

CINEMA

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Zelig

Directed by Woody Allen, Starring Woody Allen and Mia Farrow

Is that Woody Allen peeking out from behind Gordon Willis' camera? Looks like him. But maybe it's not him. Because this Zelig movie has more to do with Willis' cinematography and the technicians of the film than it does with Woody Allen.

Oh sure, there's this typical Woody Allen plot about a schlemiel who's trying to get a woman... but that's so unimportant to what you see—you hardly notice it.

And what do you see? The skillful sewing together of some old movie footage with some new movie footage. The new movie footage has been scratched up and shot at low f-stops; so it looks faded and as old as the old footage. A neat trick.

But too neat a trick just to be used to re-tell the same old

Woody Allen story, the story of a stupid man who loves a smart woman, whom he convinces to act stupid too.

Maybe Gordon Willis figured if he told too good a story, people wouldn't notice how clever he was being with the film footage he was matching up. "So," he said to himself, "I'll do an old Woody Allen plot. I'll take the plot from Bananas and make it even more simple than Allen made it. Then I'll dress it all up in real tricky cinematography and editing. Boy, people will really be impressed by the camera work."

At least, that's what I hope happened. I'd hate to think Woody Allen himself went through all this work just to rehash that simple old plot we'd all thought he'd outgrown with Annie Hall.

—John Mitchell

The Big Chill

Directed by Lawrence Kasdan, Starring William Hurt and Jobeth Williams

Alex has killed himself. He was the best and the brightest of a group of 1960's college students who have since gone their own way. But, they come back together for Alex's funeral. These are seven of them—and Cloy, Alex's last girlfriend.

The eight spend a weekend together after the funeral in an old southern mansion that now belongs to one of them. They share stories of their times together, and catch up on each other's lives.

If this plot is starting to smell familiar—it should. It's a good deal like Return of the Secaucus Seven. But there are some major differences. The most obvious are the Hollywood production values of The Big Chill. There is also the physical beauty of these Hollywood actors. If everyone from the post-war baby boom looked like these people—why then, the baby boom people have set a record for good looks!

I really don't want to belittle this film. It's not too bad—it's almost good. It just doesn't generate a lot of originality. Besides owing a ton to John Sayles, it's in debt to Robert Altman, Joan Micklin Silver, and Hal Ashby (Ashby for the sound track of Coming Home). It owes to Altman for the ensemble style of acting, and to Silver for a similar film she made called Between the Lines. They've even got Jeff

Goldblum from that movie.

I guess the main complaint I have about The Big Chill is that it borders on turning the "1960's movie" into a cliché (at worst); or a genre at best. Also, director Kasdan, who also wrote some of the screenplay, has nothing like the ear for contemporary American language that John Sayles has. Instead he relies on the glib comedy Hollywood has inherited from Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.

So I guess I'll be soft on this one. Sure, see it. But, if Secaucus Seven should show up in town or on campus—well, go see it. The Big Chill is a nice imitation—but there's nothing like the original.

—John Mitchell.

(Film reviews by John Mitchell can also be heard on KLCC 89.7 FM.)

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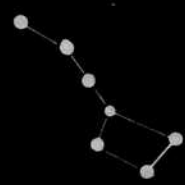


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MOVIES
THIS
WEEK

Aliso and the Condor: Opens Thursday. See Review. Showing with She Wore a Yellow Ribbon. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

An American Friend: Oct. 9 only, at the U of O campus. See calendar section.

Bad Boys: Oct. 7 only at the U of O campus. See calendar section.

Beyond the Limit: Based on a novel by Graham Greene, this film stars Michael Caine and Richard Gere. The plot revolves around a South American political kidnapping. West 11th (342-4142).

Big Chill: See review. National (344-3431).

Casablanca: Oct. 7 only, at the U of O campus. See calendar section.

Eddie and the Cruisers: Cinema World (342-6536).

Fillmore: Oct. 8 only, at the U of O campus. See calendar section.

Flashdance: Mayflower (345-1022).

Flight of the Eagle: Oct. 8 only, at the U of O campus. See calendar section.

48 Hours: Mayflower (345-1022).

The Golden Seal: Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Israel: A Search for Faith: A film by James Michener. Oct. 11 only, at the Eugene Public Library. Noon and 7:30 p.m. No admission charge.

Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence: David Bowie is a British POW in a Japanese WW II prison camp. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Never Say Never: McDonald (344-4343).

