

MOVING PICTURES



Bette Midler and Woody Allen star as a happily married couple who end up sharing the intimate details of their mutual infidelities while at a shopping mall in "Scenes from a Marriage."

Midler and Allen fall flat in "Scenes from a Marriage"

By the time Bette Midler sings "You Do Something to Me" halfway through "Scenes from a Marriage" (C, R, 85 minutes), it's too late for anybody to do anything for anyone.

Midler plays successful psychoanalyst Deborah Feingold-Piller to Woody Allen's Nick Filer, her hotshot attorney-husband who specializes in licensing sports equipment. They spend the day of their 16th wedding anniversary at the Beverly Mall, picking up presents and sushi for a dinner party they're hosting that evening in their own home.

It is really quite amazing that two such talented performers, neither of whom need a project so badly they'll accept anything, did not evaluate and reject this jumbled scenario which presents two poorly developed, shallow characters. "Scenes" was produced and directed by Paul Mazursky ("Enemies: A Love Story") and co-written with Roger L. Simon who collaborated with Mazursky on the "Enemies" screenplay. Boy, did they strike out this time.

Deborah and Nick argue, fight, drink and make love in the mall — all in less than 1½ hours. That much

action should be exciting and entertaining — and maybe funny considering the comic talents of Allen and Midler.

Not so, however, as the two of them shift behavior so quickly and to such extremes that it's all beyond belief. Even more astounding, all the action is condensed into a few moments while most of the film depicts two unpleasant, materialistic professionals indulging their marital problems in public with excessive and boring dialogue.

If this is supposed to be some filmic representation of marital fantasies, it misses the mark by several light-years.

The background is slick and the sound track terrific — Louis Armstrong, Marlene Dietrich and Gene Autry, among others — so buy the tape and stay home. "Scenes from a Marriage" only proves that shopping can be dangerous.

STILL PLAYING:

"Alice" (B+, PG-13, 100 minutes). Woody Allen's latest, fanciful and romantic comedy about New York

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ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

'L'Atalante:' A masterpiece

By John Monaghan
special writer

Jean Vigo completed only two feature films before his untimely death of lung disease in 1934. "L'Atalante," playing this weekend at the Detroit Film Theatre, is considered the 29-year-old director's masterpiece.

Francois Truffaut, who called it "perfection," would have come up with an even better adjective to describe the new restored version. After years of restoration efforts and the discovery of a decent nitrate print, audiences will get as close to Vigo's original vision as they're ever likely to.

Vigo originally stirred some controversy over his first feature, "Zero for Conduct," in 1933. The story of an oppressive boys' boarding school showed the director's anarchist leanings. The producers of his second film thought they would tone him down with more comfortable material about a bargeman and his new wife.

They got another surprise with "L'Atalante," which became one of the most free form and wildly innovative of early French films. Shot on the moody waters of the Seine, the movie mixes naturalistic locations with poetic and often surreal imagery. A wedding procession opens the

film as participants make dreaded and sarcastic comment about the new wedding. In the film's most haunting vision, the bride (played by German actress Dita Parlo) walks atop the barge, her new home, in her crisp white wedding dress.

MICHEL SIMON, the popular French character actor best known for his films with Jean Renoir, lends an unforgettable performance as the cat-loving first mate Pere Jules. He charms the young wife with his collection of exotic oddities, collected through the years at sea.

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SCREEN SCENE

ART GALLERY OF WINDSOR, 445 Riverside Dr. W., Windsor. Call (519) 258-7111 for information. (free) Contemporary Australian Cinema — A collection of shorts from the Land Down Under screen at 7 p.m. Feb. 28 and 2 p.m. March 3, including Michael Hill's "Adaptor" (1988), Tracey Moffatt's "Nice Coloured Girls" (1987), Penny Donaldi's "Too Many Captain Cooks" (1989), and Merilee Bennett's "A Song of Air" (1987).

Jean Vigo's masterpiece about a young couple's difficult married life aboard a barge. Michel Simon is unforgettable as the cat-loving first mate. A must see (\$5/auditorium). "Murder in Harlem" (USA — 1935), 1 p.m. Feb. 28-March 3. A night watchman is accused of murdering a young woman in Oscar Micheaux's mystery film. As part of a tribute to independent films originally made for black audiences. (\$2.50/recital hall)

through April. 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 943-2330 for information. (free)

"The Bicycle Thief" (Italy — 1949), 7 p.m. Feb. 25. When the disappearance of his bicycle means losing his job, a family man goes to desperate lengths to retrieve it. A still

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DETROIT FILM THEATRE, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 832-2730 for information. (\$5)

"L'Atalante" (France — 1934), 7 and 9:30 p.m. March 1-2 or 4 and 7 p.m. March 3. The full restoration of

DETROIT SCIENCE CENTER, 5020 John R., Detroit. Call 577-8400 for information. (\$5 museum admission includes ticket, \$2-44 children under 12) "To the Limit" (USA — 1990).

VIDEO VIEWING

By Dan Greenberg
special writer

Trading on perceived social patterns always has been the media's stock-in-trade and videotapes are the worst offenders when it comes to cloning theatrical successes dealing with current trends.

In this regard, albeit a bit late as international political strife goes, Prism Entertainment will release "The Endless Game" (1989, color, PG-13, 123 minutes) on Feb. 28. It's a slow but interesting, textured statement about Cold War espionage.

Albert Finney, whose performances always are pleasurable, stars as Alec Hillsden, a British intelligence agent whose wife — and the world — think he's a wine merchant, a convenient front which enables him to travel and stay out late.

Some years earlier, his mistress and co-worker, Caroline (Kristen Scott Thomas), was captured and tortured by the KGB. After being exchanged for a British-held Russian spy, Caroline was institutionalized as a result of the experience.

As "The Endless Game" opens she is murdered by an unknown agent

(George Segal) and that sets matters in motion as Hillsden tracks back through their life and love to discover who betrayed her.

This is one of those complicated character studies with limited action. The attraction of such films is puzzling out who is the KGB mole in British Intelligence.

HILLSDEN GOES underground to do so but the proceedings are telegraphed early on by a British minister's incredibly stupid comment about a Russian prison. As well, the

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