MOVIES

Talented Jodie Foster creates a believable 'Nell'



I'm not exactly sure what Jodie Foster studied in college, but I bet it had something to do with psy-chology. Her directorial debut in "Little Man Tate" focused on a child prodigy placed in the hands of the sci-entific communi-

Foster's new movie, "Nell," has a different twist but essentially the same conflict. A young woman raised solely by her mother deep in the woods must become acciamated to the real world or continue the rustle life she's used to. Unfortunately, "Nell" follows "Tate's" fete — it reads like a long-winded master's thesis. Though full of good intentions and Foster's atrong lead performance, the point becomes poinfully obvious after about five minutes; the rest merely serves as filler. It's not until Nell's mother dies that anyone even knows of her cristence. According to the papers, the mother was once the victim of

REVIEW

rape, resulting in a complete withdrawal from the community and the clandestine birth and rearing of Nell.

Nell has never seen another human being and has thus picked up her mother's manner of speech, virtually unintelligible since half of the older woman's face was paralyzed by a stroke. The movie keeps an audience on



Drama: Natasha Richardson is Paula Olsen, (left to right), Jodie Foster is the title character, and Liam Nee-son is Jerome in "Nell."

its toes trying to figure out what she's saying.

The jury is out, at least for three months, as the court decides what to do with Nell. Liam Nee-son's scriffy country doctor would like her to stay put. The would like her to say put the medical community, represented by Natasha Richardson, wants her in the hospital for observa-

tion.

He watches Nell from a rearby campaile while also, on a floating laboratory, logs her way move ny dealers and the statistics of the

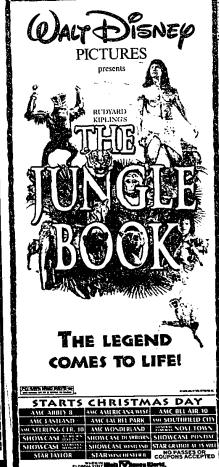
guage.

Director Michael Apted has a clever way of bringing compassion and dignity to mountain people, just as he did in 1880s "Coal Miner's Daughter." He can't, he way of the sappi-

the script, especially at the French woods. The 1969 clastic end, where a courtroom scene wrenches tears from its much-too-manipulated audience.

And I suppose this is fine for the Christmas season. If you want truth, however, check out "The Wild Child," Francois Truffaut's clinical yet emotional study of an actual 18th-century boy raised in





PLONGLE TILLY WORK TO NAMED IN

, Screen Scene

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

M MAGIC BAG THEATRE

E MAGIC BAG THEATRE
22918 Woodward, Ferndale. Call
810-544-303 for information. (\$6)
Spike and Mike's Sick and
Twisted Festived of Animation.
Dec. 22 - 30 (call for showtimes).
Beavis and Butthead mode their
Detroit debut during an earlier
citition. So you can imagine
what's in store in this new compilation, featuring such titles as
"Home Honey, I'm High," "Brian's Brain," and "Lloyd's Lunchbox." Not for the weak at heart
or stomach.

B MAIN ART THEATRE

118 N. Main Street at 11 Mile,
Royal Oak. Films play through at
least Thursday, unless noted otherwise. Call 810-542-0180 for in-

formation and showtimes. (\$6.50; \$4 students and matinee; \$3

formation and showtimes. (\$6.50;
\$4 students and matinee; \$3
twilight)
"The Last Seduction" (USA1994). The follow-up film noir
form John Dahl, director of "Red
Rock West." This time Linds
Fiorentinos lant as a ruthless
femme fatale who double crosses
formen fatale who double crosses
for husband, then hides out in a
Smalltown, USA.
"Builets Over Broadway" (USA
1994). Woody Allen's latest, set
in the 1920s, finds an ambitious
playwright (John Cusack) offered
the chance to direct his own play.
The only hitch: he has to cast a
mobater's girliend in a key role.
"Heavenly Creatures" (New
Zealand: 1994). The tole, based
on a true story about two imaginative girls who find themselves
involved in something they can't
control. An acclaimed new movie
from Peter Jackson, the director
of "Dead Alive." Starts Dec. 23.

EI MAPLE THEATRE

4135 W. Maple, Bloomfield. All titles play through at least next Thursday, Call 810-855-9090 for

information. (\$6; \$2.95 twilight)
"Little Women" (USA - 1994). "Little Women" (USA - 1994). Yet another screen treatment of Louisa May Alcott's American classic about a woman and her four daughters. Susan Sarandon, Wynona Ryder, and Gabriel Byrne star. Directed by Gillian Armatrong ("My Brilliant Career").

Armstrong ("My Brilliant Career").
"Nell" (USA - 1994). Jodie Foster tries for a third Oscar in this sometimes moving, often sappy story of a woman facing the world after growing up alone with her mother in the woods. Liam Neeson and Natasha Richardson help her along. Opena Dec. 23.
"Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle" (USA - 1994). Alan Rudolph ("The Moderne") seems well-suited to resurrect Dorothy

Parker and the other literary lu-minaries who held court over lunch and drinks at New York's Algonquin Hotel. Jennifer Jason Leigh stars. Opens Dec. 23.

E MICHIGAN THEATRE
603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call
313-668-8397 for information. (\$5;
\$4 studenteniors)
"Heavenly Creatures" (New
Zenland - 1994). Through Dec. 30
(call for showtimes). See Main
Art Theatre listing above.

STATE THEATRE
2115 Woodward, Detroit, Call
961-5450 for information. (\$1)
"Natural Born Killers" (USA
1994). 9 pm. Dec. 28. Oliver
Stone's hyperviolent story of
homicidal lovers on the run,
based on a story by Quentin
Terrantino. Juliet Lewis, Woody
Harrelson, and Tommy Lee Jones
star.



STARTS CHRISTMAS DAY

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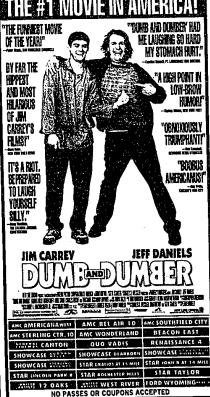
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