

Altman's 'Cuts,' Linklater's 'Dazed' Xpression from page 4B

BY JOHN MONAGHAN
Special Writer

MOVIES

I thought I was over it. The Detroit Film Theatre's revival of 1976's "Nashville" and the recent release of "The Player" finally had me convinced that maverick director Robert Altman is indeed a genius.

"Short Cuts," Altman's latest, reminds me all over again why I disliked his films in the first place. Pretentious long-winded and relentlessly complex, the movie nevertheless remains one of the year's most fascinating efforts.

The credit sequence uses brief vignettes to introduce all of the main characters, mostly couples. And there are plenty of them, including waitresses Lily Tomlin and alcoholic limo driver Tom Waits; philandering L.A. cop Tim Robbins and suspicious wife Madeline Stowe; Yuppie newscaster Bruce Davidson and catalog-loving Annie McDowell; and fishing fanatic Fred Ward and fashionable clown Anne Archer.

The movie is a tour de force of editing and acting (who else aside

from Woody Allen can assemble casts like these), serving up more three-dimensional characters than in a whole season of Hollywood movies. But when you get right down to it, only a few of these people are all that interesting in the first place.

You could easily excise the boozey nightclub singer Annie Stas and her cello-playing daughter, Lori Singer. Other bits go absolutely nowhere, like Lill Taylor and Robert Downey Jr. apartment-sitting for neighbors they know very little about. Peter Gallagher makes an appropriately slick with private part, but why is he taking a chainsaw to his ex-wife's furniture?

Any dullness in the three hours of "Short Cuts" can be attributed to Altman's love of realism. Many of the female characters speak with private part, exposed, which would probably be called sexist, if we didn't have a shot of Huey Lewis unzipping his fly and ur-

inating into his favorite trout stream.

"Short Cuts," playing exclusively the Main Art Theatre, will be hailed as an Altman masterpiece. For me, this is far from "Nashville" and more akin to ambitious Altman misfires like "H.E.A.L.T.H." and "A Wedding."

When I interviewed the young director of "Slackers" last year, he cited Altman as a primary influence. So it's not surprising that Richard Linklater's new film "Dazed and Confused" uses such a meandering style for its affectionate and often cynical look back at teenagers circa 1976.

It's the last day of school as students put finishing touches on projects in wood shop, including pot-smoking paraphernalia and thick paddles they'll use to whack incoming freshmen. The last bell rings and the kids, backed by the Alice Cooper anthem "School's Out," throw papers and folders down stairwells on their way out for summer.

Randy "Pink" Floyd (Jason London), ready to enter his senior

year, looks forward to playing king of the school. He's handsome, clever and, as a starting quarterback on the football team, a babe magnet. But when the coach asks him to sign a pledge to abstain from drinking and drugs, he's not sure he wants to play ball.

This slim plot is the springboard for the no-nonsense cast of aimless football players, nerds and stoners who drive around in search of beer busts and house parties.

Instead of simply lampooning the tacky styles and fads of the 1970s, the young writer/director uses the ball bottoms and left-form shoes as a realistic backdrop for these kids. While he paints an often appealing picture of the carefree past, Linklater also shows these kids biding time in their small Texas town, looking forward to, pathetically enough, the '80s.

"If I ever start calling these the best years of my life," says Randy, "reimind me to kill myself."

The soundtrack plays a major role here, recalling the familiar sounds of Frampton and Nazareth, which have never really left Detroit radio) and trashy, little-heard gems like "I Wanna Rock and Roll all Night" and "Fox on the Run."

"Dazed and Confused" is required viewing for anyone between 25 and 35, but may leave others just as the title suggests. Conservative groups have already protested the movie's casual drug use. There hasn't been this much pot on screen since the days of Cheech and Chong.

More importantly, the sophomore jinx has kindly skipped Linklater. Like Altman, and Linklater's own teenage protagonist, he's well on the way to working solely on his own terms.

If you have a comment for John Monaghan, call him at 563-2047, mailbox number 1866, on a touch-tone phone, or write him care of Street Scene, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

SCREEN SCENE

"Short Cuts" (USA — 1993). Robert Altman's latest weaves together the lives of eight different sets of people in contemporary Los Angeles. Tom Waits, Lily Tomlin, Tim Robbins and Anne Archer are among the all-star cast.

"Baraka" (USA — 1993). A global journey which swoops and soars across 24 countries. Shot in 70mm with an evocative musical score.

"Like Water for Chocolate" (Mexico — 1992). The surreal story of a woman whose passion is expressed through her elaborate meals.

"Bad Behavior" (Britain — 1993). The everyday triumphs and troubles of life in working-class London, starring Stephen Rea ("The Crying Game") and Sinead Cusack.

