

MOVING PICTURES



Robert Redford stars as Jack Well, a seedy but attractive gambler looking for the big score in pre-Castro Havana in the movie of the same name, "Havana."

'Havana.' Big on promise, short on its follow-through

"Havana" (B, R, 135 minutes) is the kind of film that has everything going for it but only pays 50 cents on the dollar. That may please investors faced with a total loss but professional card players are always looking for the big game, that Runyonesque grail hovering just over the horizon.

Which is exactly what Jack Well (Robert Redford) is seeking when he turns up in Havana one week before Castro's revolution chased Batista and his dictatorship from Cuba on New Year's Eve 1958.

A bit seedy but still attractive, Jack is walking around money while he searches for the big score. Joe Volpi (Alan Arkin), the mob manager on the scene, doubts they can get a big game going and waffles about getting Meyer Lansky's (Mark Rydell) permission. Both Joe and Meyer are more concerned about what unrest in the islands will do their investments. But Jack keeps pushing.

For those who missed history class, pre-Castro Havana was a wide-open town with mob-controlled gambling and Meyer Lansky (the real one, not the actor) was a major player.

On the car ferry from Miami, Jack meets Bobby Duran (Lena Olin) and gets involved with a capital "I." He switches cars with her thus helping bring supplies for the rebels. Her husband, Arturo (Raul Julia), is one of the underground leaders despite his background in the landed gentry. Falling in love is a gambler's fatal mistake but the chemistry is there and Jack falls hard.

IN ADDITION to a top-notch cast, an excellent political background, a carnival atmosphere and a romance facing insurmountable odds, "Havana" was directed by Sidney Pollack. This is his 15th film since 1965 and the seventh with Robert Redford including "Out of Africa" which won Oscars for the best picture and director of 1985.

With credentials like that why doesn't "Havana" pay off? First of all, despite excellent potential, the film tends to ramble. Considerable tightening would help as would a

Grading the movies

A+	Top marks - sure to please
A	Close behind - excellent
A-	Still in running for top honors
B+	Pretty good stuff, not perfect
B	Good
B-	Good but notable deficiencies
C+	Just a cut above average
C	Mediocre
C-	Not so hot and slipping fast
D+	The very best of the poor stuff
D	Poor
D-	It doesn't get much worse
F	Truly awful
Z	Reserved for the colossally bad
*	No advanced screening

clearer explanation of the background for those contemporary audiences not steeped in historical lore.

One of the film's major points, a most significant and ironic one, is lost. The Durans' commitment to social justice in opposition to their own class was a commitment which would not long survive Castro's government.

"Havana's" closing moments are a weak attempt to reprise "Casablanca" and leave a bad taste, particularly Jack's concluding soliloquy. Despite these complaints, it's always a pleasure to watch Redford and Lena Olin in definitely in his class. Competition for viewing time is so strong during the holidays that "Havana" may not be the best bet.

"Mermals" (A-, PG-13, 110 minutes), on the other hand, is a much stronger wager for top honors at the year-end box office. The film carefully treads the line between maudlin and emotionally touching, between reality and absurdity. Only occasionally do the "Mermals" bolly

flop and tarnish a delightful, two-hour family romance, perfect for holiday entertainment.

THE "MERMAIDS" are the Flax family, hardly the typical 1983 suburban crowd. For openers, it's an all-girl clan with an unusual Jewish matriarch, Rachel (Cher), a teenage daughter, Charlotte (Winona Ryder) who wants to be a nun, and a younger sister, Kate (Christina Ricci), the nine-year-old swimming champ.

Charlotte's teenage need for faith and stability evolves into adoration of the Catholic Church and its nun. Stability, however, is not one of Mother Rachel's priorities. She's a brassy lady who picks up the family and moves every time events turn against her. In her scheme of things,

Please turn to Page 4

ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

MT offers classic Bugs

By John Monaghan
special writer

With Bugs Bunny celebrating his golden anniversary, Warner Brothers hopes to create a "Batman"-like phenomenon centered around the wacky wabbit, er rabbit.

It didn't quite happen, but we did see even more of Bugs than usual in 1990. An exhibit traveled to museums across the country, at least two books were written on the golden age of Warner's animation, and Bugs cartoons started resurging before first-run features.

The Michigan Theatre in Ann Arbor scheduled a number of Bugs Bunny compilation films. The Michigan does it again this weekend, focusing on classic animation from the 1950s.

Bugs Bunny first appeared on screen in "Porky's Hare Hunt" (1938), but the first cartoon to truly define him was "A Wild Hare" (1940). Co-starring Elmer Fudd, originally sporting a round face and a hyperactive streak, Bugs underwent some refinements over the following year.

Bugs' appeal comes from his ability

to handle almost any situation. He faced the gun barrels of Elmer and Yosemite Sam, Bogart and Robinson, even Adolf Hitler, and lived to joke about it.

VARIOUS TALENTS went into bringing Bugs to the screen. Friz Freleng, Tex Avery and Chuck Jones headed Warner's animation department at various times. They kept the gags flying fast and furious while maintaining a consistently high quality of animation.

A recent TNT cable television production, "What's Up Doc? Bugs Bunny in Hollywood," showed rare footage of Bugs' creators at work and play around the studio. The special, which also includes a superb sampling of 10 cartoons, should air again soon.

