

Review:

The Bostonians

Directed by James Ivory; screenplay by Ruth Praver Jhabvala, from the novel by Henry James; starring Christopher Reeve, Vanessa Redgrave, Madeleine Potter.

The love triangle in *The Bostonians* is not your normal one. Verena Tarrant (Madeleine Potter) is a beautiful and gifted orator who travels with her charlatan father giving lectures on the suffrage movement. Olive Chancellor (Vanessa Redgrave), a dedicated suffragette and firm but

very private idealist, is taken with Verena's presence, confidence and bright personality and invites her to her luxurious house to ask Verena to become her "friend of friends." Olive's distant cousin Basil Ransom (Christopher Reeve), however, is also taken by her beauty and charm, though not her ideas. Ransom is a cultured southern gentleman who wants Verena to give up lecturing and become his demure wife.

The characters are complex and well developed. Basil has a magnetic, personable manner which charms the women of the movement. All, that is, except Olive, who rightly pegs Basil as an enemy. They are worthy adversaries; he has an outer strength that can overwhelm Verena's own ideals and instincts while Olive has an

inner strength which only Verena responds to in a deep way.

Reeve and Redgrave give performances to match their characters. Reeve, in fact, gives the best of his career, bringing a fully developed personality that you long to hate despite his charm through his sexist character. Redgrave plays a much less outgoing character, a woman who cannot externalize her firm convictions and hidden strength.

The two do battle over and through Verena, the person they both love yet manipulate. Basil uses his charm and strong personality to wear down Verena's convictions and trap her in a life of subservience. Olive plans Verena's life on her own, paying her charlatan father to leave her alone and manipulating her future over

tea with a New York matron, who hints at a lesbian relationship between Olive and Verena.

Much is suggested by director Ivory and screenwriter Jhabvala through the paradoxes in character and subtlety of dialogue. A cast of striking supporting characters adds to the complexity, with Linda Hunt as a very able, renowned woman doctor who has more in common with Basil than with the women of the suffragette movement, Jessica Tandy as the gentle matriarch of the movement who also is quite charmed by Basil, and Nancy Marchand as a New York arts matron who may or may not believe in the movement but desires a marriage between her son and Verena.

Verena is at the center of the conflicts, and newcomer Madeleine Potter holds her own with the gifted performers around her. She brings a charm and beauty to her character and builds a complete personality around her character, which is torn between her convictions (Olive) and love (Basil).

Well mounted and richly photographed, *The Bostonians* is a beautiful, complex work that explores the conflicts in convictions and the manipulation of humans under the rationalization of love.

—Sean Axmaker

Review:

The River

Directed by Mark Rydell; screenplay by Robert Dillon and Julian Barry; story by Robert Dillon; starring Mel Gibson, Sissy Spacek, Scott Glenn.

The River plays like a shallow remake of Elia Kazan's 1960 film, *Wild River*, about the Tennessee Valley Authority working to move residents off their land for an incoming dam. *River* screenwriters Robert Dillon and Julian Barry replace the TVA with an egocentric corporate executive and large landholder who is after personal gain at the expense of the small farmers. So much for the complexity and depth.

Mel Gibson and Sissy Spacek star as Tom and Mae Garvey, a young farming couple on the river trying to keep their farm together and their kids safe while fighting annual floods. Scott Glenn is Joe Wade, a slimy businessman/farmer whose farm is too far from the river for adequate irrigation. His plan is to buy out the small farmers and dam up the valley, providing hydro-electric power, jobs and a source of irrigation for his



Sissy Spacek and Mel Gibson in *The River*.

land. His only obstacle are the small farmers who want to hang on to their land despite the hardships, so he gets real nasty and pressures the weak bank executive to foreclose, among other sneaky tactics.

It's real easy to tell the good guys from the bad guys. The good

guys have families, work in the muck and appear as romantic rugged individualists. The bad guys work for corporations, cheat at baseball and pretend to get friendly with their victims. Director Mark Rydell praises the good traditional values and hisses at the villain in this cardboard confrontation, backed by a typically overworked John Williams score and looking posed and postured beyond any natural expressiveness.

There are a few good scenes that work despite the pretensions. Mel Gibson and a few truckloads of workers are being driven to an on-location job when suddenly they come to a picket line of angry, violent strikers. They come to the aching realization that they've been hired as scabs. In another scene a deer wanders into the plant, peeking in an almost childlike wonder from the lonely, tired, empty men.