MICHIGAN THEATER
603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call 668-8397 for information. (\$5; \$4 students and senior citizens)

"Especially on Sunday" (Italy — 1993). Through Oct. 29 (call for show times). Three separate tales of love from the Italian countryside, one directed by "Cinema Paradiso's" Giuseppe Tornatore.

"The Killing" (USA — 1956). 7 p.m. Oct. 26-27. In this early 70mm with an evocative musical score. Alice Cooper anthem "School's Out," throw papers and folders down stairwells on their way out for summer.

"Tokyo Decadence" (Japan — 1991). 9:30 p.m. Oct. 30; 9:45 p.m. Oct. 31. In this controversial new film, a young woman's escort service sends her to a bizarre mix of clients, including drug addicts, sadists, masochists and necrophiliacs.

A sampling of what's playing at alternative movie theaters throughout metro Detroit as reviewed by John Monaghan.

DETROIT FILM THEATRE
Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 833-2323 for information. (\$5; \$4 students)

"Farewell My Concubine" (China — 1993). 7 and 10 p.m. Oct. 29-30; 1 and 5 p.m. Oct. 31. The film that shared the grand prize at Cannes this year is the sumptuously photographed tale of two traditional Chinese actors and their relationship over the years.

MAIN ART THEATER
118 N. Main Street at 11 Mile, Royal Oak. Call 542-0180 for show times. Titles listed run at least through next Thursday. (\$6.50; \$3 twilight)

Humanists believe in value of self

STREET SENSE
Barbara Schiff

I have recently come in contact with some people who are into Humanism. I do not know how to evaluate what they believe in. I am calling, asking for help for my confusion.

In Farmington Hills, there is a Jewish place of worship called The Birmingham Temple. They say they do not believe in God, but represent the "humanist" position in the Jewish religion. Also, there is a school in Detroit, called The Center for Humanistic Studies. Does it have anything to do with The Birmingham Temple?

In one of my friend's son's classes, the teacher said she was a "humanistic" educator. This caused a lot of controversy and another mother even threatened to change her daughter's classroom because the humanistic teacher does not believe in God. Do you know what it means to be into "humanism"? Is that a religion in which there is no God? Do you know about these programs?

Dear Caller,

I am familiar with the institutions about which you inquire. Humanism is a philosophy that can influence many areas of our lives, including religion, psychology and education. Humanists take on that title because they think about life in certain, similar, fundamental ways.

Humanism is based on independent thinking, the rejection of certainty. Humanism encourages continual questioning of all ideas. Humanism says one must investigate even the most sacredly held views. Humanists believe foremost in the value of the self and in self-direction.

Humanists do not necessarily agree on the content of a thought, for example, yes, there is, or no, there is not a God. They do agree on the open ended search each humanistically oriented person uses to find an answer to that question. Humanists value and fight for each person's right to decide for himself or herself.

question is not whether God exists but what is the source of power. For humanistic Jews, power comes from the self and from relationships. The congregants celebrate man within the context of cultural and historical Judaism.

Clark Moustakas, the director of The Center for Humanistic Studies, says the school teaches "inquiry, which may take the person toward God, or away from God, we accept either point of view." The Center for Humanistic Studies is a Detroit college which confers master's and specialist degrees in psychology. It teaches psychology based on the philosophy described in this article.

The teacher who said she was a humanist was saying that she believes children have the right to question all beliefs, even those of the church and those of their par-

ents. Many institutions and parents think such inquiry is dangerous and untrue.

If you want further information, write to American Humanist Association, 7 Harwood Dr., P.O. Box 146, Amherst, N.Y. 14226-0146, or call (716) 839-5080.

If you have a question or a comment for Barbara Schiff, a trained therapist and experienced counselor, send it to Street Sense, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

OCTOBER HAYRIDES

WAGON DEPARTURES FROM 7 P.M. TO 10 P.M.

LIVE THE LEGEND

- Acres of horrors
- Laughs, thrills & chills
- Ghosts, Goblins, Monsters, Denizens of the Night
- Free cider & donuts at the Witches' Cauldron
- No alcohol allowed
- Group discounts available

CALL FOR RESERVATIONS
(313) 726-9100

PLYMOUTH ORCHARDS 10685 Warren Rd. • Plymouth 1/2 Mile West of Napier

BIG RED ORCHARD 4900 32 Mile Rd. • Romco 2 Miles West of Van Dyke

On the Town

DINOHO & ENTERTAINMENT

Have We Got A Halloween Deal For You!

Now thru October 31st dine with us and kids under 12 eat FREE.

Turn on to Thai Cuisine. You can get it with just a little zing or hot enough to send you to the moon.

