

'Tomatoes:' refreshing film fare

Had I known how refreshing "Fried Green Tomatoes" truly is, I would have seen it much sooner. By now, almost a month after release, it's no secret that this is the most satisfying and moving film to reach screens this year.

The story, according to the advertisements, centers around the relationship between Kathy Bates and Jessica Tandy. This isn't surprising, since the two back-to-back Oscar winners, usually seen on stage, are at the height of their powers at the box office.

Actually, they become something of a framing device in the adaptation of Fanny Flagg's novel. Tandy's character, who resides temporarily in a retirement home, begins to reminisce about life in a tiny Alabama town in the 1930s. Here, Idgie, a tomboy, and the more demure Ruth strike up a deep and lasting friendship.

They open a restaurant, the Whistle Stop Cafe, which becomes the main pulse of the town. Problems arise, however, when Ruth's estranged husband returns out of

nowhere and tries to kidnap their baby. When his car is dredged up from the local pond years later, Idgie is still a prime suspect.

tickets please
John Monaghan

THE CAPTIVATING saga, told during several visits, inspires Bates, who has been suffering the strain of a mid-life crisis. She gets a new lease of herself and starts to assert herself with her selfish and insensitive husband.

"Fried Green Tomatoes" has a wonderful message about individuality and just for life that really works. Sure, if you pick the movie apart it can be seen as sentimental and contrived, but it also works in a rare and deceptively simple way.

Bates and Tandy are brilliant, as

usual, so the real surprises come from Mary Stuart Masterson, who has her best role to date as the non-conforming Idgie. At first she seems too pretty for the role, but overcomes that beautifully by the time "Fried Green Tomatoes" reaches its surprising conclusion.

"Kafka" is another story entirely; The long-awaited new film from the director of "sex, lies and videotape" certainly had promise. The shadowy, paranoid landscapes of writer Franz Kafka lend themselves perfectly to the lens of the proper filmmaker.

And in the new film, director Steven Soderbergh does create a "film noir" world in black-and-white where characters walk in and out of shadows and disembodied footsteps

always seem to be just behind you.

AS IN THE current "Naked Lunch," the film places the writer as the central character in a story that mixes biographical elements with dialogue and imagery from books. Fans of the great Czech writer will recognize references to such works as "The Metamorphosis," "The Penal Colony," and "The Castle" within the framework of a murder mystery story.

Visually, there are moments of great power here. Most of it is shot in stunning black and white (always a treat), except for 20 minutes or so when Kafka enters the government headquarters where scientists hope to create a race of zombie-like humans.

Jeremy Irons, his natural paleness accentuated through heavy makeup and a trace of lipstick, tries his best to bring some life to what inevitably becomes a tedious exercise in style. The film has been hailed for its wit, but to me it was nothing more than a pretentious in-joke from an already overrated young director.



Kathy Bates offers up a memorable performance as Ruth, co-owner of the Whistle Stop Cafe, in "Fried Green Tomatoes."

SCREEN SCENE

CAPITOL THEATRE, 121 University, Windsor. Call 519-254-FILM for information. (44)

"Female Trouble" (USA - 1974), 9 p.m. Feb. 17-18. In the sleazy style of his earliest film, actual director John Waters traces the rise and fall of Dawn Davenport (played by Divine) from childhood to her eventual execution for murder.

"Dog Fight" (USA - 1991), 7 p.m. Feb. 20-22. River Phoenix. In 1963

San Francisco, takes out a plain Jane (Lili Taylor) as part of a "dog fight" - a contest to see who can date the ugliest girl. Directed by Nancy Savoca ("True Love").

DETROIT FILM THEATRE, Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 832-2730 for information. (15)

National Film Board of Canada's Animation Festival, 7 and 9:30 p.m. Feb. 21-22 and 4 and 7 p.m. Feb. 23. This entertaining compilation celebrates 50 years of Canadian animation, mixing world premieres like Caroline Leaf's "Two Sisters" with classic titles like "The Big Snit."

MAGIC BAG THEATRE CAFE, 22918 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Call 544-3039 for information. (43, 42 students and senior citizens)

"Paris Is Burning" (USA - 1991), 8 p.m. Feb. 17-20. The fascinating documentary focuses on drag balls in New York. Here gay black and Hispanic dress as women and compete for titles. The film defines "voguing," which combines fashion poses and dance moves.

"Depeche Mode 101" (USA - 1989), 9 and 11:30 p.m. Feb. 21-22. Acclaimed rock documentary director D.A. Pennebaker turns his camera on popular musical group Depeche Mode, captured live during their 101st concert appearance.

MAPLE THEATRE, 4135 W. Maple, Bloomfield. Call 855-9090 for show times. (45, \$2.95 twilight)

"Naked Lunch" (USA - 1992). David Cronenberg's flipped-out treatment of the novel by William Burroughs. Peter Weller stars as an exterminator whose addiction to bug

powder sends him on a one-way trip to a drug-inspired fantasy.

