

'Ruby' — an exercise in understatement — gets subtle treatment

By JOHN MONAGHAN
SPECIAL WRITER

"I got out of Manning without getting beat up or pregnant, which is something," says the young woman played by Ashley Judd in "Ruby in Paradise." She leaves her tiny Tennessee mountain town for Florida, where she lands a job in a seaside gift shop.

The movie that follows, like its heroine, wanders rather aimlessly through life in the Sunshine State. While Ruby discovers some piece of mind by film's end, viewers may find themselves wanting more from this low-key slice of life.

An admittedly "small" film playing exclusively at the Main Theatre in Royal Oak, "Ruby" is an exercise in understatement. Granted, not every movie has to climax with an earthquake, but writer/director Vincent Nunez goes out of his way to show us the mundane.

Ruby does her job dutifully, dusting off the display counters and stacking beach towels and sunglasses for the upcoming busy season. She meets regularly for lunch with an ambitious fellow co-worker.

Off the job, Ruby writes in a diary, musing on life, love, and the reasons why we get out of bed in the morning. She comes to profound conclusions about women after dropping by a topless bar, desperate after being turned down

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by every business short of McDonald's.

Despite all this helpful exposition, it's still a mystery what her life back home was really like. She mentions grandparents, a mother who died not that long ago, and even hints at a boyfriend, apparently the same one who throws a boat at her before the opening credits.

Florida has its own man troubles in store for Ruby. Against her better judgment, she sleeps with a handsome playboy named Ricky (Bentley Mitchum), who also happens to be the boss' son. When she tries to break off the relationship, he threatens her with her job.

Mike (Todd Field) works in a nursery and, for a while, looks like a real catch. Then he starts to show his gloomy and condescending side, and we weigh with Ruby the comfort of an intimate relationship and the compromises that will inevitably follow.

Ashley Judd (of the famous country music family) follows the

movie's aesthetic well, forcing you to read into long stretches of silence and reflection. Though Judd has been praised for her subtly shaded performance, I'm still not sure if she's acting introspective or just plain dull.

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Ruby has her own shortcomings, but we relate completely to her stupid moves and small conquests. She finds in Florida the kind of opportunities she couldn't find at home. For that we should celebrate.

If you have a comment for John Monaghan, call him at 953-2047, mailbox 1868, on a Touch-Tone phone, or write to him care of Street Scene, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150.

SCREEN SCENE

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

DETROIT FILM THEATRE
Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 463-2323 for information. (\$5; \$4 students/seniors)

"Rock Hudson's Home Movies" (USA - 1992). 7, 9:30 p.m. Dec. 3 - 4. Mark Rappaport's amazing new documentary shows clips from the late actor's film career, offering clever clues that should have given us a hint that he was gay.

"Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media" (Canada - 1992). 4 p.m. Dec. 5. This documentary portrait of the radically independent author, activist, and thinker intersperses interviews with cleverly edited stock footage.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY
1321 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-2330 for information. (Free)

"Just My Luck" (USA - 1957). 7 p.m. Nov. 29. Norman Wisdom and Margaret Rutherford star in race-track comedy.

MAGIC BAG THEATRE
22918 Woodward at Nine Mile, Ferndale. Call 544-3030 for information. (\$3)

"Tex Avery's Wildest Cartoons." 8 p.m. Dec. 2. Holly-

wood's most outrageous cartoon director is represented in ten of his greatest works. Among them: "Little Red Riding Hood," "Ventilator Cat," "King-Size Canary," and "Who Killed Who."

MAIN THEATRE
118 N. Main St. at 11 Mile, Royal Oak. Films play through at least Thursday. Call 542-0180 for information and showtimes. (\$6.50; \$4 students; \$3 twilight/matinee)

"Short Cuts" (USA - 1993). Robert Altman weaves together eight stories in this ambitious but ponderous exploration of the screwed-up character types that populate contemporary L.A. Tom Waits, Lily Tomlin, Tim Robbins and Jack Lemmon just scratch the surface of the all-star cast.

"Remains of the Day" (Britain - 1993). Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson play butler and housekeeper at a 1930s English estate. Top-notch performances highlight this intelligent character study from the producer/director team of Ismail Merchant and James Ivory.

"Ruby in Paradise" (USA - 1993). (See accompanying story).

MICHIGAN THEATRE
603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call

668-8397 for information. (\$5; \$4 students and senior citizens).