Mr. Mom: Dad stays home to raise three kids while Mom pursues her career. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Octopussy: Ian Fleming's James Bond Fine Arts (747-2201).

Return of the Jedi: West 11th (342-4142).

Revenge of the Ninja: Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Risky Business: Dream and fantasy mix with reality in this tender and humorous film about a teenage boy going through sexual initiation, who meets a big city prostitute through the prank of a friend. Opens Friday. West 11th (342-4142).

A Romantic Comedy: Cinema World (342-6536).

She Wore a Yellow Ribbon: One of the great westerns with John Wayne, directed by John Ford in 1949. Showing with Aliso and the Condor. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Snow White: Disney animation. Showing with Tron. Cinema World (342-6536).

Survivors: Oakway Cinema (342-5351).

Tootsie: Dustin Hoffman stars as Tootsie. Showing with The Survivors. Oakway Cinema (342-5351).

Trading Places: Comedy starring Dan Akroyd and Eddie Murphy. Cinema World (342-6536).

Tron: Computer fantasy from Disney studios. Showing with Snow White. Cinema World (342-6536).

War Games: Computer games turn serious when a boy and his computer accidentally begin playing global thermonuclear war. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

We of the Never Never: Nominated for six awards, this Australian film is the story of a woman who goes to live at a cattle station in the outback around the turn of the century. Bijou (686-2458).

Year of Living Dangerously: Oct. 8 only, at the U of O campus. See calendar section.

Zelig: Woody Allen's new film with Mia Farrow. See review. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Merry Christmas,
Mr. Lawrence

Directed by Nagisa Oshima (Japan, 1983)

Starring David Bowie, Tom Conti, Ryuichi Sakamoto, and Takeshi

Nagisa Oshima's new film, Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence, is an accomplished film which will certainly be added to the list of this director's most widely praised films, such as Boy, The Ceremony, and In the Realm of the Senses. Oshima adapted the film from a Laurens Van Der Post novel, The Seed and the Sower, about a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp on Java during World War II. Filmed in the Cook Islands, Raratonga, and New Zealand, the international cast and crew included actors from eight countries. Both the isolated island location shooting and the multi-lingual cast and crew served to replicate the confinement of a POW camp and the cultural and political clash between East and West. The result is a tense, complex film which depends heavily upon its primary characters for its philosophical and spiritual content.

The film features four prominent characters: the army superintendent of the prison camp, Captain Yonoi (Ryuichi Sakamoto); one of his men, Sergeant Hara (Takeshi); and two captive British army officers, Jack Celliers (David Bowie) and John Lawrence (Tom Conti). All four actors give superb performances. Tom Conti's role as John Lawrence offers the most objective point of view in the film. As the only Westerner who speaks conversational Japanese, Lawrence is able to see both the Eastern and Western viewpoints and to understand that "no one is right." David Bowie's character is a man tormented by his past—a man of action who seeks to redeem himself and to put meaning into his life.

While Conti and Bowie are

known to Western audiences, the real surprises in Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence are its Japanese stars. Ryuichi Sakamoto, a popular musician who also composed the outstanding music for the film, is a novice actor who was chosen to fit a pure type. As Captain Yonoi, Sakamoto plays a man of spiritual purity and military dedication who is a failure in life because of that very purity and dedication. Takeshi, who plays Sergeant Hara, is a stand-up comic who has never before done any serious dramatic acting. Hara is also depicted as simple and pure of heart, the type of person perhaps most susceptible to militarism.

In a modern world which constantly brings East and West face to face, Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence offers valuable insights into the complexity of feelings between East and West. Director Oshima says, "I am not interested in making films that can be understood in the first fifteen minutes." His latest film deserves a bit of the West and of the East from filmgoers: in true Western fashion, be a consumer and buy a ticket to see Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence; and in Eastern spirit, meditate for awhile on the film after you've seen it.

—Cathy Sarkowsky

CINEMA 7 Attn: Bldg 687-0733

ALISO and the Condor

Director: Michael Liffin

Shows: Thurs-Sat 7:30 Sun-Wed 1:00

Sunday Matinee: 2:00

Special Sat Matinee showing at 4:00 pm

All seats \$2.00 entire proceeds to Eugene Council for Human Rights in Latin America for emergency medical relief for poor people refugees

She Wore a Yellow Ribbon Director: John Ford (USA 1949) 35mm 103 min

Shows: Thurs-Sat 9:15 Sun-Wed 8:45

Sunday Matinee: 3:45

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