

LET'S GO! MOVIES

'Panther' rewrites history, but retains message

TICKETS PLEASE



JOHN MONAGHAN

It all starts with a traffic light. After another child is run down at a busy intersection, the primarily black Oakland, Calif., neighborhood takes its protest to the streets in the form of a candlelight vigil.

The police brutality that follows only encourages the newly formed Black Panther Party for Self Defense to turn up the heat. Taking their cue from the recently murdered Malcolm X to gain respect "by any means necessary," they start to carry guns.

While there has been considerable controversy about the historical accuracy of the film, Mario Van Peebles' "Panther" does cap-

ture the spirit of 1967. Much like the movement he chronicles, the young director strays from his original aims but not without success.

One of these is the feeling of solidarity the film maintains, from stirring meetings at cluttered storefront offices to the historic march into the State Legislature building past an already befuddled Ronald Reagan. These are heady times for the Panthers as women join, chapters form in other cities, and average Joe's want to do their part. Some want to carry guns, others think they can pick up women. Most, however, want to remedy what they see as 400 years of oppression from "The Man."

Bobby Seale and Huey Newton, founders of the Party, remain central to the film. Though Seale says that interaction between he and Newton (who died in 1989)

REVIEW

was limited in the early days, the film paints them as inseparable, a following Lennon and McCartney. Dividing these charismatic leaders was key to the police, and later the FBI, who saw the Panthers' militant activities as a threat to American policy in Vietnam. Newton's arrest after a shootout with police resulted in a "Free Huey" campaign that only made the Panthers' aims more visible. Courtney Vance and Marcus Chong are quite good as Seale and Newton, but they're undermined by the often preachy script by the director's father Melvin.

The elder Van Peebles is still best-known for directing and starring in the 1973 cult film "Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song."

The super-charged story of a black man on the run from police brutality remains on Variety's list of top money-makers but continues to confuse viewers with its message.

Son Mario ("New Jack City," "Posse") also lacks clarity, relying too heavily on MTV-style quick cuts and different film stocks, a la Oliver Stone and "JFK." The camera never stands still long enough for us to savor any of the details or its minor characters, who don't have enough personality outside of the ranks.

Like Oliver Stone, the Van Peebles have developed their own conspiracy theory. The movie purports that widespread drug trafficking started in Oakland, perpetrated by the government as a way of "neutralizing" the African American population.

While Seale is right to call the

filmmakers on revisionism, it's important to remember that his last appearance on the scene was to sell a cookbook. He and the other now-graying Panthers should at least give the Van Peebles credit for keeping their message alive.

To leave a message for John Monaghan, dial 953-2047, 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.

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Redford shows restored 'My Fair Lady'

Movie classic: Audrey Hepburn and Jeremy Brett in "My Fair Lady."



PREVIEW

The fully restored, "My Fair Lady," winner of eight Academy Awards, will be shown in its original Super Panavision 70mm stereophonic format for the first time in Michigan at the Redford Theatre, 17360 Lahser Road, (north of Grand River, between Six and Seven Mile Roads), 8 p.m. Friday, May 11; 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday, May 12. Free, supervised parking. Tickets \$3.50 at the door, call (313) 537-2560 or (810) 258-5806.

The Redford's original 1928 Barton theater pipe organ will be heard one-half hour preceding the film, and at intermission on Friday with Tony O'Brien at the console. Gus Bormann will be the organist at the Saturday matinee and evening performances.

Robert A. Harris, perhaps best known for his restoration work on the David Lean epic "Lawrence of Arabia," and James C. Katz, who

teamed up with Harris to restore Stanley Kubrick's "Spartacus," were brought in to save "My Fair Lady," winner of the Oscar for Best Picture in 1964.

The original camera negative for "My Fair Lady" was so brittle that it kept tearing during the restoration process. To add to the problem, the three acetate black and white separations used in the Technicolor process had shrunk, producing halos and blurred images on the screen. The six-month restoration cost \$600,000 before it was finished.

Once the subject of much contention, it is now generally known that, Audrey Hepburn's singing voice was dubbed by Marni Nixon (whose singing voice was also dubbed for Natalie Wood in "West Side Story" and for Deborah Kerr in "The King and I"). It is now also known that the singing voice of Jeremy Brett, as Freddy Eynsford-Hill, was similarly dubbed by Bill Shirley.

LET'S GO! STREET SCENE

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A sampling of what's playing at alternative movie theaters across metro Detroit as reviewed by John Monaghan.

