



LOUISE SNIDER

Disaster threatens in tacky remake of 'The Hurricane'

Spring seems to be the season of disasters, with floods, tornadoes and even radioactive fallout. Now there's one more calamity at hand, the Dino De Laurentiis production of "The Hurricane" (PG).

Mia Farrow plays a proper Bostonian gone randy in Pago Pago over a sexy Samoan played by Ex-surfer Dayton K. Ka'Ne. Ka'Ne, soon to start work on "Shark Boy of Bora Bora," has the cut of a lovely, brown-toned John Travolta. Farrow, more affected by the wind and rain, looks like a drowned mouse through much of the movie.

One reviewer described "The Hurricane" as "one torrid love affair and one bang-up hurricane." Oddly enough, the adjectives can be reversed.

Even the stern, tough navy captain (Jason Robards) can't keep his daughter (Farrow) in check, not to mention the natives or the weather. Nor is there exemplary moral conduct or support from the local priest (Trevor Howard) who has succumbed to drink.

(Haven't we seen Trevor Howard in this role before? Or was it Walter Huston? Or do all boozey missionaries look alike?) THE ELEMENTS fare better at the hands of cinematographer Sven Nykvist who captures the sensuous beauty of the tropical atoll. The actual location was Bora Bora.

THE WIND and rain come (How much energy does it take to run all those wind machines?) and the world turns into a soggy spectacle. The sun emerges for a bit and then the big blow starts. Be assured, \$22 million worth of wind and rain is a lot of wind and rain.

"THE HURRICANE" is a substantially revamped version of the John Ford epic made in 1937, just as another recent film, "The Champ," is a remake of a 1931 film with Wallace Beery and Jackie Cooper. Both originals are interesting within the context of their own era, but they are not cinematic equivalents of Shakespearean plays.

Why reprocess such slight, trivial material? These remakes, like numerous others, appear to be further instances of Hollywood turning inward and backward to cannibalize old films for new profits.

Revamping called for in Oscar categories

Some afterthoughts on the Academy Awards — why was Maggie Smith, who won an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress, nominated in that category? Whom was she supporting?

Why isn't there a category for animated feature films? Walter Lantz received a special award for his overall contribution in animated films, but there is no category for feature-length animated films. Thus, the merits of such movies as "Waterhip Down," "Lord of the Rings," "The Rescuers" and others go unrecognized.

Can anyone remember the five songs nominated for awards? The best-song competition has fallen flat on its keyboard for some time. The lackluster caliber of this year's entries was underscored when Sammy Davis and Steve Lawrence entertained with a musical medley of outstanding songs which never won awards.

It would be better to abolish or in lean years omit the category rather than continue a charade that dilutes the award's value.

Glimpses

NEW RELEASES

THE BELL JAR (R). Crack-up of a young poet, torn between life and art, is presented in somewhat flattened film version of Sylvia Plath's autobiographical novel.

THE BRINK'S JOB (PG). William Friedkin directed this comic adventure about the big heist with Peter Falk, Peter Boyle, Warren Oates and Gena Rowlands.

CALIFORNIA DREAMING (R). More of that laid-back living in story about kids who make the California beach scene. Glynnis O'Connor and Seymour Cassel star.

THE CHAMP (PG). Good cast in remake of old tearjerker about a down-and-out boxer and his adoring son. Jon Voight and young Ricky Schroder are the touching twosome.

THE CHINA SYNDROME (PG). A gripping melodrama about an accident at a nuclear power plant and the potential danger. Jane Fonda is a television newscaster, Jack Lemmon's the plant engineer.

THE DEER HUNTER (R). An emotionally gripping and violent film about the lives of three friends from a small steel town as they are affected by the Vietnam war.

THE FIFTH MUSKETEER (PG). Your average swashbuckling tale with heroes, villains and court intrigue. Beau Bridges deftly handles dual role as nasty king and his noble twin.

HAIR (G). The counter culture musical of the '60s, directed by Milos Forman, comes to the screen with amazing vitality and musical energy — if a decade late.

