



Marilu Henner is the dance hall hostess and Sela Ward is the cattle baron's daughter, who are both smitten with the western hero, played by Tom Berenger, in "Rustler's Rhapsody."

## the movies

### Dan Greenberg

# 'Rhapsody' suffers from raunchy script about the old west

It's quite a challenge to take a clever idea, a good cast, a decent budget and turn it into a bad movie. Producer David Giler and Writer-Director Hugh Wilson were equal to the task in "Rustler's Rhapsody."

First, the clever idea. What if they made Westerns like they used to... with one exception? Yesterday's films with today's mores and values, except for the hero. He's stuck with Hays Office Production Code, circa 1935: "No lustful and open-mouth kissing."

"Rustler's Rhapsody" opens with the screening of an old, black-and-white Rex O'Herlihan (Tom Berenger) western. O'Herlihan made 38 in the good old days. As the situation is explained, the screen widens to modern-day, full-color Cinemascope.

From that point Rex rides his great horse Wildfire into nearly two hours of unfulfilled promises, bad jokes and a lot of humorless, pointless homosexual allusions.

EVERY WESTERN has its cattle-baron villain, and this time Andy Griffith as Colonel Ticonderoga has the unenviable assignment of trying to be a tough, evil lord of the "raunch" while mining around with his cowhands.

The problem with this, and much of the rest of the film, is that a one-liner is milked after its limited potential has run dry. Griffith doesn't even have a one-liner to work as he shows no strength or evil of his own, simply prancing and nancing. The only toughness is exhibited by his gunslingers.

The film's second obligatory villain, the railroad baron, Fernando Rey, is equally humorless and appears to suffer from terminal heartburn.

Griffith's daughter, played by model Sela Ward, soon falls for our singing hero, Rex, as does the local dancehall queen, Miss Tracy, played by Marilu Henner. Several compromising situations which develop — two girls on the make for the same guy, one campsite and one hero with morality — are not exploited for their potential slapstick humor.

The whole thing just lies there and whimpers slowly as the pace falters and the dialogue dies a humorless death.

"RUSTLER'S RHAPSODY" has all the other stereotypes of old westerns: Sheepherders; a corrupt sheriff; town drunk; and another gunslinger, John Wayne's son Patrick. His face-off with Rex, and their discussion of good guys being confident heterosexuals, has got to be a new low in tastelessness.

G.W. Bailey as the town drunk who sobers up and becomes Rex's faithful sidekick has all the grace and humor of a large, gray lump. His so-called comedy routines include trying to emulate Rex's heroic bound into the saddle. All he manages is a groin-crushing leap. It is tasteless, humorless and obvious.

So is the film.



Andy Griffith is Colonel Ticonderoga, the cattle baron, who is confused about his sexual identity.

## upcoming things to do

● **AUDITIONS OPEN**  
Farmington Players will hold auditions for a summer production of "The Elephant Man" at 7:30 p.m. Monday-Tuesday, May 20-21, at the Farmington Barn, 32332 W. 12 Mile, Farmington Hills. For further information, call 661-4599.

● **TV HOSTESS**  
Photojournalist Linda Solomon of Birmingham will be guest co-host the week of June 9 on "The Morning Exchange," a two-hour talk show, on WEWS-TV in Cleveland. Other women who will be guest co-hosts in the next few weeks include well-known actresses. Solomon also has become a regular on "Good Afternoon, Detroit." For the show starring John Kelly and Marilyn Turner, she appears each Wednesday doing a segment on parties and benefits involving local notables.

● **HARP MUSIC**  
Andreas Vollenweider and Friends will appear in concert at 8 p.m. Thursday, May 23, at the Royal Oak Music Theatre in Royal Oak. A Swiss harpist, Vollenweider made his U.S. debut at

the 1981 Montreux Detroit Jazz Festival. Tickets at \$13.50 are available at the box office and all Ticket World outlets. For more information, call 362-9023.

● **CONCERT BAND**  
Leonard B. Smith and the Detroit Concert Band will open Kiviat's "Music Under the Stars" free, annual series at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 18, at the Livonia City Hall Plaza, Five Mile Road at Farmington Road. Concert-

goers should bring their own folding chairs or blankets for the lawn. For further information, call 421-2000, Ext. 351, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.

● **NEW PLAYS**  
The fifth program of its New Playwrights Forum Series will be presented at 7 p.m. Monday, May 20, at the Attle Theatre, Third Street at W. Grand Blvd., in Detroit. Simone Juda Press, playwright in residence, will

have staged readings of her two one-act plays, "A Burning Matter" and "Knocking at the Wrong Door." Admission is \$3 at the door only. For more information about the series call 875-8285.

● **'DANCE FEVER'**  
Preliminary, local auditions for "Dance Fever" seen locally on WDIV-TV, continue at 8 p.m. Tuesday, May 21, at Club LaNotte in Fraser. Final audition will be held at 8 p.m. Wednesday, May 29.

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