



Audience loses with poor acting in hokey 'Players'

"Players" (PG) is about love and tennis, which, in this instance, don't go together.

The movie attempts to leap the net of sports-oriented films (we've had bowling, boxing, football, hockey, basketball) and land in the box office, but it only manages to fall flat on its face — racquet face that is.

Dean-Paul Martin as Chris, the young tennis upstart, and Ali MacGraw as Nicole, the older woman in his life, are a forgettable twosome firing passing shots at each other.

When Chris isn't sparring with Nicole, he's hitting against an international lineup of tennis stars who play themselves. They include Ilie Nastase, Denis Ralston, Vijay Amritraj and others.

THE MOST interesting parts of the film are those which record the singular niceties of custom at Wimbledon. Wimbledon is the touchstone for "Players" which opens with unseeded slugger Chris in the finals against top-seeded Guillermo Vilas.

In a series of flashbacks, Chris recalls events from his life (No need to concentrate when one has such vivid memories to rummage through.) With the help of his best friend Rusty (Steven Guttenberg), who mysteriously disappears in the middle of this film and reappears later, Chris has been a tennis hustler, ala Bobby Riggs, since puberty, which may still be going on.

While swinging through South America, he meets Nicole when he witnesses her sporty red Jensen crash into a fruit truck. Gutsy guy (th he is, he saves her from becoming a lemon squash and the seeds of love are planted).

She is very mysterious. She lives alone in a palatial villa with a drawl of money and a well-worn passport. Chris gets suspicious, especially when Nicole leaves every time she gets a long distance call and starts speaking French.

Nevertheless, his natural good nature and zest for sponging keep him hanging around, strumming his guitar and singing off key. Perhaps that's what has driven her away. As he begins to figure things out, he gets quite miffed when Nicole's lover (Maximilian Schell) calls and she quickly heels.

NICOLE, FOR HER PART, is annoyed when she returns from her liaison to discover that Chris has stolen her money. Well, the course of true love never does run smooth, even for a tennis hustler and a jet-age mistress.

Meanwhile, back at Center Court, the tense match continues. Chris keeps looking at an empty seat, presumably reserved for Nicole. Will Nicole show up? Will Chris win the championship? Will they reconcile? After all, he only stole the money so he could get tennis lessons from Pancho Gonzales. She only headed her millionaire boyfriend's call because she was afraid of reaching 40 without a proper nest egg.

These are the dramatic issues tempering Chris's play. How will it all end? Who cares?



Together again

George Segal and Glenda Jackson are reunited in Melvin Frank's "Lost and Found," a romantic comedy about a recently widowed American college professor and his toasty marriage to a newly divorced English secretary. Segal and Jackson were co-starred in Frank's 1973 boxoffice hit "A Touch of Class." The Columbia film "Lost and Found" (rated PG) opens Friday, June 22, at metropolitan Detroit theaters.

Glimpses

NEW RELEASES

ALIEN (R). Hair-raising, science-fiction horror film about alien life form that terrorizes the crew of a space ship.

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA (PG). Essentially, a recut version of pilot film for TV series but with big sound added.

BOULEVARD NIGHTS (R). Authentic-looking drama about life in the barrio. Set in East Los Angeles.

BUTCH AND SUNDANCE: THE EARLY DAYS (PG). "Prequel" to the successful hit. Tom Berger and William Katt are paired off as the rascally robbers in their salad days.

DAWN OF THE DEAD (Unrated). George Romero's zombies are the ultimate consumers in this gory, satirical sequel to his cult classic "Night of the Living Dead."

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 DREAMER (PG). Bowling version of the "Rocky" story. About as exciting as watching bowling on TV.

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.

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.

Children's Theatre partying outdoors

The AAUW Birmingham Branch Children's Theater will hold a picnic and swimming party at the home of Ann Perkins, 6385 Hills Drive, Birmingham, at 1 p.m.

Wednesday, June 20.

The event is open to new members. For membership information, call Donna Rhinehart at 644-3094, before 5 p.m.

Classic show opening

Comedy and old songs abound in the Henry Ford Museum production of the 19th century classic "A Trip to Chinatown" (Fridays and Saturdays, June 22-July 28).

The production tells the story of how a group of well-bred young people, with their chaperone as an accomplice, set out for an evening of strong drink and good times.

In this 1891 work written by Charles Hoyt, the respectable guardian, Ben Gay, allows his young charges to go out for a night on the town. The guardian has mistakenly concluded that their chaperone, a pretty widow, devised the outing as a ruse and that she hopes to dine with him secretly.

When the entire entourage ends up at the same fancy restaurant, the musical comedy of errors begins.

The show includes some of Hoyt's most memorable characters, including Gay, the outwardly respectable San Francisco bachelor with a weakness for women; Welland Strong, Gay's hypochondriac friend who comes to California for its climate and finds the earthquakes to be the most invigorating feature; and the widow, Mrs. Guyer, whose nearly immortal character became the basis of the leading roles of two 20th century productions, "The Matchmaker" and "Hello Dolly."

"Trip to Chinatown," with 657 consecutive performances, was the longest-running play of the last century.

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