These are small gems in an overly pretentious film, "family film" fodder that looks beautiful (thanks to outstanding lighting and photography by cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond) but registers contrived emotions and cardboard characters.

—Sean Axmaker

NOW SHOWING

Attila: Based on the true-life story of George Attila. This entertaining film set in the snowy outback of Alaska details the life of an Indian boy caught between old and new worlds who overcame tuberculosis and grew up to be a champion dog sledger. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Beverly Hills Cop: Eddie Murphy is a Detroit cop who comes to Beverly Hills to solve the murder of his best friend. Directed by Martin Brest (*Going in Style*). National (344-3431).

The Bostonians: Film reviewer Judy Stone (*S.F. Chronicle*) says: "Vanessa Redgrave is brilliant as the wealthy, possessive Bostonian suffragette who despises men. Her infatuation with a charming coquette who is also a dazzling speaker for women's rights is challenged by a courtly Southerner (Christopher Reeve) with an old-fashioned notion of a woman's place. Their three-cornered struggle for supremacy is sustained by tension, humor and a faithful portrait of that early battle for women's rights." Based on the novel by Henry James. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Breaking 2—Electric Boogaloo: Kelly, Ozono and Turbo become big Broadway stars to prove they're the best, and try to save an old building from demolition. The soundtrack is supposed to be hot. Directed by Sam Firstenberg. Shows with *Supergirl*. Fine Arts (747-2201).

Buckaroo Banzai: Peter Weiler (*Shoot the Moon*) is the world's leading scientist and hottest rock 'n' roller. He sets out to stop the evil aliens from destroying the earth. Directed by screenwriter W.D. Richter, the cast includes: John Lithgow (*Terms of Endearment*), Jeff Goldblum (journalist from *People Magazine* in *The Big Chill*) and Ellen Barkin (*Diner*). Shows with *City Heat*. Cinema World (342-6536).

Choose Me: Genevieve Bujold is a sexually-inhibited radio talk show shrink (Dr. Love) rooming with a lusty female tavern owner (Lesley Ann Warren). They get tangled up with the spirited and crazy Keith Carradine. Directed by Alan Rudolph, this modern love comedy is full of ridiculous twists, accented by neon, guns, libido and improvisational jazz. We are reminded that movies can be crazy fun. Also shows *Late Night*. Bijou (686-2458).

City Heat: Burt Reynolds and Clint Eastwood play private eye and cop in this 30's gangster thing. Directed by Richard Benjamin. Also stars Jane Alexander, Madeline Kahn, Rip Torn, Richard Roundtree. Shows with *Buckaroo Banzai*. Cinema World (342-6536).

Cotton Club: Francis Ford Coppola's lavish music, dance, gangster extravaganza. Co-written with Pulitzer-prize winning novelist Wm. Kennedy. The stories are drawn from *The Cotton Club*, a New York prohibition-era speakeasy. Stars Richard Gere, Gregory Hines, Dianne Lane, Lonette McKee. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Dune: The story spans four planets and focuses on the water-starved world of Arrakis, also known as Dune, which is at the brink of economic and ecological ruin due to bad mining practices. The hero, Paul Atreides (newcomer Kyle MacLachlan), joins an army of sandworms to fight the forces of evil. Directed by David Lynch (*The Elephant Man*, *Eraserhead*), the film also stars Jose Ferrer as the evil Emperor and Max Von Sydow as the Fremmen planetologist, Dr. Kynes. West 11th (342-4142) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Flamingo Kid: Light drama. A city kid takes a summer job at an upper-middle-class resort and grows up. Directed by Gary Marshall, writer-director of TV's *LaVerne* and Shirley. West 11th Tri-Cinema (342-4142).

Ghoulies: Comedy. Horror film spoof. Springfield Quad (726-9073) and Mayflower (345-1022).

Micki & Maude: Blake Edwards ("10") directs Dudley Moore as a TV journalist who wants a baby but can't get his busy lawyer wife (Ann Reinking, *All That Jazz*) to cooperate. The journalist meets a beautiful cellist (Amy Irving, *Yentl*) and winds up with two wives, both pregnant. This film is slow to pick up, but has some crack-up scenes near the end. Cinema World (342-6536).

A Passage to India: A tale of impossible love, complicated by social pressure. Director David Lean (*Ryan's Daughter*, *Doctor Zhivago*, *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, *Lawrence of Arabia*) adapts the E.M. Forster novel about a young Englishwoman (Judy Davis, *My Brilliant Career*) who arrives in India and shocks the community by filing rape charges against an upstanding Indian doctor. Sir Alec Guinness appears in his sixth David Lean film. West 11th Tri Cinema (342-4142).

