in answering those questions but "Mortal Thoughts" is still well worth everyone's viewing time because the performances by Moore, Headly and Willis are compelling as Cynthia recounts — in flashback — the doomed Urbansky marriage.

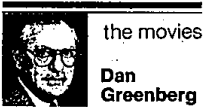
FROM THEIR very first moments, the Urbanskys squabbled as James tormented his bride, even at their wedding feast which had a nice generic, ethnic touch. Willis is a later-day Stanley Kowalski even though that role is now clichéd and "Mortal Thoughts" is a long way from the filmic achievement of "A Streetcar Named Desire."

The girls in the beauty shop, however, are the very best. Moore and Headly are simply excellent in their portrayal of two street-smart cookies, tough but loving, if only given a chance.

Cynthia has what she wants, two children and a decent, faithful man, even though her husband Arthur is somewhat of a nerd and always so busy working that Cynthia's out on the town getting in trouble. She exhibits all too well that inherent will to fall so many of us possess.

The urge to play and the looming, throbbing force of man's worst features, ably represented by Willis' Urbansky, are the seeds of tragedy that blossom all too obviously amidst "Mortal Thoughts."

"Reunion" (F, PG-13) has a screenplay by Harold Pinter to recommend it as well as an important topicality of year when Holocaust Memorial Day reminds the world — only of the awful crimes Nazis committed against Jews — but about the crimes regularly committed against all humanity. Ask the Kurds.



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

JASON ROBARDS is featured in this story of two schoolboys — one Christian, one Jewish — and what happens to their friendship in Hitler's Germany of the 1930s.

The terrible toll of prejudice and racism is also the subject of "Up Against the Wall" (F), a story of Black teenage life.

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

William 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 film lacks spark expected from these talented actors.

"Career Opportunities" (F, PG-13). The night-shift at a Target Store is Jim's last chance. Whoopie!

"Chameleon Street" (F, R). True story of Detroit's William Street who was an impersonator of doctors and other folks.

"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.

"Defending Your Life" (C, PG, 95 minutes).

Unsatisfactory romance in the afterlife as Albert Brooks defends his life and falls in love with Meryl Streep.

"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.

"The Five Heartbeats" (A-, PG-13).

Good entertainment and excellent music in story of fictitious Black singing group.

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

Martin Scorsese's intense, compelling saga of three mobsters returns after receiving 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 anti-communist hysteria inflicted on Hollywood in the '50s.

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

James Woods 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.

"Heaven and Earth" (PG-13).

Japanese Samurai epic.

"Home Alone" (B, PG, 100 minutes).

Engaging comedy about young boy (Macaulay Culkin) left at home by accident.

"If Looks Could Kill" (C+, PG-13).

High school student flunks French but winds up living the life of James Bond.

"Killing Ralph" (B, PG-13, 95 minutes).

Vegas lounge pianist (John Goodman) is in line for British throne in delightful comedy.

ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

'Cry:' Powerful, preachy

By John Monaghan
special writer

"China Cry" is in some ways a true-life remake of "1984," told through the eyes of a woman. And while the grueling story of Sung Neng Yee's nightmare during Communist China in the 1950s shares Orwell's totalitarian fears, its powers are muted by preachiness.

The new film, which plays exclusively at the Star Theatre in Madison Heights, opens in 1941, as the Japanese march in to Shanghai. Sung's pampered childhood is destroyed by low-flying fighter planes and storm troopers who toss her family onto the street.

Sung grows to believe the promises of the Communist government, which frees China from the marauders. Yet the bright, attractive and friendly teenager also desires nylon stockings and the attention of a handsome fellow student who wears Western clothing.

HER FREE spirit and questioning nature don't sit well with the Communists, who subject her to intense interrogation and torture throughout her 20s. They want her to denounce her early Christian teachings, but she only grows stronger in her faith. Her love for her husband is constantly in jeopardy.

"Love is a bourgeois deceit," barks a female interrogator, in between beating the pregnant Sung.

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SCREEN SCENE

DETROIT FILM THEATRE, 5200 Woodward, Detroit. Call 832-2730 for information.

"Open Doors" (Italy — 1990, 7 and 9:30 p.m. April 26-27 and 4 and 7 p.m. April 28. When Italy's regime institutes capital punishment, a judge must grapple with some difficult choices when a notorious triple murder reaches his bench. (R/auditorium).

"Juke Joint" (USA — 1947, 1 p.m. April 25-28. Spencer Williams directed and stars in this comedy about two drifters who blow into Dallas and pass themselves off as "bluejays" for room and board. They eventually gravitate toward

a local social club stocked with wolves and con men. As part of a series of African American independent cinema. (\$3.50/rectal hall).

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

"The On-Boy Incident" (USA — 1943), 7 p.m. April 22. A deputy sheriff and his posse initiate an emotion-ridden search for the supposed murderers of a rancher. Dana Andrews, Henry Fonda and Henry Morgan.

LIVONIA MALL, Seven Mile and Middlebelt roads, Livonia. Call 478-1166 for information. (free).

"Take Me Out to the Ballgame" (USA — 1943), 10 a.m. April 23. Frank Sinatra and Gene Kelly team for an enjoyable Busby Berkeley musical, with shapely Esther Williams taking over the boys' baseball club. As part of a month-long tribute to "Old Blue Eyes."

MAPLE THEATRE, 4135 W. Maple, Birmingham. Call 855-9090 for information. (R, \$3.50 (willigt); call for show

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VIDEO VIEWING

By Dan Greenberg
special writer

Old stuff, new stuff, laser discs, news programs, music video — you name it, it's at your corner video store waiting. Re-priced, high-priced, low-priced and everything in between — there's enough video for every mood and plenty of pics to wile away the lonesome hours of the night.

Now that Steven Seagal is all the rage as a box office mega-buck, macho darling, homebodies can rent or buy Marked for Death, his story of a retired drug enforcement officer who cleans up the drug scum that have taken over the old home town.

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Robert DeNiro plays Hollywood director David Merrill and Annette Bening is his wife, Ruth, in "Guilty by Suspicion," a film about the anti-communist hysteria inflicted on Hollywood in the '50s.