

CINEMA

Review:

Reuben, Reuben

Directed by Robert Ellis Miller; screenplay by Julius J. Epstein, from the novel by Peter DeVries and the play "Spofford" by Herman Shumlin; starring Tom Conti, Kelley McGillis.

Gowan McGland (Oscar nominee Tom Conti) is a Celtic poet who has laid down his pen for the podium, content with a modest existence sustained by the meager stipends garnered on the lecture circuit. He now finds himself slowly waking the sleepy East Coast academic community of Woodsmoke, speaking to women's literary clubs and seducing as many of its members as possible in between. Gowan is a fascinating figure of a man. With a perpetual half-day's growth and an almost constant state of inebriation, he attracts women by the score, content to bed them and insult their husbands at dinner parties, almost as if it were a simple game to fight off boredom.

Gowan's only real friends in this community are an old philosopher farmer named Jack Spofford (Jack Davidson) and his Scottish sheep dog Reuben. It's only fitting that Gowan loses his detachment and actually falls in love with Spofford's beautiful granddaughter Geneva (Kelly McGillis), an innocent young woman who is intrigued with Gowan and attempts to probe him psychologically, with little success. True love seems to bring some real meaning into Gowan's life, but the price he pays seems to be retribution from God, ironic but ill-timed poetic justice.

Conti brings the character of Gowan alive in a tremendous performance that has the audience loving this figure of indolence and

sloth. This is a man who steals tips off of restaurant tables and basically leeches off anyone in the community with money, but his barely concealed contempt and cynicism seems refreshingly honest up against the preening, hypocritical academic community he moves around in. Gowan's behavior is almost a protest, albeit one he enjoys. His biting sarcasm and subtle wit exposes a high intelligence that he tries to hide with alcohol and sex. One really wonders what, though, Gowan is protesting against or hiding from. He gives us no clues, but that's part of the fun of him.

Gowan is the key to the story. Though well portrayed, none of the other characters approach his wit or charisma except for Spofford, who is on the screen for too little time. Though Geneva is the more important character, Spofford is much more interesting than she.

Reuben, Reuben is an intelligently written, sophisticated drama with two fascinating characters, great dialogue and some wonderful humor. Conti's spotlight performance is just one reason to see the film.

—Sean Axmaker

Hill's film is a simple adventure tale. The characters are only marginally sketched out, but there isn't any need for real people in this story. There's only good and evil. Raven (William Dafoe) is evil. He leads a motorcycle gang known as the Bombers, who kidnap rock singer Ellen Aim (Diane Lane). Tom Cody (Michael Pare) is good. He and sidekick McCoy (Amy Madigan) trek into Bomber territory and get her out. Simple, isn't it?

Streets moves along quickly to a pounding rock beat provided by Ry Cooder and various guest artists. Hill knows how to stage action and he does it well here. Stripped bare of any thematic meaning, all that's left here is the aesthetics of speed, violence and music. With attractive set design and a curious costume design that combines eighties punk and fifties styles, the film is attractive and interesting on a surface level. Yet Hill makes it all work. The energy level stays pumped up throughout and the action comes fast and expertly choreographed. Cody is an ideal hero—reminiscent of Clint Eastwood in Sergio Leone's classic westerns. Though he can't quite fill Eastwood's shoes, Pare makes a valiant attempt, and the rifle he totes seems almost a tip of the hat to Eastwood.

This is myth, pure and simple, on a level so abstract that it doesn't go much beyond pure good and evil. Cody is Han Solo with a harder edge, a hero for the inner city. Walter Hill keeps the pace fast and furious without pausing for simple things like characterization or motivation, but none is needed. Except for some major dialogue inanities, *Streets* works on exactly the level it is trying for—the aesthetics of sound and image and the power of myth.

—Sean Axmaker

Review:

Streets of Fire

Directed by Walter Hill; written by Walter Hill and Larry Gross; starring Michael Pare, Diane Lane, Rick Moranis, Amy Madigan.

Take the neo-noir atmosphere of *Blade Runner* and drop it into the Manhattan Island prison of *Escape from New York*; that's a fair approximation of the setting for *Streets of Fire*, a curious amalgam of fifties and eighties that moves to the steady beat of rock 'n roll.

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Kamilla



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"REUBEN, REUBEN... is certainly reason enough for a grown-up to go back to the movies again."

—Richard Corliss, TIME MAGAZINE

Reuben, Reuben



DON'T MISS THIS INTELLIGENT COMEDY about a slightly over-the-hill Welsh poet Gowan McGland (imagine Dylan Thomas & Brendan Behan combined!) who is on the northeastern college lecture circuit charming just about everyone he meets. An AMAZING bit of trivia: the screenplay is by Julius J. Epstein, who with his brother Phillip, won an Academy Award in 1943 for the script of CASABLANCA!

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