



LOUISE SNIDER

'The Big Sleep' may have you yawning, dozing

Many people thought it couldn't be done, but Michael Winner has done it. He's taken themes of drug use, gambling, blackmail, murder, nymphomania and pornography and made them into a movie that's as exciting as pruned whip. Winner is the writer, director, and, with Elliott Kastner, co-producer of the remake of "The Big Sleep" (R).

Winner probably took a good hard look at Howard Hawk's memorable 1946 film of the Raymond Chandler novel, and then decided to rework it in a manner as remote from the original as possible.

Thus he rushed in where others feared to tread. He changed the time and place, from 1940s Los Angeles to 1970s London; changed private eye Philip Marlowe's cheap suits and tacky digs to Bond Street tailoring and a respectable pad; and significantly trimmed the role of the leading female.

Why not? one might ask. It's done in the theater frequently—a play is given a new interpretation with new settings, new costumes, new time slot. Why not? Because in this instance it doesn't work.

THE ORIGINAL version, in spite of an absurdly complicated plot, had a coherence which is completely lacking in the remake. The coherence was the result of a fine script by William Faulkner and Leigh Brackett; imaginative directing by Howard Hawks; distinctive characterizations by Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall and the supporting players; and an integrated approach in design, editing and cinematography that gave the movie a crisp vitality.

The new version gains nothing by its changes and loses a lot. The English laws, tidy shops and nattily dressed characters don't mesh with the nasty reality of the story, which was served better by the L.A. setting.

The fast repartee of the original doesn't weather well. Many of the wisecracks are dated and sound out of place in their new surroundings.

Finally, paring down the female lead also pares down the romantic fireworks and throws one back to plot, which no one wants to think about. (Even Hawks and his scriptwriters confessed to some confusion about Chandler's puzzle.)

Robert Mitchum, who played Philip Marlowe once before (in "Farewell, My Lovely"), has the kind of battered face and hulking physique that seem right for the role. Yet, his disdainful look and slightly mocking tone give Marlowe a disturbing quality. At any moment, one expects Mitchum Marlowe to utter a terse profanity and walk off the set.

SMALL WONDER, when one considers the other characters. Sarah Miles is insipid as Charlotte Sternwood, the "provocative" older daughter of Marlowe's wealthy client. Candy Clark is frenetic as the kooky younger sister, Camilla.

Edward Fox is reserved and unconvincing as the blackmailer Joe Brody. James Stewart as the aged General Sternwood neither looks decrepit nor sounds English. Richard Boone is a ridiculous parody of a killer, and Oliver Reed is unduly overpowering in the minor role of casino owner Eddie Mars. So much for the director's ability to bring out the best in everyone.

About the only thing that hasn't changed in the remake is the tangled story. Winner might have tried to unscramble it; instead, he scrambled everything else.



Robert Mitchum is seen once more as private eye Philip Marlowe in "The Big Sleep."

Glimpses

AMERICAN HOT WAX (PG). Story of rock 'n' roll era with guest stars Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis. Tim McIntire plays deejay Alan Freed.

THE BETSY (R). Intrigue and power within the horny set of auto industry, based on Harold Robbins' best-selling novel. Many scenes filmed in metropolitan Detroit. **BLUE COLLAR (R).** Tough, realistic drama of three auto workers whose small-time revolt produces drastic results.

CASEY'S SHADOW (PG). Sensitive movie about impoverished Cajun (Walter Matthau), his three sons and the horse that becomes pivotal to their future fortunes.

COMA (PG). Scary and unpleasant movie about some strange goings-on at a hospital. Genevieve Bujold is the plucky doctor who uncovers a fiendish arrangement.

CROSSED SWORDS (PG). Adaptation of Mark Twain's "The Prince and the Pauper." Star-packed cast in story about royal impersonation, romance and ruffians in the 18th century.

THE FURY (R). Director Brian DePalma ("Carrie") again ventures into realm of the supernatural in film about two teenagers with the psychic power to move objects.

GRAY LADY DOWN (PG). Suspense as Navy attempts to rescue sunken submarine. Charlton Heston is the sub's skipper; David Carradine is among the rescue team.

HIGH ANXIETY (PG). Mel Brooks tips his hat to Hitchcock in this lunatic romp at the Psycho-Neurotic Institute for the Very, Very Nervous. Liberal visual "quotations" from Hitchcock in this howler.

HOUSE CALLS (PG). Water Mathau and Glenda Jackson in entertaining comedy about amorous adventures of widowed doctor and complications in hospital politics.

THE MOUSE AND HIS CHILD (G). Award-winning full-length cartoon feature with voices of Peter Ustinov and Cloris Leachman.

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER (R). John Travolta (of Kottler's sweatshops) is the main man in film with plenty of disco action.

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.

Contest continues, with movie tickets for best guesses

Entries have been pouring in to the Observer & Eccentric's second annual competition to guess the winners in several categories of the Academy Awards.

The Academy Awards will be presented Monday, April 3. There will be live coverage of the event from 10 p.m. to conclusion on ABC-TV (Channel 7).

The best talents will be honored with Oscars, but you—if you're first with the correct choices on our contest coupon—will receive two free passes to the movies.

Check your selections below, and watch for the Monday, April 10, edition of any Observer & Eccentric newspaper to see if you're a winner, too.

BEST ACTOR

- ☐ Woody Allen ("Annie Hall")
- ☐ Richard Burton ("Eyes")
- ☐ Richard Dreyfuss ("The Goodbye Girl")
- ☐ Marcello Mastroianni ("A Special Day")
- ☐ John Travolta ("Saturday Night Fever")

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

- ☐ Mikhail Baryshnikov ("The Turning Point")
- ☐ Peter Firth ("Equus")
- ☐ Alec Guinness ("Star Wars")
- ☐ Jason Robards ("Julia")
- ☐ Maximilian Schell ("Julia")

BEST ACTRESS

- ☐ Anne Bancroft ("The Turning Point")
- ☐ Jane Fonda ("Julia")
- ☐ Diane Keaton ("Annie Hall")
- ☐ Shirley MacLaine ("The Turning Point")
- ☐ Marsha Mason ("The Goodbye Girl")

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

- ☐ Leslie Browne ("The Turning Point")
- ☐ Quinn Cummings ("The Goodbye Girl")
- ☐ Melinda Dillon ("Close Encounters of the Third Kind")
- ☐ Vanessa Redgrave ("Julia")
- ☐ Tuesday Weld ("Looking for Mr. Goodbar")

BEST DIRECTING

- ☐ Woody Allen ("Annie Hall")
- ☐ Steven Spielberg ("Close Encounters of the Third Kind")
- ☐ Fred Zinnemann ("Julia")
- ☐ George Lucas ("Star Wars")
- ☐ Herbert Ross ("The Turning Point")

BEST PICTURE

- ☐ "Annie Hall"
- ☐ "The Goodbye Girl"
- ☐ "Julia"
- ☐ "Star Wars"
- ☐ "The Turning Point"



One of these five films will receive an Oscar (center) when the Academy Awards are telecast April 3. The nominees are (clockwise, from lower left) "Julia," "Annie Hall," "The Turning Point," "The Goodbye Girl" and "Star Wars."

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY

- ☐ "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," Vilmos Zsigmond
- ☐ "Islands in the Stream,"

Only one entry per person. In case of a tie, entry with earliest postmark will prevail. All entries must be postmarked no later than March 31. The contest is not open to employees of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

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