

SCREEN SCENE

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

Birmingham Theatre 211 S. Woodward, Birmingham. Call (810) 644-FILM for information. (\$6.50; \$4.26 matinees and seniors)

■ "The English Patient" (USA - 1996). Four people meet in a ruined monastery near the end of World War II in this adaptation of the Booker Prize-winning novel by Michael Ondaatje. Ralph Fiennes, Juliette Binoche, and Willem Dafoe star.

Fox Theatre 2211 Woodward, Detroit. Call (313) 983-6611 for information. (\$6)

■ Christmas Classics - "It's a

Wonderful Life" (USA - 1947) and "Miracle on 34th Street" (USA - 1948). Dec. 13-14 (call for show times).

■ The first in the Frank Capra heart warmer stars Jimmy Stewart as a distraught man who discovers what the world would be like if he was never born.

■ "Miracle" stars young Natalie Wood as a skeptical child who doesn't believe in Santa Claus, until she gets a look at Edmund Gwenn.

Magic Bag Theatre 22920 Woodward, Ferndale. Call (810) 544-3030 for information. (\$2)

■ "Spike and Mike's Sick and Twisted Festival of Animation." Preview screening 9:30 p.m. Dec.

18, regular schedule Dec. 24-Jan. 2. Last year it was a "greatest hits" package. This year the fourth annual showcase of animated bad taste features 20 premieres. Among the titles: "Condom Complaint," "The Happy Moose" and now episodes of the perennial favorite "No Neck Joe."

Main Art 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 show times. (\$6.50; \$4 students, seniors and matinee; \$3 twilight)

■ "Big Night" (USA - 1996). A pair of brothers try to run an authentic Italian restaurant in

the 1950s but discover that most people want simple spaghetti and meatballs. An independent comedy starring and co-directed by Stanley Tucci.

■ "Vertigo" (USA - 1956). Many call this Hitchcock's most personal film because its main character (Jimmy Stewart) tries to turn his girlfriend into the image of a lost love. Hitch did the same thing after Grace Kelly left movies to become a princess, sending the old director scrambling for the likes of other icy blondes, here Kim Novak. The ambitious 40th anniversary restoration sports new color and a remixed soundtrack.

■ "The English Patient" (USA - 1996). See Birmingham

Theatre listing above.

Maple Theatre 4136 W. Maple, Bloomfield. All titles play through at least next Thursday, unless noted otherwise. Call 810-856-9090 for information. (\$6; \$2.95 twilight)

■ "Trees Lounge" (USA - 1996). Bugeyed character actor Steve Buscemi makes his directorial debut as an out-of-work mechanic who hangs out at the title establishment, a bar based on his own nonworking days on Long Island.

■ "The English Patient" (USA - 1996). See Birmingham Theatre listing above.

Michigan Theatre 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call (313) 668-8480 for information.

(\$5.50; \$4.50 students/seniors)

■ "Citizen Kane" (USA - 1941). Dec. 12-14 (call for show times). Some still call Orson Welles' first feature "the greatest film ever made," the story of an ambitious newspaper publisher based on William Randolph Hearst.

■ "Cyclo" (Vietnam - 1996). Dec. 17-19 (call for show times). A Vietnamese version of "The Bicycle Thief" in which an 18-year-old man loses his bicycle/livelihood and is thrust into the ominous underworld of Hanoi, Vietnam. The latest from the director of "The Scent of Green Papaya."

■ "Trees Lounge" (USA - 1996). Through Dec. 14 (call for show times). See Maple listing.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Opens Friday, Dec. 13

"THE PREACHER'S WIFE"
Remake of the 1947 movie "The Bishop's Wife," a fable about an angel who comes to Earth to help a preacher's struggle to maintain a congregation. Stars Denzel Washington, Whitney Houston, Courtney B. Vance and Gregory Hines.

"JERRY MAGUIRE"
Romantic comedy about a sports agent who loses his job through an ill considered act of honor. The story follows his comedic journey to redemption through an unlikely ally

with a young single mother and his single remaining client, Stars Tom Cruise.

"MARS ATTACKS!"
From the weak casinos of Vegas, through America's heartland and into the lunar sanctum of the Oval office (over the President's seat), "Mars Attacks" casts a comedic eye at the hysterical patriotism wrought in America's battle over invasion by little green men from Mars. Led by Jack Nicholson, the cast includes Annette Bening, Pierce Brosnan, Glenn Close, Danny DeVito, and Jessica Parker.

Opens Friday, Dec. 20

"THE CRUCIBLE"
Suspenseful drama of evil and personal conscience based on one of the greatest plays of the 20th century. Stars Daniel Day-Lewis, Winona Ryder, Paul Scofield and Joan Allen.