Protocol: Goldie Hawn seduces a Middle Eastern potentate and persuades him to permit placement of an American military base in his country. Directed by Herbert Ross (*Footloose*). Script by Buck Henry (*First Family*). Valley River Twin (686-8633).

The River: Sissy Spacek and Mel Gibson fight the gov't. bureaucrats to protect their small Tennessee family farm in the early 1900's. Directed by Mark Rydell (*On Golden Pond*). McDonald (344-4343).

Runaway: Tom Sellick (Magnum, P.I.) and Cynthia Rhoades combat a future world where the machines invented to save people begin to turn on them. Shows with *The Terminator*. Oakway (342-5351).

Starman: Jeff Bridges (*Tron*, *The Last Picture Show*, *Against All Odds*) is the endearing alien who materializes in the form of the dead husband of Karen Allen (*Animal House*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*). Directed by John Carpenter (*Halloween*, *The Thing*). Light comedy, escapist, family fare. PG rating. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Supergirl: Played by Helen Slater (a 20-year-old graduate of New York's High School of the Performing Arts that was featured in *Fame*), she is Superman's cousin Kara, sent off to earth just before the planet Krypton was destroyed. She pursues truth, justice and the American way in Chicago. Co-stars Faye Dunaway, Brenda Vaccaro, Peter O'Toole. Directed by Jeannot Szwarc. Shows with *Breaking 2* at the Fine Arts (747-2201).

The Terminator: Arnold Schwarzenegger is the perfect robot-beast from the future sent back to kill the woman (Linda Hamilton) who will bear humanity's white knight. Both dreadful and comic images of life after the nuclear holocaust. Non-stop action and scary stuff. Shows with *Runaway*. Oakway (342-5351).

That's Dancing: Film clips from famous dance movies. Special appearances by Ray Bolger, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Sammy Davis Jr., Gene Kelly, Liza Minelli. Cinema World (342-6536).

2010: More in the nature of *Star Trek* than *2001*, a well-done comic book film story. While Russia and the U.S. prepare to fight a war over a crisis in Honduras, a Russian craft with a Russian-American crew sets out to explore the circles of Jupiter. Cinema World (342-6536).

—S.R.

BIJOU 492 E. 13th
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★★★★★

"Hip, outrageous, beautiful a generous, funny romance with music at its heart and farce around its edges."



In the middle of the night, when there's no one else.

Choose Me
a serious comedy

Genevieve Bujold Keith Carradine Lesley Ann Warren

R

Thur. 7, 9:15, 11:15 pm
Fri-Sat 7:15, 9:30, 11:45 pm
Sat-Sun Bargain Mat. 4 pm

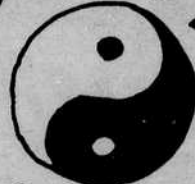
Late Show Thur-Sat reduced admn!!

Sun-Wed 7 & 9:15 pm
Miser Monday \$2.50

Auditions

Auditions for *House Guest*, a mystery, will be held on February 2 and 3 at 2 pm at the Very Little Theatre, 2350 Hilyard. Parts are available for four men and four women ages 20 to 50 years. *House Guest* plays March 14-30. For more information call the director, Dennis Dolan, 344-3668.

Benefit Dinner for Amazon Kung Fu



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JANUARY 18-24

CINEMA 7 Attrium Bldg.
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THE BOSTONIANS

PREMIERE

Director: James Ivory
(USA 1984)
35 mm, 120 min.
Shows: Fri. - Sun. 7:00 & 9:20 pm
Mon.-Wed. 7:30 only
Sun. Matinee 2:00 pm
Thurs. 7:00 & 9:20

"In James (*Heat and Dust*) Ivory's vivid adaptation of Henry James' novel, Vanessa Redgrave is brilliant as the wealthy, possessive Bostonian suffragette who despises men. Her infatuation with a charming coquette who is also a dazzling speaker for women's rights is challenged by a courtly Southerner (Christopher Reeve) with an old-fashioned notion of a woman's place. Their three-cornered struggle for supremacy is sustained by tension, humor and a faithful portrait of that early battle for women's rights." Judy Stone, S.F. CHRONICLE

"VANESSA REDGRAVE'S PERFORMANCE IS A WONDER TO BEHOLD!"

