

# 'Sirens' slowly sinks in its own silliness

BY JOHN MONAGHAN

SPECIAL WRITER

Sirens, according to legend, perch upon craggy cliffs and beckon sailors toward them. As their ships sink after crashing upon the rocks, the seamen are lulled to a watery grave by the hypnotic women.

John Dulian, writer/director of the new movie "Sirens," hopes to cast a similar spell. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of a willing cast and crew, his movie isn't clever or sly enough to draw us into the trap completely.

Hugh Grant and Tara Fitzger-

ald play an English reverend and his wife who visit the country home of a controversial Australian artist in the 1930s. His "Crucified Venus," depicting a voluptuous naked woman nailed to the cross, has London in an uproar, and it's up to the Rev. Tony Campton to talk him into withdrawing it from international exhibition.

They find in Norman Lindsay (Sam Neill) a playfully mocking and dedicated artist who intends to do nothing of the kind. He does the various evils carried out in the name of organized religion — from witch burnings to the Span-

## ■ MOVIES

ish Inquisition — and doesn't see how his pictures are going to unravel the country's moral fabric.

During these philosophical arguments, the reverend's wife Estelle finds herself first repulsed and then strangely attracted to Lindsay's trio of artist models.

When they aren't posing or swimming naked, they're dressed in flamboyant costumes, eating sug- gestively and talking about little else but sex.

While Tony considers himself

broad-minded and worldly, it's the prim Estelle who is drawn to the rocks. The days are hot and sunny and the constant talk about the muscular, half-naked handy man (usually shown stripped to the waist, in a homo-romance style) has her thinking.

Her feelings grow so vivid that she does not notice at the point whether she's been unfaithful to Tony or not.

At its best, "Sirens" is a playful summer romp for its talented cast. Likable Hugh Grant, still visible on area screens in "Re- mains of the Day" and "Pour

Weddings and a Funeral," may finally take his place as a bankable leading man. Likewise Sam Neill, practically a household name when you add up all the people who saw him in "The Piano" and "Jurassic Park."

Norman Lindsay, as it turns out, was an Australian artist. He died in 1969 at the age of 90 after seven decades of infuriating the public with his satirical paintings, sketches, sculptures and novels. The filmmakers actually shot at his 40-acre estate outside Sydney, another plus.

At its worst, "Sirens" is an in- herently sexist romp filmed with the subtlety of a dirty slide show. Writer/director Dulian ("Flirting") keeps his tongue firmly in cheek, especially when it comes to overt use of sexual symbols. We can practically see him in a fit of adolescent snickering as another snake winds suggestively through the scenery.

"Sirens," nearing the end of a successful run at the Maple and elsewhere, proves once again that sex — or the promise of it — still sells. It's hard not to think of worthier movies that have fallen through the cracks.

## In concert from page 6A

### DELA 88 BLUES BAND

Doc Frock's, 7935 W. Maple, West Bloomfield. (242-7200)

### HAPPY ACCIDENTS

With Chain Reaction at Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. (alter- nate rock) (313) 485-5050

### MARVIN THOMPSON

Bind of Paradise, 207 S. Ashley, Ann Arbor. (313) 662-8310

### FOUR HANDS

John Dugay, 110 N. Main St., Rochester. (acoustic) (313) 650-3344

### SUDPHONE

With HAL at Alvin's, 5758 Cass, Detroit. (313) 832-2355 or (313) 886-7860

### PETE OR MEAT

With Dabblers and Subsidence at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. (313) 334-2922

### THE LOOK

At Outrageous Sports Tavern, 27206 Michigan Ave., Inkster. (313) 277-5010

### JOHN WESLEY HARDING

Majestic, 4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. (313) 764-7680

### ROCKIN' ROLLIN'

Hoover Roadhouse, 24300 Hoover, Warren. (313) 756-6140

### THE HARD MINE DOWNS

With The Poor Pigs, 206-208 S. Franklin, Ann Arbor. (313) 996-8555

### PIT Vipers

Speakeasy, 31410 Ford Road, Garden City, (blues) (313) 425-3737

### PAUL MARVIN BLUES BAND

Bind of Paradise, 207 S. Ashley, Ann Arbor. (313) 662-8310

### GUITAR SHOW

Michigan State Fairground, 7½ Mile Road and Woodward Avenue, Detroit. (310) 546-7447 or (810) 546-5249

### THE REV. MORTON NEAT

With Possum Dixon at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. (swing) (313) 961-9670

### SOMETIMES WHY

With Joey Ranchers at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. (alternative pop) (310) 334-2922

### PANTHERS ACTION COUNCIL

Stan's Dugout, 4000 Garfield, Clinton Township. (blues) (313) 277-5010

### ROCKIN' ROLLIN'

At Outrageous Sports Tavern, 27206 Michigan Ave., Inkster. (313) 277-5010

### (313) 265-5060

### HARMONICA SHAH AND BOBBY EAST

New Site, 41270 Hayes, Clinton Town- ship. (313) 265-5060

### EMMA'S BALL PAUL

St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. (rock) (313) 961-9670

### 3 GUANAS FROM EARTH

Mill Street Bar and Grill, 12 S. Mill St., Pontiac. (blues) (310) 334-2037

### Saturday, April 16

### PANTHERS

With Crowbar at State Theatre, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit. (rock) (313) 961-5451

### MSX

At Crowbar, 23130 Woodward Ave., Detroit. (rock) (310) 541-9670

### MARY MCQUIRE

Brendan's Pub, 33210 W. 14 Mile Road, Livonia. (313) 265-5060

### ROBERT JONES

New Site, 41270 Hayes, Clinton Town- ship. (313) 265-5060

### THEY SHOUT IT'S GIANTS

Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University, Ann Arbor. (quirky alternative pop) (313) 764-6350

### COMMANDER COOT

Sally's, 1758 Greenfield Road, Dear- born. (313) 265-5060

### DELTA 88 BLUES BAND

Doc Frock's, 7935 W. Maple, West Bloomfield. (blues)

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