

'Playboy' request spurs responses

STREET SENSE
BARBARA SCHIFF

Dear Readers, This high number of responses to the mother of the 12-year-old boy who wants a subscription to "Playboy" magazine reveals the pervasiveness of this issue in our culture. Lots of young boys want to look at pictures of naked women and other sexually stimulating photographs. The replies are varied. Last week's writer warned readers that pornography is responsible for sex crimes. This week, the mother responding reports her individual experience, which is about family dynamics, not pornography. In the following weeks more comments will be printed. If you are like me, you will be impressed by the diversity in individual attitudes they show and by the thoughtfulness exhibited by many.

Barbara
Voice Mail Message: Barbara, I read the message from the mother whose son wants a subscription to "Playboy." Some years ago I had a similar experience but with a different twist. One of my sons is now 16. When he was 11 or 12, he also wanted to keep "Playboy" in the house. Like the mother who called you, I tried logically to reason out the best decision. I know now that I wasn't thinking about the situation clearly. In my case, the appropriateness of the material was only a diversion from the real issue, which was, and is, my son's manipulation of his father, his siblings, his friends and me. For my son, disagreements are important because they bring the opportunity for power. If he can make others do what he wants them to do then he wins, and, I want to add, then he thinks he is smarter than the rest of us. My son is difficult to raise. The issue about "Playboy" was just another in a long list of overt and covert power struggles. My son argued about his bedtime, the food he ate, the time he left for the bus and most other responsibilities. I should have known at the time that sexy magazines were another battlefield in the same old fight of who's the boss. Unfortunately, it took until my son got older for me to see the light. Maybe your caller's son is not like my son. But, because I struggle with this problem, I wanted to warn this mom to beware. Thank you for taking the time and trouble to share your experience, which will be helpful to many. Without wanting to place any additional burden on your generous nature, I would like to ask you what happened that made it possible for you to see "the light." Many could profit from that experience as well. I also wish, for myself, and for the readers of this column, that I knew how, once you saw the light, your behavior toward your son changed and whether or not you could stop his manipulation of you. The problem you describe is not an uncommon one, even though it is often difficult for parents to recognize. It is natural to want to think the best of our children. You deserve credit for confronting this difficult problem rather than running away from it.

Barbara
If you have a question or a comment for Barbara Schiff, a trained therapist and expert on Street Sense, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. You can also leave a message by calling (313) 953-2047, mail box 1877, on a touch-tone phone.

Day-Lewis is brilliant in 'Father'

BY JOHN MANAGHAN
SPECIAL WRITER

Young couples laugh and tease as they enter the noisy pub in Guildford, just outside London. As the front door closes behind them, the pub explodes, the front windows flying out, blowing five people inside to smithereens and injuring several others. In the real-life drama that followed, the British people required justice from the 1975 Irish Republican Army bombing and found it in Gerry Conlon, a Belfast native in London at the time. Pressured into a confession, he served 15 years in a maximum security prison for a crime he had nothing to do with. He wasn't alone. Friends Paul Hill, Paddy Armstrong and Carole Richardson — collectively known as the "Guildford Four" — also received life sentences. "In the Name of the Father," based on Conlon's autobiography "Proved Innocent," focuses on this dark chapter in London legal history. It's also a moving story about Conlon and his father Giuseppe, who shares a cell with Gerry after being named as an ac-

MOVIES

complish in the bombing. Daniel Day-Lewis teams up again with Irish writer/director Jim Sheridan. The two worked together on "My Left Foot," copping Day-Lewis a best actor Oscar for his portrayal of palsy-stricken writer Christy Brown. His performance here is no less stunning. Wearing bell-bottom jeans, wide-collared shirts and a mass of shaggy unkempt hair, this Conlon is no angel. Actually, he's a petty thief whose involvement with the IRA is no different than any other young man in Belfast at the time. He grew up with active members, but, as his father tries to say in defense, "he's not political." Aside from quality acting, including Pete Postlethwaite as the physically weak but steadfast father, "In the Name of the Father" creates an amazing sense of place. Snaking through Belfast back to back with Gerry, you really do feel part of the late '60s Irish uprisings that found locals lobbing rocks and trash cans at British tanks. Likewise, when Gerry tries his luck in London, we get introduced to an authentic hippie commune where residents rip up the floorboards for firewood. The images of wildly dressed hippies frolicking in parks to the strains of typically uptight Londoners compare poignantly to the dark times that follow. Emma Thompson, still on area screens in "Remains of the Day," plays the solicitor who represents the Conlons in court years after the original trial. Much of the story is told through Gerry's recollections on a tape recording which he hopes will persuade her to take the case. A lesser director would have made this a straight courtroom drama, but Sheridan, an immensely talented filmmaker, keeps these sequences to a minimum, focusing instead on the personal relationships. Gerry's transformation from aimless young man fighting not just for himself but for his father is both believable and poignant. Politically, the movie depicts

