



Story swirls around mystery

"Mr. Klein" (PG) is a baffling mystery, not a "whodunit," but a "who am I."

Set in France in 1942, the film has beginning titles that state Mr. Klein is a composite of many people but that the "facts are a matter of history." (The film, which won three Oscars, the French Oscars, is in French with English subtitles.) Alain Delon is silky smooth as the debonair Robert Klein. He lives in an elegant apartment filled with objets d'art, wears superbly tailored clothes and enjoys the favors of numerous women. Klein lives comfortably and well in a world torn apart by brutality and war.

The plot for "Mr. Klein" turns on a case of mistaken identity, yet each attempt to sort out matters seems to obscure, not clarify. The movie is a subtle suspense story, concerned with character and attitudes rather than action and events.

The smug and meticulous Mr. Klein is annoyed to find that the authorities have confused him with another Robert Klein, a Jew. How could this be? Our Mr. Klein's family has been Catholic and French for hundreds of years, at least back to Louis XIV.

IT SEEMS that the shadowy and Jewish Mr. Klein deliberately attempted to evade authorities by covering his tracks with the scent of our Mr. Klein. This was accomplished easily by putting Klein's name on the subscription list to a Jewish newspaper. The police routinely subscription the lists and assume all the subscribers are Jewish. Now it is up to Mr. Klein to prove that he is not.

The irony of the situation is evident from the beginning as we watch Klein, the art collector and hard bargainer, pay bottom prices for the property of French Jews who must leave the country hurriedly.

Klein's annoyance at his own situation is matched by his curiosity about his namesake. Who is the man? What is he like? Each clue he uncovers about the man's identity seems to draw him deeper into a maze. The man writes music and knows about explosives; he owns a large dog; he has a married lover Jeanne Moreau at a large country estate and a young admiring girlfriend who also keeps changing her name. Klein's hunt for the "other" Mr. Klein becomes an obsession. The authorities begin to close in on Klein, restricting his activities and demanding documented proof of his identity, but Klein ignores the warnings in his dogged hunt for his elusive namesake.

Joseph Losey, who directed "Mr. Klein," has created a remarkably restrained drama of slowly building tension. It is a social drama that is significant for the questions it raises rather than the answers it provides.

ULTIMATELY, we see Klein insensitive to the plight of those around him even when he shares their experiences. His faith in the French police and judicial system remains unswerving although its failures are clear. Tragically, Klein's callousness and political naivete are not replaced by compassion and knowledge. His search for the other Mr. Klein becomes a fatal kind of self-indulgence.

On one level "Mr. Klein" chronicles the unfortunate case of an innocent man wrongly accused; on another level, it prompts one to reconsider the meaning of innocent. In a criminal "warring" society, is anyone innocent?

Glimpses

NEW RELEASES

ALLEGRO NON TROPPO (PG). Take-off on Disney's "Fantasia" by Italian animator Bruno Bozzetti.

ANOTHER MAN, ANOTHER CHANCE (PG). Claude Lelouch successfully remakes his own romantic film "A Man and a Woman" as an American western.

BOBBY DEERFIELD (PG). Not enough scenery for a travelogue, not enough plot for a dramatic film; just a bore with Al Pacino and Marthe Keller.

FIRST LOVE (R). Curly, blond-haired William Katt searches for true, pure love on college campus where phys ed is most popular activity, but not for class credit.

HEROES (PG). TV stars Henry Winkler and Sally Field hit the big screen in comedy about Vietnam vet trying to start a worm farm.

JULIA (PG). Jane Fonda and Vanessa Redgrave excel in Lillian Hellman's deeply moving story of the warm, courageous friendship of two women.

LOOKING FOR MR. GOODBAR (R). Judith Rossner's steamy best seller brought to the screen with stunning impact. Diane Keaton scores as woman who teaches children by day, picks up men by night.

OFF THE EDGE (PG). Documentary from Jeff Campbell of Birmingham about skiing and hang-gliding. Nominated for Academy Award for '76.

OH, GOD (PG). Humorous look at the world as God (George Burns) carries on a dialogue with a supermarket employee (John Denver).

PIECE OF THE ACTION (PG). Antics of Sidney Poitier and Bill Cosby who try to rip off the rip-off artists.

SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT (PG). Burt Reynolds in action-comedy as the "bandit" who's trying to bootleg 400 cases of Coors beer from Texas.

STAR WARS (PG). Seriocomic sci-fi adventure about a rebellion of solar systems in a distant galaxy. Good-time movie with laughs and special effects. Two robots steal the show.

SHORT EYES (R). Compelling prison drama of racial and sexual tensions written by Miguel Pinero from his play.

BACK AGAIN

FUN WITH DICK AND JANE (PG). Jane Fonda and George Segal in snappy social satire about a middle-class couple who turn to crime.

I NEVER PROMISED YOU A ROSE GARDEN (R). Superb acting by newcomer Kathleen Quinlan in moving and hopeful story about a teenager coping with mental illness.

MOVIE RATING GUIDE

- G General audiences admitted.
- PG Parental guidance suggested. All ages admitted.
- R Restricted. Adult must accompany person under 18.
- X No one under 18 admitted.

Getting Around

By ETHEL SIMMONS



The man behind dinner theater idea

"Dinner theater." The word seems part of the language. Ah, but who created the concept and coined the word? Over lunch recently at Alvaro's Restaurant in Troy, Gary McHugh, who has lived and breathed theater for most of his 55 years, told how he did it.

"Dinner theater grew out of 3,000-seat tents presenting musical theater in the round," McHugh said. "I was aware the public didn't just want these shows in the summer."

McHugh took over Frank Bailey's Meadowbrook (no connection with Meadow Brook Theatre in Rochester) which had been the home of big bands, in New Jersey, for the first dinner theater.

"I thought up the name, dinner theater. It took me three days to think up," he said. Today, there are 500 dinner theaters in the United States, according to McHugh.

"I DID NOT CREATE dinner theater for Neil Simon, although he's captured it," McHugh said. Simon's easy-to-enjoy comedies regularly entertain dinner theater audiences, which are composed of everyone from theater buffs to many first-time play-goers.

"I created dinner theater for musical comedies," McHugh said. Creating dinner theater is the one proud thing he has done in his life, he said, but, "the only thing bigger than dinner theater is musical comedy, the American musical theater."

McHugh said the American musical theater is dying, and he wants to save it. He believes "Man of La Mancha" is the greatest musical drama of this century and mourns the fact that current musicals don't even approach it in quality.

Although McHugh is the man who created dinner theater, he said, "I've never liked the name—dinner theater. It never had the class of cocktail playhouses."

Cocktail Playhouses of America Limited is the production company

that McHugh is presently involved with. The first Cocktail Playhouse Productions in Oakland County were presented at the Sheraton-Pontiac Bloomfield Inn, where McHugh is director of marketing.

"I thought of it (cocktail playhouses) in Ann Arbor (where the productions originated). 'Again, it took me three days. The other (dinner theater) should have been called dinner playhouses.'"

"COCKTAIL PLAYHOUSES was meant to be the correction to dinner theater in America." I a cocktail playhouse, dinner is not in the room, he said.

Despite his coming up with the new concept, Cocktail Playhouses Productions is offering a dinner theater show, downstairs at Alvaro's.

The musical "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying" being given Friday and Saturday through Dec. 31. A buffet at 7 p.m. is followed by the show at 8:45 p.m.

Showgoers may opt, however, for the show and two prepaid drinks, which is the Cocktail Playhouses concept that leaves you to your own resources at dinner.

"We are the first commercially successful dinner theater, technically, in the Detroit area," McHugh said.

A dinner theater, as defined by Actors Equity, has the food and show in one room.

In 1964, McHugh founded the Dinner Theatre Association of America's 500 dinner theaters, there are 70 Equity dinner theaters, with professional

actors from the Actors Equity Association.

"AN ACTORS EQUITY theater hires only union actors and occasionally community actors," McHugh explained. He also said professional theater may be defined as any theater that pays any performer.

"Actors Equity said to me one day, 'Gary, you have done more for theater in this century than anybody else. You created dinner theater, and we have more actors working in dinner theater than on Broadway and the national touring companies.'"

This was in 1975 and, according to McHugh, figures showed 320 actors working every week year-round in dinner theater and only 380 working on Broadway and national touring companies each week.