"MY FELLOW AMERICANS"
Comedy about two unscrupulous e.e.s. Presidents who have nothing in common but their dislike of one another who find themselves compelled to travel cross country together as they investigate a

potential White House scandal involving the current president. Stars Jack Lemmon, James Garner and Dan Aykroyd.

"ONE FINE DAY"
An old-fashioned love story for the cellular age. Two career minded people, one male, the other female, determined never to have romance in their lives, are thrown together for one chaotic day, the only thing they have in common are identical cellular phones and the fear of letting someone get too close. The last thing they expected was to fall in love. Stars Michelle Pfeiffer and

George Clooney.

"RIDICULOUS"
A lavish and colorful drama set in the age of Louis XVI. The tale of a modest country engineer who travels to court, a place where even the slightest misstep can be fatal. He must focus every ounce of energy on extracting royal favor. The one thing he must not do is fall in love. Stars Fanny Ardant, Charles Berling, Bernard Giraudeau.

"SCREAM"
A thriller about a small town that comes under siege by a murderer who takes all of

his cues from the movies. Stars Neve Campbell, Skeet Ulrich, Courtney Cox, Drew Barrymore and David Arquette.

"SLINGBLADE"
A Southern gothic tale about a man, closed from an asylum after 25 years, who returns to the small southern town of his youth. Here he finds friendship until he's thrust into a combustible situation that has powerful and moving consequences for all. Stars Billy Bob Thornton, Dwight Yoakam and John Ritter.

Disney's '101 Dalmatians' warm, funny, fast-paced

By DOLORES BARCLAY
AP Arts Editor

NEW YORK (AP) - Leave it to Disney to put a different spin on a beloved classic, especially when the classic is a Disney production.

The Mouse Factory's new take on its 1961 animated hit "101 Dalmatians" is a feature-length, live-action movie starring Glenn Close and 230 of the cutest spotted fur beauties you've ever seen.

How does the new version hold up to the original? Well, how does frozen yogurt compare to ice cream? The original is rich and creamy, while the imitator is, well, sweet and not bad for you.

Though not one of Disney's best artistic efforts, the animated version of "101 Dalmatians" was still cute, warm, funny and fast-paced. It made the evil Cruella De Vil, who kidnapped Dalmatian puppies so she could turn them into a fur coat, a legend among villains.

The new live-action movie is sluggish at times and infused with so much of John Hughes' gratuitous sadism that it's sometimes unbearable to sit through. Hughes, whose "Home Alone" typifies the rude and hostile behavior he glorifies in his movies, wrote the script and produced "101 Dalmatians" with Ricardo Montalva.

Fortunately, the film has the outrageous and glistening talents of Close, who turns in such a fabulous performance as the wonderfully wicked Cruella that you ride with the movie no matter how lame it is.

But as much as Close dominates the screen with her twonted fright wig, arched brows and crimson lips, she's still no

match for the dogs. Pongo and Perdita simply steal the show. (Actually, four adult Dalmatians play Pongo and three play Perdita.)

These beautifully trained dogs register love, sadness, happiness, anger, and fear better than some humans. And they show such extraordinary tenderness toward one another.

Early on in the movie, Pongo and Perdita curl up together before a fireplace, their paws intertwined. And when their owners, Roger (Jeff Daniels) and Anita (Joely Richardson) marry, we see the Dalmatians in the rear of the church facing one another as they, too, exchange vows.

The first half of the movie involves the speedy courtship between Roger, a video game maker, and Anita, a designer for the House of De Vil. They meet when Pongo, having spotted the beautiful Perdita trotting alongside a bike-riding Anita, drags Roger on a hair-raising chase.

They marry. Anita's old nanny (Joan Plowright) moves in and, a short time later, Anita finds herself pregnant, as does Perdita, who gives birth to 15 puppies.

Cruella offers big bucks for their hides so she can have her spotted puppy coat. No deal, as far as Roger and Anita are concerned.

So Cruella employs two bumbling thugs, Jasper (Hugh Laurie) and Horace (Mark Williams), to kidnap the pups and turns to a scary, Nazi-like taxidermist named Skinner (John Shrapnel) to do the dirty work of turning them into a coat.

Pongo goes to the rescue of his children with the Twilight Bark,

a long-distance communication method employed by dogs. The bark reaches the ears of an Airedale named Kipper and an Old English sheepdog named Fogey, who find the puppies and bring them to safety.

But that doesn't stop Cruella and her comical duo from continuing to try to chase the puppies down.

Close, who roars "GET ON WITH IT, YOU IMBECILES!" throughout the movie, has the

screenplay's best lines. There's her insidious "Love the smell of near-extinction" as she closes in on the puppies, and her admonishment to the farm animals who thwart her every move that they're all going to end up at some fast-food restaurant.

