

MOVIES

'Cry the Beloved Country' lovingly remade

BY BOB THOMAS
AP NEWSPHOTOGRAPH

It is 1947 in a Zulu village amid the peaks of South Africa. Black pastor Stephen Kumalo (James Earl Jones) leaves his village on a personal mission to Johannesburg. Thus begins his Dantean descent into hell.

His arrival in the metropolis is harrowing. He is frightened by the traffic and noise. A bystander offers to buy a bus ticket for him, takes the money and disappears. Kumalo finally arrives at a church mission, where a benign young priest (Vasu Kuneo) gives him shelter.

The rural pastor is seeking his family, brother and son, with whom he has lost contact. He discovers his sister (Dambisa Kente) has turned to prostitution to support herself and her child. The brother (Charles S. Dutton) is a slick businessman who harangues blacks with demagogic speeches. He cares only for himself.

Kumalo doggedly trudges the city in search of his son, Absalom (Eric Myson). He finds the woman who is bearing his son's child. Finally, he discovers that Absalom is in jail, charged with the burglary-murder of a white man.

Alan Paton's modern classic,

REVIEW

"Cry, the Beloved Country," opening Friday at metro Detroit movie theaters, has been lovingly remade by director Darrell James Roodt and producer Anant Singh, who collaborated on the admirable "Sarafina!" The first version was filmed in 1981 by Zoltan Korda with a very young Sidney Poitier in the cast. Paton's book also provided the basis for the stage musical, "Lost in the Stars," which became a 1974 film.

The new "Cry, the Beloved Country" is a stirring rendition marked by an Academy Award-caliber performance by James Earl Jones.

Lately associated with roles as gruff, curmudgeons, Jones reverses himself as the gentle, sometimes bewildered man of God. At times he seems ineffectual, overwhelmed by the personal tragedies he encounters, as well as the misery black life in the city. But in matters of right and wrong, he remains assertive.

Counterpoint to Jones is Richard Harris as the affluent white rancher who lives in the same district. The two men know each



MIRAMAX FILMS

Drama: James Earl Jones in Darrell James Roodt's "Cry, The Beloved Country," opening Friday, Jan. 12, at metro Detroit movie theaters.

other by sight, but they have never met. It turns out that Harris' son, a civil rights advocate, is the man killed by Jones' son.

The scene in which the two bereaved fathers meet and seek understanding is a masterpiece played by consummate actors.

Director Roodt deserves credit

for keeping the narrative moving without pausing for preambles. The film attains even more significance than the earlier versions in light of efforts to end apartheid in South Africa.

The Miramax release was adapted with great sensitivity by Ronald Harwood. Rating is PG-13, perhaps for violence.

SCREEN SCENE



Romantic: Elinor Dashwood (Emma Thompson) struggles to keep family finances in order and hide her longing for Edward Ferrars (Hugh Grant) in "Sense and Sensibility."

tional walls lead to a mental breakdown.

"Casablanca" (USA - 1942). Jan. 12 - 15 (call for showtimes). In his quintessential performance, Humphrey Bogart plays nightclub owner Rick Blaine, caught up in international intrigue in World War II. With Ingrid Bergman, Paul Henreid, and Claude Rains.

"Seconds" (USA - 1966). 7 p.m. Jan. 16 - 17. Rock Hudson stars in this visually dazzling science fiction movie about a man who gets a second crack at life with all the advantages. James Wong Howe provides the often bizarre black-and-white cinematography.

REDFOOT THEATRE
17360 Lahar, Detroit, Call (313)

537-2560 for information. (\$2.50)

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as a condemned man who forms a controversial friendship with a Catholic nun (Susan Sarandon). A typically offbeat drama directed by Tim Robbins. Starts Friday.

MAPLE THEATRE
4135 W. Maple, Bloomfield. All titles play through at least next Thursday, unless noted otherwise. Call (810) 855-9090 for information. (\$6; \$2.95 twilight)

"Nixon" (USA - 1995). Anthony Hopkins stars as the fallen president in Oliver Stone's challenging new film. As usual, the director employs quick editing techniques and varied film stocks, resulting in a movie both tedious (at almost three-and-a-half hours long) and fascinating. Ed Harris and James Wood co-star.

"Cry, the Beloved Country"

(South Africa - 1996). Based on the acclaimed novel by Alan Paton, the story of the reconciliation of two men - one white, the other black - who have each lost a son to the violence of South Africa. James Earl Jones and Richard Harris star. Starts Friday.

MICHIGAN THEATRE
603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call (313) 668-8397 for information. (\$6; \$5 students/seniors)

"Pink Floyd's The Wall" (British - 1982). Through Jan. 13 (call for showtimes). A rare 70mm screening of the eye-popping Pink Floyd film, based on the acclaimed album and starring Bob Geldof as a rock star whose emo-

tion walls lead to a mental breakdown.

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