THE INNOCENT (R). Luchino Visconti's last film. Stylish, sensual tale of tensions in upper-class Italian society at end of 19th century. Giancarlo Giannini, Jennifer O'Neill and Laura Antonelli are the principals.

OLD BOYFRIENDS (R). Talia Shire is a clinical psychiatrist searching for lost love. Past suitors are John Belushi, Richard Jordan and Keith Carradine.

THE PASSAGE (R). Cliche-ridden film about family's flight from Nazi persecution during World War II.

A PERFECT COUPLE (PG). Sluggish comedy about seemingly mismatched computer dater. Maria Heflin sings and lives with a rock group. Paul Dooley belongs to an old-fashioned Greek family devoted to classical music.

MOVIE RATING GUIDE

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

Henrietta Valor tops the cast

By ETHEL SIMMONS

Review

Sophisticated, yet gamelike, red-haired Henrietta Valor brings the lyrics and melody from each of her songs. She projects emotion in vibrato and gesture, with captivating charm.

At Thursday's opening night for "Berlin to Broadway with Kurt Weill," Ms. Valor clearly was in control of the Meadow Brook Theater production. The rest of the cast for the show, described as a "musical voyage," reveals its strength in good, powerful voices.

Every lyric comes across with clarity from all five performers, including Jenny Brown who sings like (and resembles) Julie Andrews, with belting purity.

The men — Richard Marshall, Andy McAvin and Ty McConnell — are pleasant sounding but none created a distinct personality. In fact, it would be easy to imagine each of them playing the other parts. They are nearly indistinguishable in manner.

DESPITE THE SHOW'S title, which is certainly accurate, the production directed by John Ulmer doesn't have the kind of zip you might expect from a musically oriented performance.

"Berlin to Broadway with Kurt Weill" is fascinating for what it tells us know about this major composer who wrote for operas (and musicals) about life's seamy, or at times just everyday, side.

Words for his songs were by foremost lyricists of the day, from Bertolt Brecht to Alan Jay Lerner. With Brecht, in Germany, the songs have a black, brooding humor.

Weill's "Threepenny Opera" has thrived, and the titles of most of his Broadway shows are familiar ("Knickerbocker Holiday" and "Lady in the Dark," to name a few).

With performer Ty McConnell acting as guide, the composer's musical career and dramatic life story is briefly narrated. Songs from Weill's shows move his story, and the story of the times, along.

MC CONNELL TAKES his job as narrator seriously, perhaps using too reverential a tone about Weill. Actually, the entire cast seems to have some difficulty establishing the right mood for the material.

Part of the problem is that in doing songs from shows reflecting their times — pre-war Berlin, the dawn of World War II and America's reluctance to enter the war — the style and words tend toward quaintness.

This is especially heightened because we hear and see only segments of these mostly dated productions. There is a stilted quality in the early sequences of "Berlin to Broadway" that comes from trying to accurately reproduce these bits.

However, the cast deserves some credit for not going to the other extreme, which is to camp everything up and destroy the validity of the original productions.

Weill's music has a constant energy and beauty. From "The Threepenny Opera" (Richard Marshall is Mack the Knife), to "Happy End," "The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny" and "Marie Galante," the performers follow Weill and his wife Lotte Lenya as they flee Nazism to Paris.

AFTER INTERMISSION the show begins when the Weills arrive in New York City, and the drab though versatile stage-set by Peter-William Hicks gets a New York skyline.

The Broadway shows go from 1936 to 1949: "Johnny Johnson" (Andy McAvin is an American soldier at war), "Knickerbocker Holiday," "Lady in the Dark," "One Touch of Venus," "Love Life," "Street Scene" and "Lost in the Stars."

The cast and the pace picks up considerably as the shows near a more contemporary mode. In the "Saga of Jenny," Henrietta Valor got the biggest applause of the evening as the racy heroine who comes to a bad end.

Jenny Brown sparkles in the ballad "That's Him," from "One Touch of Venus," describing how she feels about the man she loves.

"Berlin to Broadway," the season's closing attraction, continues at Meadow Brook Theater through May 27.



Henrietta Valor got the biggest hand for "The Saga of Jenny."

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