DETROIT FILM THEATRE
Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward, Detroit, Call (313) 833-2323 for information. (\$5; \$4 students)

"Window to Paris" (Russia/France — 1993). 7, 9:30 p.m. May 12-13; 4, 7 p.m. May 14. In this comedy of capitalism, residents of a crowded Russian flat discover that the wall inside their closet is actually a space-war passageway to Paris, they frantically stock up on every luxury item they can find.

"Son of the Shark" (France — 1993). 7 p.m. May 15. The story of two young brothers abandoned by their mothers who must make their own way on the streets of Paris has received positive comparison to Truffaut's "The 400 Blows."

MAGIC BAD THEATRE
22918 Woodward, Ferndale, Call (810) 844-3030 for information. (\$5)

"Death and Taxes" (USA — 1994). 7 p.m. May 11. A contriver-

sial new documentary about a North Dakota farmer whose refusal to pay taxes leads to a bloody gun battle with state troopers. Through countless interviews, director Jeff Jackson pieces together the real story of a man who some see as either bigoted cop killer or modern folk hero.

MAIN THEATRE
118 N. Main Street at 11 Mile, Royal Oak. Films play through at least Thursday, unless noted otherwise. Call (810) 542-0180 for information and showtimes. (\$6.50; \$4 students and matinee; \$3 twilight)

"The Sum of Us" (Australia — 1995). When a son comes out of his closet to his father, dad not only gets the news, but helps him get dates. This gay-friendly comedy stars familiar Australian actors Jack Thompson and Russell Crowe.

"Bar Girls" (USA — 1995). A seriocomic melodrama about the lifestyles of eight lesbians who frequent the same neighborhood bar.

"Kuriel's Wedding" (Australia — 1995). In this hit comedy from Australia, a young woman dreams

of marriage but can't seem to get her life together.

"The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill but Came Down a Mountain" (Britain — 1995). Hugh Grant stars in this new comedy about a pair of mapmakers who find they're no match for the people of a small town who will stop at nothing to ensure that their hill is declared a mountain. Starts Friday.

MAPLE THEATRE
4135 W. Maple, Bloomfield. All titles play through at least Thursday, unless noted otherwise. Call (810) 655-9090 for information. (\$5.75; \$3.75 students and matinee; \$2.95 twilight)

"Tom and Viv" (Britain — 1994). Miranda Richardson's Oscar-nominated performance finally hits the big screen. She plays Vivienne Haight-Wood, whose relationship with American writer T.S. Eliot (Willem Dafoe) was one of the century's great literary love affairs.

"Priest" (British — 1995). In this controversial new film, a young priest questions the church's rules of celibacy and sanctity of confession. What

starts as an authentic portrait of the modern priesthood quickly turns into a manipulative and one-dimensional plea for tolerance and understanding.

"Funny Bones" (Ireland — 1995). From the director of "Hear My Song," the story of two related half-brothers, both comedians, who only discover each other in adulthood. Jerry Lewis co-stars.

REDFORD THEATRE
17360 Lahser, Detroit, Call (313) 537-2560 for information. (\$2.50) "My Fair Lady" (USA — 1964). 8 p.m. May 12; 2, 8 p.m. May 13 (organ overture begins a half hour before showtime). A restored 70mm print of this much-loved musical, starring Rex Harrison and Audrey Hepburn.

STATE THEATRE
2116 Woodward, Detroit, Call (313) 961-5450 for information. (\$1)

"True Romance" (USA — 1994). 9 p.m. May 15. An early script by Quentin Tarantino is the basis for this violent story of a couple that runs from both police and the mob. Filmed partially in Detroit.

Wanted
Are your pets like Gordie?

"Gordy" is a young pig on a mission — to save his family, which has been hauled away from Meadowbrook Farm in the movie by the same name opening this Friday at metro Detroit movie theaters.

In the course of his travels, Gordy meets Jinnie Sue, the "First Little Lady of Country Music." The two become instant friends and Gordy decides to go with Jinnie Sue to the fund-raiser

where she is to sing for the governor of Arkansas. During the fund-raiser, Gordy saves the life of the son of a billionaire industrialist Henry Royce. His son, Hanky, falls off the diving board and nearly drowns. But Gordy heroically leaps in and saves his life, and becomes an overnight celebrity.

Kids — write and tell us why your pet is a hero to win four tickets to see "Gordy," and a plush

Gordy toy. Six prizes will be awarded. This contest is open to kids age 12 and younger. Deadline to enter is Thursday, May 18. Send or fax entries to: Keely Wygonik, Let's Go editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, fax: (313) 691-7297.

Winners will be notified by phone.

"Gordy," a Miramax release, is rated G.



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Visit "Gordy" site. Online at <http://www.danay.com> or call 1-800-11ERO-PIC. All prices in dollars excepted.