

CINEMA

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Silkwood

Directed by Mike Nichols
Starring Meryl Streep, Cher and Kurt Russell

Silkwood is the best film surprise of the Christmas season. It is deserving of praise given respectively to films such as **The Big Chill** and **Terms of Endearment**: the "feel-good," "people" movie of the year. **Silkwood** is a rich, unsentimental portrayal of working class life. The film unfolds slowly, naturally, revealing consistent characters who grow and change credibly and realistically.

Silkwood is based on a young woman who worked in a plutonium rendering factory in Texas. In 1974, Karen Silkwood was killed in a car accident as she was going to meet with a *New York Times* reporter to turn over documentation of unsafe practices at the plant. Meryl Streep's enactment of Karen Silkwood as a flawed working class heroine bears little resemblance to Sally Field's rendition of Norma Rae. As drawn in Nora Ephron and Alice Arlen's screenplay, patiently directed by Mike Nichols, and magnificently brought to life by Streep, Karen Silkwood is a rather slovenly working class woman whose consciousness and sense of responsibility is raised by her slow-growing awareness of lethal carelessness in her work environment. She is anything but self-righteous, and she is far from radical. After waking up to the implications of the job she has mindlessly worked at for over two years, she gets curious, then worried, then scared; finally, she gets downright angry.

Silkwood bears even less resemblance to **The China Syndrome** than it does to **Norma Rae**. Much of the film has little directly to do with Silkwood's experiences at the plutonium plant. Because the film takes time, for example, to visit Karen's three estranged children and to hang out at home with her live-in lover Drew (Kurt Russell) and her second-bedroom housemate Dolly Pelliker (Cher), it is one of the best mainstream American movies in quite some time about friendship, companionship, love, and the fluke nature of human sexuality. Without betraying her character or contriving "sensitive" moments, the film allows Silkwood the time and private spaces within which to accommodate emotions and personal wounds, as well as surprises.

Given the difficulty of making a film about a woman whom the informed viewer knows "dies at the end," director Nichols artfully and honorably neither wishes away Silkwood's demise nor attempts to "prove" what no one can know about its circumstances. While **Silkwood** is certainly an intelligent, respectful vision of a specific, historic life, it is mostly about any human life that remains open to discovery—about itself, about the people with whose lives it meshes, and about a world that is somehow both larger and smaller than the individual.

—Cathy Sarkowsky
(Film reviews by Cathy Sarkowsky can also be heard on KLCC 89.7 FM.)

MOVIES
THIS
WEEK

Big Chill: A group of old college friends meet for one friend's funeral and spend the weekend together. Through Dec. 29. Fine Arts (747-2201).

Blue Thunder: Showing with *Big Chill*. Fine Arts (747-2201).

Bongo Man: With Jimmy Cliff. Showing with *Heartland Reggae*. Dec. 29-Jan. 4. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Children of Paradise: This classic film by Marcel Carne centers around a group of theatre people in France. Dec. 22-28. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

D.C. Cab: Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Fanny and Alexander: Ingmar Bergman's most recent and perhaps last film is about a large Swedish theatrical family around the turn of the century, and the series of events which change their lives. Through Dec. 29. Bijou (686-2458).

Gorky Park: Based on a best-seller by Martin Cruz Smith, this film about international intrigue stars William Hurt and Lee Marvin. Mayflower (345-1022).

Heartland Reggae: With Bob Marley and the Wailers. Showing with *Bongo Man*. Dec. 29-Jan. 4. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

The Keep: Cinema World (342-6536).

Koyaanisqatsi: A Hopi word meaning "life out of balance," this film with no characters or dialogue shows us, through image and sound, what America was and what it has become. Late show. Through Dec. 27. Bijou (686-2458).

The Man Who Loved Women: Starring Burt Reynolds. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Mickey's Christmas Carol: Animated film from Disney studios. Showing with *The Rescuers*. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Never Cry Wolf: Based on Farley Mowat's book about a man who lives with and studies the wolves. Cinema World (342-6536).

Never Say Never Again: Sean Connery returns to the James Bond role. Through Dec. 29. Oakway Cinema (342-5351).

The Rescuers: With Mickey's Christmas Carol. Both Disney animation. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

The Return of Martin Guerre: Directed by Daniel Vigne and starring Gerard Depardieu and Nathalie Baye. A true story about a man in 16th century France who comes back from the war but is not recognized by his village. Opens Dec. 30. Bijou (686-2458).

Rocky Horror Picture Show: Dec. 28-31. Midnight, reserved seats. Bijou Late Nite (686-2458).

Silkwood: Meryl Streep stars as Karen Silkwood, the woman who blew the whistle on the high radiation levels in her workplace and was killed soon afterward. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Sudden Impact: Clint Eastwood is Dirty Harry. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Terms of Endearment: Shirley MacLaine, Debra Winger, and Jack Nicholson star in this sensitive comedy centering around the relationship of a mother and daughter. From a Larry McMurtry novel. McDonald (344-4343).

To Be Or Not To Be: A Mel Brooks comedy. Cinema World (342-6536).

Two of a Kind: Stars John Travolta and Olivia Newton John. National (344-3431).

Uncommon Valor: Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Yentl: Produced, directed by, and starring Barbra Streisand, this film is about a young Jewish girl who disguises herself as a boy in order to get a religious education. Cinema World (342-6536).



The Bijou Theatre presents a special Midnight Showing of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, Dec. 28-31. Reserved seat tickets are available at the Bijou Box Office, 492 E. 13th.

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DEADLINE

for calendar listings & classifieds
is Thursday at 5 pm
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"UNUSUALLY RICH."

Depardieu is superb!

—Vincent Canby,
New York Times

"FASCINATING!"

—David Denby,
New York Magazine

"A CLASSIC!"

—Michael Feingold,
Village Voice

"★★★★★ SPELLBINDING!"

—Alex Keneas,
Newsday

"SUSPENSEFUL!"

—Archer Winsten,
New York Post

"MOVING and SENSITIVE!"

—Ernest LeGrande,
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