"Alan and Naomi" (USA - 1992). Lukas Haas and Vanessa Zouli star in this tribute to lost innocence, about a boy's friendship with a young refugee from Hitler's Europe.

"Mississippi Masala" (USA - 1992). A spicy love story about an African-American man and an Indian-Ugandan woman who find themselves embroiled in scandal that threatens to unravel the delicate balance between their two cultures.

MICHIGAN THEATRE, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call 666-8397 for information. (45; \$4 students and senior citizens)

"High Heels" (Spain - 1991), through Feb. 20 (call for show times). The latest from Spanish director Pedro Almodovar offers a typically irreverent twist on a classic Hollywood staple - the nostalgia for a lost parent. It finds an aging pop star returning to Madrid to both perform and patch things up with her estranged daughter, only to get involved in murder.

"Il Bidone" (Italy - 1955), 7 p.m. Feb. 18 and 5:40 p.m. Feb. 19. Translated as "The Swindle," this rarely screened early work from Federico Fellini, finds a group of con artists seeking a better life. Broderick Crawford, Giulietta Masina and Richard Basehart star.

Charles Burnett - "My Brother's Wedding" (USA - 1983) and "To Sleep With Anger" (USA - 1990) team Feb. 20. The first, at 7:15 p.m., the story of a Watts resident who dislikes his brother's mobility but agrees to stand up in his wedding. "Anger," at 9:40 p.m., is the powerful story of an old family friend

(Danny Glover) who appears out of the blue one day and disrupts a family already wracked by personal problems. Director Charles Burnett will appear to introduce and discuss his films.

REDFORD THEATRE, 17350 Lakeside, Detroit. Call 537-1133 for information. (42, 50)

"Some Like It Hot" (USA - 1959), 8 p.m. Feb. 21-22 (organ overture begins at 7:30 p.m.). Billy Wilder's raucous comedy opens with a pair of musicians (Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon) witnessing the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. They take it on the lam and hide out in an all-girl band led by Marilyn Monroe.

STATE WAYNE THEATRE, 35310 Michigan Ave. West, Wayne. Call 326-4600 for show times. (42; \$1 children and senior citizens)

"High Noon" (USA - 1952). Feb. 19-22 (call for show times). Sheriff Gary Cooper tries to enlist the help of citizens to stand up against a recently released criminal only to find himself standing alone. Fred Zinnemann's classic western was edited to give the effect of occurring in real time.

"Platoon" (USA - 1986). Feb. 19-23 (call for show times). Oliver Stone's semi-autobiographical account of life on the line in Vietnam. Charlie Sheen, Tom Berenger and Willem Dafoe star.

— John Monaghan



Pepper LaBajo and Angie Xtravaganza star in Jennie Livingston's "Paris Is Burning," now at the Magic Bag Theatre in Ferndale.

On the Town
DINING & ENTERTAINMENT

IN CONCERT

Saturday, Feb. 22

- **COTS Benefit**
Oriental Spas and Objects in the Mirror will perform in a benefit for Coalition on Temporary Shelter at Studio Lounge, 621 N. Wayne Road, south of Warren Road, Westland. Show time is 5-8 p.m. Admission is \$5 at the door. 729-2340
- **Lunacy**
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti, 485-5650
- **Toenage Fancub**
With Supercub at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. 961-9117
- **Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band**
Rick's Cafe, 811 Church, Ann Arbor. 956-2747
- **Junior Valentin and the All Stars**
Blind Pig, 308 S. First, Ann Arbor. 956-8255
- **See Dick Run**
With Opaque at Alvin's, 3758 Cass Ave., across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 832-2355
- **Van Halen**
With Baby Animals at The Palace, Two Championship Drive, off I-75, Auburn Hills. Tickets are \$22.50. 377-0100
- **Chain Reaction**
Todd's, 8139 E. Seven Mile Road, Detroit. 366-7000
- **Hammibals**
With Wally Pleasant at Lili's 21, 3930 Jacob, Hamtramck. 973-4555
- **Joanna Connor**
Sully's, 4756 Greenfield, between Michigan Avenue and Ford Road, Dearborn. 446-1920
- **D. C. Drive**
The Blitz, 17580 Frasho, 10 1/2 Mile and Gratiot, Roseville. 778-6404

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9:30 A.M.	Saturday, March 14, 1992	Ringside (Rows 1-9)	\$7.00	\$4.90
	Morning	Reserved (Rows 10-18)	\$8.00	\$5.60
	Saturday, March 28, 1992	Ringside Ends (Rows 1-9)		
5:30 P.M.	Sunday, March 15, 1992	Ringside (Rows 1-9)	\$7.00	\$4.90
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	Sunday, March 22, 1992	Ringside Ends (Rows 1-9)		
7:30 P.M.	Wednesday, March 18, 1992	Ringside (Rows 1-9)	\$5.00	\$3.50
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1:30 P.M.	Sunday, March 15, 1992	Ringside (Rows 1-9)	\$7.00	\$4.90
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