The work of Jones and Freleng highlights this Saturday and Sunday's lineup at The Michigan. The titles should include "Sahara Hare" (1955), "Hare-We to the Stars" (1958), and "Hare-Abian Nights" (1959).

Inventive soundtracks and music also became Warner's trademarks.

Mel Blanc created more than 700 original voices for the cartoons while Carl Stalling set them to music. Stalling, who scored virtually every Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodie cartoon for 32 years, is featured in a new recording called "The Carl Stalling Project."

Each of the Bugs cartoons, especially in the 1940s, might include 30 songs. The musicians would effortlessly segue from perky renditions of "By a Waterfall" to "We're in the Money" to "As Time Goes By" to "Camptown Races," all in less than a minute.

WHAT WARNERS miscalculated in its hopes for a Bugs phenomenon is that the rabbit has never lost his popularity. The syndicated cartoons are still among the most highly rated programs on television.

The only place that has possibly suffered from all the celebration is The Redford Theatre. The Bugs cartoons have been unavailable outside of feature-length compilations, but should return as short subjects before The Redford's vintage films next year.

SCREEN SCENE

DETROIT SCIENCE CENTER, 5020 John R, Detroit. Call 577-8400 for information. (\$5 museum admission includes ticket, \$2-4 children under 12).

"To the Limit" (USA - 1990), through April 1991. The latest Omnimax spectacular intercuts amazing athletic feats with an analysis of how muscles and blood meet the challenge. Not intended for people with claustrophobia, the movie becomes a first-person "Fantastic Voyage" into the human body.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY, 13671 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-2333 for information. (Free)

"A Child's Christmas in Wales" (1987), 7 p.m. Dec. 17. A grandfather tells his grandson about Christmas long ago in this hour-long adaptation

of the Dylan Thomas story.

LIVONIA MALL, Seven Mile at Middlebelt, Livonia. Call 476-1166 for information. (Free)

"An American in Paris" (USA - 1956), 10 a.m. Dec. 16. American artist and expatriate Gene Kelly lives and loves in Paris. The George Gershwin music is highlighted by Kelly's dream ballet with Leslie Caron. Vincent Minnelli directed.

"The Long, Long Trailer" (USA - 1954), 10 a.m. Dec. 22. Minnelli also directed this enjoyable Lucille Ball-Desi Arnaz vehicle in which the famous couple spends a disastrous honeymoon in an unwieldy trailer.

MAPLE THEATRE, 4135 W. Maple, Bloomfield. Call 855-0900 for show times. (\$3.50 general, \$3.50 twilight)

"Cinema Paradiso" (Italy - 1989).

A young boy grows to manhood, all the while obsessed by the village movie theater, where he eventually becomes projectionist. This love letter to the movie returns to the Maple after a successful run this summer.

"C'est La Vie" (France - 1989). The effects of separation and divorce are felt by all members of a family during a summer vacation in 1958 France. Director Diane Kurys based the story on her own early life.

MICHIGAN THEATRE, 16301 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor, 869-8397. (\$4.50; \$3.50 students/seniors)

"Cinema Paradiso" (Italy - 1989), 7 p.m. Dec. 18-21. (See Maple listing above).

"Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down" (Spain)

Please turn to Page 4

Oldies 104.3 WOMC



Holiday Gift Guide



HODGES

SUBARU

The Subaru Only Dealer

3 Blks. N. of 9 Mile on Woodward Ave. In Ferndale

Ferndale

547-8800

Laurel Park Place
Experience the art of Great Holiday Shopping at
Laurel Park Place

Featuring Jacobson's and many other distinctive stores.

W. Six Mile and Newburgh Roads in Livonia

Complimentary Valet Parking • 462-1100



MANAGED
HEALTH CARE.
A CHANGE
FOR THE BETTER.

838-2824

OMNICARE
More Choices. More Care.



VISIT THE GRAND OPENING
OF OUR BIRMINGHAM LOCATION

1532 S. Woodward Ave.

645-8181

FARMINGTON:

32825 Northwestern Hwy.

626-8480

MADISON HEIGHTS:

31075 John R

585-4520



"OFFICIAL
COMPUTER SOURCE
OF THE
NORTH POLE"

Novi - 348-8841

Troy - 649-0910

Livonia - 476-2212

Madison Heights - 544-1216

Harmony House

ANY COMPACT DISC

\$11.99

Present this coupon at any Harmony House and receive any single compact disc (regularly priced up to \$15.99) for just \$11.99. Not valid with other offers. No limit. Expires 12/23/90.

Fannie May Candies

Try our New

Egg Nog Creams

specially priced thru December at

\$5.95

Conveniently Located
Throughout The Detroit Area!

MIDAS

FREE PUCK

TOYS FOR TOTS

The first 1,000 fans who donate a new, unwrapped toy at Thursday, December 20th Red Wings game at Joe Louis Arena, will receive a Collector's Edition Red Wings Hockey Puck FREE courtesy of Midas.

HELP A NEEDY CHILD THIS CHRISTMAS BY SUPPORTING TOYS FOR TOTS

Tickets for Red Wings Games are on sale at Joe Louis Arena Box Office and all Ticketmaster Outlets

CALL (313) 645-6666

