

'Crying Game' twists, turns through a fascinating story

TICKETS PLEASE



JOHN MONAGHAN

"The Crying Game" opens at a carnival, appropriate enough since it has more twists and turns than a Tilt-a-Whirl. The latest from Irish writer/director Neil Jordan doesn't always make the best narrative sense (it's almost three movies in one), but it has supremely clever moments of emotion and free-wheeling style. The acclaimed new picture, which plays for a second weekend of the Detroit Film Theatre, opens with a black English soldier (Forest Whitaker) taken hostage by a group of IRA types who hide up in a rundown country house. Unless one of their people

is released, the soldier will die. Fergus (Stephen Rea) befriends the soldier, Jody, during his assigned watch. As the hours drag by, the men share cigarettes, past experiences and dreams until it becomes painfully obvious that the hitman will have an unusually hard time shooting the doomed soldier when the time comes. Giving away much more would be unfair to the movie, which has a much-publicized twist. Even if someone does have loose lips and gives it away, there's enough here to hold your attention. One of these things is Rea's performance as the shaggy Fergus, who walks through the film in a perpetual daze, battered about by circumstance and other people's desires and deception. Sensitive, tough and thoroughly unpredictable, he's easily taken in by the rough charm of the sol-

dier, well-played by the beefy American actor Whitaker ("Dill"). Miranda Richardson ("Enchanted April") and Adrian Dunbar ("Hear My Song") play fellow IRA freedom fighters. She's the epitome of femme fatale, part chameleon, part black widow, who shows her attraction to each of the film's male characters at one time or another. He's a textbook IRA man — ruthless and unwavering in his duty. Written by English group Pet Shop Boys, the spooky title song is performed in one of its incarnations by Boy George. On another level, "The Crying Game" means emotional manipulation, something that writer/director Neil Jordan has become a master of after seven films. In his most popular works, "Mona Lisa" and "The Miracle," he created characters who were almost clichés from the outset. Yet, he has an amazing way of making you emotionally involved even when bizarre coincidence and predictability shake your willing suspension of disbelief. His movies are often so loose that you might get the idea that Jordan is making them up as he goes along. Look closer and you will find a director who probably works much closer to Hitchcock's style of meticulously plotting each angle out before the cameras roll. The movie is a dazzler visually, both polished and realistically low budget at the same time. The opening shots at the carnival, with the familiar ferris wheel and games of skill, are seedily rendered. He used similar seaside trappings to lend an almost surreal edge to "The Miracle." While "The Crying Game" might fall short of its overblown reputation as a masterpiece, it does offer a dose of freshness and ingenuity rarely seen in commercial releases. And from a quick glance at the movies opening in the next couple of months, this is the best new release we're going to have for a long, long time. If you have a comment, question or suggestion, write to John Monaghan, Street Scene, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150, or call him at 953-2047, mailbox number 1866, on a touch-tone phone.

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In Concert from page 4B

Saturday, Jan. 23
FIREHOUSE The Rat, 10½ and Gratiot, Roseville, 776-8150.

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS Twenty-36, 2036 Woodward, Detroit, (alternative rock) 961-5471.

ROY BROOKS The Ark, 637½ S. Main St., Ann Arbor, (native African-American music) 761-1451.

THE BUSTER WILLIAMS TRIO With pianist Stephen Scott and drummer Carl Allen at Bird of Paradise, 207 S. Ashby, Ann Arbor, (jazz) 962-8310.

3RD NATURE With Affection at Lil's, 2930 Caniff, Hamtramck, (melodic rock) 875-6595.

SKELETON CREW Giff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac, (acoustic rock) 354-9292.

STEVEN GORNALL & THE BLUE COLLAR BLUES BAND Q Club, 29 S. Saginaw, Pontiac, (blues) 394-7411.

GRADY HAZY With The Strait and World of Hate at Pay-

check's Lounge, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck, 874-0909.

THE LOVE CLUB Alternative music dance night at The Shelter, below St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit, 736-7478.

PARK THE KARMA Gotham City Cafe, 22848 Woodward, Ferndale, (acoustic pop) 358-7430.

EARTH CIRCUS With Sabre's Edge at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit, 831-8070.

TOP SOIL The Gallery, 22759 Van Dyke, Warren, 357-6060.

PIGFACE Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor, (industrial all stars) 996-8555.

LONNIE BROOKS Rick's Cafe, 511 Church St., Ann Arbor, (blues/rock) 996-2747.

MARC FALCONBERRY J.J.'s Pub & Grub, 32611 Ford Road, Garden City, (blues) 522-9450.

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