And the actress is quite a proper fool. She gets quite a bit out of molasses and a bed of mud. But weighted down with all that gunk, she's still ready for her close-up.

AMERICA. THIS IS YOUR WAKE UP CALL!
THE ATTACK BEGINS FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13!

MARS ATTACKS!

JACK NICHOLSON GLENN CLOSE ANNETTE BENING PIERCE BROSNAN DANNY DEVITO

STARTS FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13TH

AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC OLD ORCHARD	AMC DEL AIR
AMC STERLING CITY	BEACON EAST	AMC SOUTHWEST CITY
EGG NOVI TOWN CTR	OLD VARS	EGG CANTON CINEMA
SHOWCASE WINDY	SHOWCASE WINDY	SHOWCASE WINDY
STAR CANTON	STAR JOHN R. 14 MILL	STAR LINCOLN PARK
STAR ROCHESTER	STAR TAYLOR	

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SPECIAL SNEAK PREVIEW
Saturday Night, December 14

ONE FINE DAY

MICHELLE PFEIFFER GEORGE CLOONEY

Sometimes love at first sight can take all day.

SNEAK PREVIEW SATURDAY NIGHT AMC AMERICANA WEST

AMC LAUREL PARK	BIRMINGHAM 8	QUO WADIS
SHOWCASE PORTAC 1-19	STAR GRANT	STAR TAYLOR
STAR WINCHESTER	UNITED ARTISTS FAIRLANE	UNITED ARTISTS OAKLAND

CALL THEATRE FOR SNEAK SHOWTIMES • REGULAR ENGAGEMENT STARTS DECEMBER 20

"THE BEST HOLIDAY FILM IN DECADES"

"A WINNER! AN ABSOLUTE JOY!"
Uplifting and totally exhilarating!
See through AMERICAN CINEMA REGION 1 PROGRAM

"THE PREACHER'S WIFE IS PURE MAGIC!"
An instant holiday classic!
Courtesy: LARRY KING, USA TODAY

"WHITNEY HOUSTON AND DENZEL WASHINGTON ARE A SHEER DELIGHT!"
Read: MONTY BRANTLEY, THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

The Preacher's Wife

DENZEL WASHINGTON WHITNEY HOUSTON

STARTS FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13TH

AMC AMERICANA WEST	AMC DEL AIR	AMC EASTLAND 2
AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC SOUTHWEST CITY	AMC SOUTHLAND
AMC WINDYLAND	BIRMINGHAM 8	EGG NOVI TOWN
SHOWCASE WINDY	SHOWCASE DIARBORN	SHOWCASE WINDY
STAR CANTON	STAR GRANT AT 15 MILL	STAR LINCOLN PARK 8
STAR JOHN R. 14 MILL	STAR LINCOLN PARK 8	STAR WINDY
STAR ROCHESTER	STAR TAYLOR	

NO PAGES ON COUPONS ACCEPTED

"JERRY MAGUIRE" IS THE ROLE TOM CRUISE WAS BORN TO PLAY!"
JEH CRAW, SIXTY SECOND PREVIEW

JERRY MAGUIRE

"A TERRIFIC MOVIE! VERY FUNNY AND VERY TOUCHING! IT MIGHT BE TOM CRUISE'S BEST PERFORMANCE EVER!"
Larry King, USA TODAY

"TWO THUMBS UP!"
SISKEL & EBERT

"TOM CRUISE IS OUTSTANDING! HIS MOST PASSIONATE PERFORMANCE!"
David Sheehan, KCBS-TV

STARTS FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13TH

AMC AMERICANA WEST	AMC DEL AIR	AMC EASTLAND
AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC SOUTHWEST CITY	AMC STERLING CITY
AMC WINDYLAND	BIRMINGHAM 8	EGG NOVI TOWN CTR
SHOWCASE WINDY	SHOWCASE WINDY	SHOWCASE WINDY
STAR CANTON	STAR JOHN R. 14 MILL	STAR LINCOLN PARK
STAR ROCHESTER	STAR TAYLOR	

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GLENN CLOSE

"101" HITS THE SPOT!"
-LARRY KING, USA TODAY

101 HITS THE SPOT!

STARTS FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13TH

AMC AMERICANA WEST	AMC DEL AIR 10	AMC EASTLAND 2
AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC SOUTHWEST CITY	AMC SOUTHLAND
AMC WINDYLAND	BIRMINGHAM 8	EGG NOVI TOWN
SHOWCASE WINDY	SHOWCASE DIARBORN	SHOWCASE WINDY
STAR CANTON	STAR GRANT AT 15 MILL	STAR LINCOLN PARK 8
STAR JOHN R. 14 MILL	STAR LINCOLN PARK 8	STAR WINDY
STAR ROCHESTER	STAR TAYLOR	

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