the dark side of both the London police and the Irish terrorists. When a notorious IRA leader arrives in the same prison as the Conlons, Gerry respects his ability to get things done but then backs away when he discovers the intense and often mindless hatred involved. Modern-rock lovers will find haunting new songs from Irish performers Bono and Sinéad O'Connor during the opening and closing credits. Other music of the era, including Hendrix's "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" and The Kinks' "Dedicated Follower of Fashion" are also creatively used. Tightly scripted and surprisingly entertaining, "In the Name of the Father" could teach Hollywood a thing or two about making movies that deliver a message while rarely growing preachy or heavy-handed.

If you have a comment for John Managhan, call him at (313) 953-2047, mailbox 1866, on a touch-tone phone, or write to him care of Street Sense, 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 Managhan.**
- DETROIT FILM SOCIETY**
Detroit Public Library, 5201 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 833-4048 for information. (\$4 individual screening; \$25 series membership)
Musical double feature — "Roberta" (USA — 1935) and "The Gang's All Here" (USA — 1943), starting at 7 p.m. Jan. 11-12. Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire star in "Roberta," about a group of entertainers operating a Paris dress shop. Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach penned the score. The second feature is a colorful wartime musical directed by Busby Berkeley and featuring Carmen Miranda.
 - DETROIT FILM THEATRE**
Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 833-2323 for information. (\$5)
"Combination Platter" (USA — 1993), 7 and 9:30 p.m. Feb. 11-12; 4 and 7 p.m. Feb. 13. A charming but anxious young man, recently arrived from Hong Kong, takes a job in a Chinese restaurant where he gets a funny and moving crash course in life, romance and tipping.
 - KINOTEK**
Capital Theatre and Arts Centre, 121 University, Windsor. Call (519) 971-5160 for information. (\$4.50)
"Fellini Casanova" (Italy — 1976), 9 p.m. Feb. 12-14. Perhaps Federico Fellini's darkest film focuses on Casanova's compulsive and loveless approach to sex. Donald Sutherland stars in the film the director called "a film about emptiness, a film about death."
 - MAGIC BAG THEATRE**
22915 Woodward, Ferndale. Call 544-3030 for information. (\$4)
"A Clockwork Orange" (USA — 1971), 8 p.m. Feb. 10. Stanley Kubrick's visionary story of Alex, the gang leader who undergoes treatment for his anti-social behavior. Based on the novel by the late Anthony Burgess.
 - MAIN ART THEATRE**
118 N. Main Street at (11 Mile) Royal Oak. Films play through at least Thursday. Call 542-0180 for information and show times. (\$8.50; \$4 students; \$3 twilight/matinees)
"King of the Hill" (USA — 1994). Stephen Soderberg ("sex, lies and videotape" and "Kafka") directed this tale of a boy's coming-of-age during the Depression. "Schindler's List" (USA — 1993). Stephen Spielberg may finally get his Academy Award for this story of Oskar Schindler (Liam Neeson), a war profiteer and Nazi crony who protected and saved the lives of more than 1,000 Jews during the Holocaust. "Six Degrees of Separation" (USA — 1994). Based on John Guare's award-winning play, a savvy young man (Will Smith) poses as Sidney Poitier's son to cajole his way into the home of a Fifth Avenue couple (Donald Sutherland and Stockard Channing).
 - MAPLE THEATRE**
4135 W. Maple Road, Bloomfield. Call 855-9090 for information. (\$5.75; \$3.35 matinee; \$2.95 twilight)
"The Snapper" (England/Ireland — 1993). When 20-year-old Sharon announces to her working-class parents that she's pregnant, her family and neighborhood react in some most surprising ways. The second film adaptation of a Roddy Doyle's trio of books about Dublin life ("The Commitments" was first) is a disarmingly funny movie highlighted by Colm Meaney's performance as Sharon's ram-bunctious father.

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