Because of McHugh's love for the American musical, he is determined to make a success of Cocktail Playhouses, which presents only musicals.

"I know if I don't do what I do to get the Cocktail Playhouses going, there are no showcases for American musical theater," he said.

McHugh plans to open a 3,000-seat, star musical comedy-theater in the Detroit area next June, concurrent with one in Grand Rapids. These indoor, summer theaters will be expanded to a number of other states, eventually reaching a network of 50 theaters, he said.

Theater buff Kenneth Holyoak of Royal Oak is in partnership with McHugh. Holyoak owns a chemical company, Kenpac Inc., with offices in Troy.

'Noel Night' cheers cultural center

Detroit's Cultural Center will bustle with the Christmas spirit on Noel Night, Wednesday. One block of Woodward Avenue will become a mall as visitors stroll among 12 cultural institutions 6-9 p.m. at this fifth annual open house sponsored by Detroit Adventure.

A shooting star design will point the way for visitors to a multitude of free activities and programs.

Noel Night will offer music, drama, entertainment and workshops. Visitors will gather for a Christmas caroling finale with the Salvation Army Band at 8:30 p.m. in the center of Woodward Avenue, which will be closed between Kirby and Farnsworth for the festivities.

A program schedule and a map of the Cultural Center will be available at the door of each participating institution or at an information booth on either end of the closed block of Woodward. Following is a listing, by institution, of what visitors from toddlers to grandparents can do on Noel Night.

SING ALONG WITH carolers and musical groups, view an art exhibit and let the kids enjoy free candy and balloons at the Center for Creative Studies, 245 E. Kirby.

Make Santa caps, see a planetarium

demonstration, checkle with the Muppet Puppets or watch the little ones have their faces made up by junior members at the Children's Museum, 67 E. Kirby.

See presentations from the "Wizard of Oz" by the Grosse Pointe Children's Theatre, learn ethnic and folk dancing and hear choirs from St. Matthew's, St. James and the First United Methodist Church at the Detroit Historical Museum, Woodward and Kirby.

See a mini-concert of music, dance and opera theater performed by faculty and students every half-hour at the Detroit Community Music School, 200 E. Kirby.

Listen to the Waldorf School Orchestra and the Detroit Waldhorn Quartet at the Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward. While you are there, watch the Zooper Puppets and the Fantasy Street Theater.

WIN A LUCKY penny at the Detroit Main Library, 5201 Woodward, by guessing the name of a costumed Christmas character, see a Christmas film and sway to music by David Butzu, a 10-year-old pianist, or by soloist Alice Short with Jim Dance on organ.

Tour the First Congregational Church, a designated historical site at 33 E. Forest, after seeing a dramatic

presentation from "Holy Family." For a nominal fee, you may also dine (cafeteria style) 5-7 p.m.

Sample ethnic holiday delights at the food booth of the International Institute, 111 E. Kirby. There also will be an exhibit, ethnic dancing and music by church and community groups.

Sip wine and nibble cheese to the tune of recorders and harpsichord ensembles, piano duets, or to the music or the Cathedral Chamber Singers at St. Paul's Cathedral Church, 4800 Woodward.

Drink free apple cider and view an exhibit by members at the Scarab

Club, top your foot to folk music there 7-9 p.m.

SHARE THE CHRISTMAS spirit with friends and family as musical and theatrical groups from Detroit's public high schools perform at the School Center Building, 5057 Woodward.

Celebrate an old-fashioned Southern Christmas with candy-making, carols, Christmas spirituals and story-telling at Your Heritage House, 110 E. Ferry.

Complete your Christmas shopping at any of the gift boutiques, shops or sales sponsored by several of the institutions. Items for sale are designated "Shopper's Delight" in the Noel Night program.

How to send news items

News releases, photographs or other information can be mailed to Ethel Simmons, entertainment editor, at 1225 Bowers, Birmingham 48012, or delivered to any office of the Observer & Eccentric.

The entertainment pages include news, features and reviews on the following:

- Movies.
 - Music (pop, rock, jazz, country).
 - Night life.
 - Restaurants.
 - Special attractions.
 - Theater (college, community and professional).
 - Travel.
 - TV and radio.
- The phone number is 644-1100.

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