"The Piano" (New Zealand - 1993). Through Dec. 6 (call for showtimes). Jane Campion directed this stunning tale of a mute woman who arrives in the New Zealand hush as part of an arranged marriage. While her husband (Sam Neill) leaves her cold, she carries on a bizarre relationship with a neighboring settler (Harvey Keitel).

REDFORD THEATRE
17360 Lahser Road, Detroit. Call 537-2561 for information. (\$2.50)

"Fancy Pants" (USA - 1950). 8 p.m. Dec. 3, 2, 8 p.m. Dec. 4 (organ overture starts a half hour before showtime). Bob Hope plays a British actor stranded in a small Western town who poses as a butler. Lucille Ball co-stars.

STATE THEATRE
2116 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 961-2461 for information. (\$1)

"Reservoir Dogs" (USA - 1992). 9 p.m. Nov. 29. Harvey Keitel stars in this violent study of a robbery gone way wrong. The impressive ensemble cast features Lawrence Tierney, Steve Buscemi, Tim Roth, and Chris Penn.

Comedy from page 6A

baby-faced look communicate immediate credibility to that statement.

Since getting his comedic start at the University of Michigan a little over two years ago, Zimmer has graduated on to performing in clubs and colleges around the country.

But when he gets on stage Dec. 6, this Upper Peninsula native will remember his real childhood. At the age of 18 months, he had a generalized tonic-clonic, formerly known as grand mal, seizure. His parents were not aware of what was happening.

It wasn't until he had a second seizure that he was diagnosed

with epilepsy and put on medication. A third seizure followed soon after, but eventually, the medication brought the seizures under control. Zimmer took his last dose of medication when he was 14.

Epilepsy is a serious matter in anybody's life, but Zimmer can find humor in looking back.

"During school, I used to get out of class to take my medicine every day," Zimmer recalled. "The nurse couldn't open the childproof cap on the medicine, so she'd ask me to do it."

Sandwiched between Carey and Zimmer on stage for the benefit is

Westland's Jim McLean.

"The First Annual Laugh Revue," a benefit for the Epilepsy Center of Michigan and starring Drew Carey with special guests Jim McLean and Joel Zimmer, will be Monday, Dec. 6, at Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle, 269 E. Fourth, Royal Oak. Tickets are \$25 per person or \$40 per couple and include a pre-show reception, featuring Metro Detroit Pizza. Patron seating at \$35 per person and includes complimentary wine and cheese, V.I.P. seating and a special souvenir. Group discounts are also available. For reservations, call the Center at 351-7979.

Tonys from page 6A

"What we do, however, rather than sample records from the past, because we are real musicians we choose to recreate the feel, the vibe, the overall attitude of what was going on then," he added.

The name "Sons of Soul" reflects that.

"You have James Brown who is the Godfather of Soul, you have Aretha Franklin who is the Queen of Soul, you have Ray Charles who is the Genius of Soul. Without them and so many others... we wouldn't be able to create the

music we create. We're their children," Raphael Wiggins said.

"We just put the name with the music. It's the vibe we created while we were recording."

Although Raphael Wiggins doesn't play instruments live, he and his brother Dwayne played guitars, bass and keyboards on "Sons of Soul."

Their shows with Janet Jackson — Saturday at Joe Louis Arena in Detroit and Sunday at The Palace of Auburn Hills — will feature a number of non-traditional touring musicians includ-

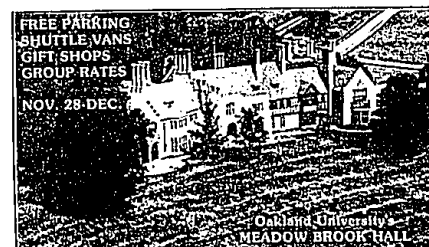
ing horn players and a violinist, Wiggins said. That just confirms Raphael Wiggins' basic philosophy about his band.

"Music is more important than vocals," Raphael Wiggins said.

Tony Toni Tone opens for Janet Jackson at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 4, at Joe Louis Arena, 600 Civic Center Drive, Detroit. Tickets are \$29.75. For more information, call 396-7600; and at 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 5, at The Palace of Auburn Hills, 1-75 and Lothrop Road in Auburn Hills. Tickets are \$29.75 and \$50. For more information, call 377-0100.

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