



Woody Allen tracks missteps of would-be sleuths

A keen observer of the foibles of friends and lovers, Woody Allen reveals the often farcical nature of contemporary relationships as he chronicles the misadventures of would-be sleuths in uptown Manhattan in "Manhattan Murder Mystery," opening Friday at metro Detroit movie theaters.

Directed by Allen from a screenplay he co-wrote with Marshall Brickman, "Manhattan Murder Mystery" is a contemporary comedy in which a husband and wife find themselves totally bewildered by a possible murder.

Filmed in New York, "Manhattan Murder Mystery" is the 23rd feature Allen has directed and either written or co-written. Alan Alda, Woody Allen, Anjelica Huston and Diane Keaton star in the film, which co-stars Jerry Alder, Joy Behar and Ron Rifkin.

In the film, the untimely death of a seemingly robust upper West Side matron turns some of New York's literary set into amateur detectives. Suspicion abounds, and not all of it revolves around the supposed killer.

PREVIEW

Diane Keaton, as Carol Lipton, is the self-appointed leader of the group. Carol, a former advertising executive married to book editor Larry Lipton (Woody Allen), has given up her career to raise their son and has become an expert cook, with dreams of owning a restaurant.

Impetuous and inquisitive, with time to spare, she becomes curious about the sudden death of her neighbor's wife — to the infinite dismay of her more apprehensive husband, who would just as soon ignore the whole affair.

Alan Alda plays the Liptons' engaging, unmarried friend Ted.

"There's an unusual atmosphere of improvisation and catch-up to the run," said Alda about working with Allen on a film. "It's more like coming into a play. It's well thought out by Woody, but the actors don't suffer the boredom of the long waits and repetitions that are part of most movie making."

Anjelica Huston portrays a charming author whom Allen de-

scribes as "not only attractive and sexy, but also very intelligent."

Ron Rifkin plays Sy, married to Marilyn (Joy Behar). Friends of the Liptons, Sy and Marilyn encourage their investigation, offering their own opinions and ideas, and importantly their technological expertise.

Jerry Alder portrays the mysterious neighbor, Paul House, who may be a murderer.

Principal photography began in November 1992 and trailed the novice detectives through a variety of venues in and around New York, including the Hotel 17 on the East Side, the famed "21" Club, the Cafe des Artistes for a poker lesson, Elaine's, Madison Square Garden for a New York Rangers hockey game, Lincoln Center and a night visit to a steel smelting factory.

Behind the scenes, Allen assembled his longtime creative team, including producer Robert Greenhut and executive producers Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe.

"Manhattan Murder Mystery," a TriStar Pictures release, opens Friday at AMC Maple, AMC Woods and Showcase Pontiac. It's rated PG (Some material may not be suitable for pre-teenagers.)



Contemporary comedy: Diane Keaton (left), Alan Alda, Anjelica Huston and Woody Allen in a scene from Allen's latest film, "Manhattan Murder Mystery."

"The Secret Garden": heartwarming magic works

Like Alice looking through another looking glass, the young heroine in "The Secret Garden" finds a miracle growing behind a locked gate on her uncle's estate. Her discovery about her uncle and the people around her lead to one of the year's most charming films.

By now, we all know the story. After all, aside from being a perennial children's bestseller, Frances Hodgson Burnett's "The Secret Garden" also surfaced on the big screen in 1949 with Margaret O'Brien, as a 1987 TV movie and, most recently, as an acclaimed Broadway musical.

Somewhere around the turn of the century, an earthquake in India turns 10-year-old Mary Lennox (Kate Maberly) into an orphan. Her uncle, Lord Craven, (John Lynch), out of obligation, takes her to live at his dreary Gothic mansion, where she looks upon everything with a sullen, dark-eyed glare.

This is not a happy place. Mary is told not to go poking around the castle, where screams some-

REVIEW

times echo through the corridors. The girl, both spoiled and neglected, can't even dress herself without the aid of servants.

Mary changes when she discovers a secret garden, kept shut off by her uncle in memory of his beloved wife, who rumor has it died there. The screams, she discovers, are those of her young cousin, Colin (Heydon Prowse), an invalid who has never glimpsed sunshine or even ventured outside.

The girl's mission now becomes clear. She brings the overgrown mass of thorns and dead leaves back to life, and in the process, rejuvenates virtually everyone

around her. She's joined in the task by Dickon (Andrew Knott), a peasant boy who has the power to attract baby animals to the garden.

Frances Ford Coppola, whose American Zoetrope produced the similarly winning "The Black Stallion" in 1979, wisely recognizes the audience for quality children's movies. He has assembled some top-notch filmmakers for this project, including Agnieszka Holland, director of the art-house hit "Europa, Europa."

Holland uses every technique available to create a movie that will bring "The Secret Garden" alive for both children and adults. Stop-motion animation even slips in as rooks feel their way through the soil and rose petals open before our eyes.

We share in the mystery of the castle through Mary's eyes. This is helped greatly by an assured performance by young Maberly, who transforms in the film from the "quite contrary" Mary left waiting by her uncle at the boat docks to the bright-eyed red-headed girl who later introduces him to the garden.

Maggie Smith, as the bullying housekeeper, Medlock, brings soul to what could have been a one-dimensional villain while Lynch's Lord Craven undergoes his own appropriately melodramatic change of character.

"The Secret Garden's" unbridled sentimentality might not appeal to everyone, but it is far from what one local critic called "a museum piece." Heartwarming in the best possible sense, it's as

fresh and vital as the best-tended garden in June.

Secret Garden is now showing at these suburban movie theaters: AMC Abbey, Showcase Auburn Hills, AMC Americana West, GCC Canton Cinema, Showcase Dearborn, Showcase Westland, Star Winchester, AMC Laurel Park,

GCC Novi Town Center, United Artists West River.

To leave a message for John Monaghan, dial 963-2047, mailbox number 1866, on a Touch-Tone phone, fax him a note at 691-7279, or write him in care of Entertainment, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

FILM CLIPS

"THE SECRET GARDEN"

Released by: Warner Bros.
 Starring: Kate Maberly, Heydon Prowse, Andrew Knott, Maggie Smith and John Lynch
 Directed by: Agnieszka Holland
 Produced by: Fred Fuchs, Fred Roos and Tom Luddy
 Screenplay by: Caroline Thompson (based on the book by Frances Hodgson Burnett)
 Rated: G (All ages admitted)
 Running time: 1 hour, 46 minutes
 Rating (out of a possible four):

Don't miss it
 Strongly recommended
 Worth a look
 Walk for video



Family story: Heydon Prowse (left) as Colin, Kate Maberly as Mary and Andrew Knott as Dickon in Warner Bros.' new film of the classic tale, "The Secret Garden."

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