BANGKOK CLUB
Southfield Road between 12 & 13 Mile Road Southfield Commons 569-1400

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

DIRECTED BY STRATFORD'S BRIAN MACDONALD

At the Fisher Theatre
Oct. 29, 30, 31
Nov. 3, 5, 6
Coming Nov. 12-21
The Merry Widow

MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE
874-SING

shows including "Gospel Telethon," and have won best new band, best band, top reggae/calypto, most versatile band and top Carnival Road march band awards.

"Can't Stand It" from their "World Grooves" record was on regular rotation on local commercial radio, with "Come Falla Mi" from the same album making the No. 14 spot on the College Music Journal charts.

Like Farris, other members of the band hail from the Caribbean, more specifically Nevis, Jamaica, Dominica, and the Bahamas, creating what he calls a native sound.

"The fact that what we are about is more than a band selling Royal Oak and Caribbean Market at Eight Mile Road and I-75.

Xpression means we're not confined to any one style of Caribbean music."

Universal Xpression performs Tuesday, Oct. 26, at the Metro Musicale, 3220 W. Fourth St., (at Lafayette) Royal Oak. For more information, call 542-1950. The group will also perform Saturday, Oct. 30, at Sierra Afrique, 19325 Plymouth Road, Detroit, (838-3833); Saturday, Nov. 6, at Serbin-an Hall, 19940 Van Dyke (at Outer Drive), Detroit. (366-9668); and Wednesday, Nov. 17, with Sugar, Minott and Dread Palmstone at Industry, 15 S. Saginaw, Pontiac, (334-1999). Universal Xpression's release is available at Sam's Jams in Ferndale. Off the Record at Royal Oak and Caribbean Market at Eight Mile Road and I-75.

STREET BEATS

Motown music came full circle Thursday at the Palace of Auburn Hills. With "Tears of a Clown" by Smokey Robinson and the Miracles echoing throughout the arena, 19,000 people jumped to their feet to greet Motown's most flamboyant star — Madonna.

Numerous costume changes including clown outfits, pin-striped suits and tropical island gear (no cone bras) highlighted the 1½-hour show.

The nine-piece band and eight-member dance troupe performed house music versions of 16 of Madonna's hits from "Holiday" to "Rain" on a two-story stage that took 17 hours to build.

Mid-show, Madonna performed a 1930s-style rendition of "Like a Virgin" dressed in top hat and tails.

At one point, Madonna, clad in military garb, scolded a dancer who appeared topless during the show. Embarrassed(!) for her father who was in the audience, she made the dancer do push-ups.

Madonna, more personable and funny than she appears, acknowledged her Michigan roots several times during the show. She questioned the audience, "Not bad for a girl from Michigan, huh?"

"Seeing the multi-million dollar 'Girlic Show,' that's an understatement."

— Christina Fuoco

Cheap eats from page 4B

Appetizers are creative, colorful and absolutely delicious. "Dragon's Eggs" are a good way to start off and Union Street has a warning on the menu that they're not for the squeamish. Boneless chicken breast is stuffed with bleu cheese, rolled in tempura batter and tossed in Jamaican Hellfire sauce, and a very tasty mushroom medley, featuring sautéed portabella, oysters and shitake mushrooms in marsala wine sauce, are a few of the offerings on this very diverse and visually appealing list of appetizer.

Entrees — this place layers, contrasts and juxtaposes colors, textures and tastes in a truly unforgettable way. Italian, Cajun, Mexican, French, Mom's kitchen — Union Street does it all, and it's all unbelievably authentic. Main courses are stylish enough to intrigue sophisticates, yet sprinkled with enough local ingredients to appeal to less-traveled palates.

Beers from around the world, an extensive wine list and an impressive array of desserts are also available. There's virtually nothing here that's not tempting.

Union Street is a truly unforgettable dining hot spot. It's menu reads like a gastronomic love story, the atmosphere is elegant, yet comfortable, and the patrons are as creative and colorful as the food.

"People do read the ads"

Ollie Colvard now knows something we've known for years—people not only read our Observer & Eccentric Classifieds, they call on them and buy from them. "My response was excellent," Ollie told us.

Reach Michigan's Finest Suburban Market

World War II Veterans

It's not a secret anymore.

If you were exposed to mustard gas during field and chamber tests of protective equipment while in military service, you may be eligible for VA benefits for certain health problems related to that exposure. You are no longer bound by pledges of secrecy about your participation in these tests. For more information, call the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs toll free: 1-800-827-1000. Survivors of exposed veterans may also be eligible and should contact VA for additional information.

THESE MEDICAL CONDITIONS CAN BE CAUSED BY POISON GAS

- RESPIRATORY CANCERS
- SKIN CANCER
- OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE
- NON-LYMPHOCYTIC LEUKEMIA
- CHRONIC LARYNGITIS
- BRONCHITIS
- EMPHYSEMA AND ASTHMA
- CHRONIC CONJUNCTIVITIS
- KERATITIS
- CLOUDED VISION