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May 24-30
MAN OF FLOWERS
PAUL COX
NORMAN KAYE WERNER HERZOG
Shows: Fri. & Sat.
7:30 & 9:20 pm
Sun. thru Thurs
7:00 & 8:50 pm

CINEMA

Review

Man of Flowers

Directed by Paul Cox; screenplay by Paul Cox and Bob Ellis; with Norman Kaye, Alyson Best, Chris Haywood and Werner Herzog.

Charles Bremer (Norman Kaye) is an odd sort of man. A recluse with a rather large inheritance and some less than natural practices, he is a gentle, kindly man who would never want to harm anyone. Yes, he does think that flowers are "arousing sexual beings" and he dreams of them constantly; yes, he collect erotica and hires life drawing model Lisa (Alyson Best) to strip for him every Wednesday; yes, he writes letters to his dead mother and mails them back to himself to read. Merely minor flaws in a guy that is as amiable as he is weird.

At heart, Charles is simply as the title describes him, a *Man of Flowers*. "I've always loved beautiful things," he says, "but I've only looked at them." Lisa is

his "little flower." He watches her undress, but he can't bring himself to touch her even when she begins to like him. He can't even stay as she finishes stripping; the excitement, tension or guilt (whatever it is as we are not certain) forces him to flee his house and pound out his anxieties through twisted melodies on the church organ across the street. He's a shy man, not altogether sure of himself, uncomfortable around people, but altogether a likeable guy.

Director Paul Cox has a knack for capturing the stranger aspects of life. An Australian filmmaker just now receiving attention in this country, he was responsible for last year's *Lonely Hearts*, a quirky, wonderful film about romance among two middle aged people, and will soon have his newest film, *My First Wife*, distributed in this country. Like *Lonely Hearts*, *Man of Flowers* is a funny, offbeat comedy with a sure sense of character and a sophisticated approach.

Dreamlike flashbacks (shot in super 8) show us Charles' early life and his relationship with his mother and father. Voice overs

give us his letters to his mother, letting us into Charles' childlike understanding of the world. He is a lamb in a world of wolves and his honesty and simplicity build him a cadre of friends—Lisa, his worldly mailman, the church warden, even a bronzesmith with unique plans to revolutionize the way we treat our dead. These are striking characters, some only on screen for moments but memorable for their own quirks and compassion. Cox lovingly presents his characters, especially Charles. For all his sexual deviances and repressions, you can't help but like him.

Paul Cox is a filmmaker on par with Woody Allen and Bill Forsythe. Like their recent pictures, *Man of Flowers* is a thoroughly engaging comedy that is complete and satisfying. The comedy comes from the meticulous attention to style and construction, not at the expense of it. Wacky and wonderful, *Man of Flowers* should send people back looking for his earlier Australian features. If they are at all like his current films, they can't come too soon.

—Sean Axmaker

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NOW SHOWING

Baby, Secret of the Lost Legend: Shows with
Pete's Dragon at the Oakway (342-5351).

Beverly Hills Cop: Shows with *Police Academy II* at Cinema World (342-6536).

Brewster's Millions: Richard Pryor is a baseball player who is bequeathed \$30 million on the condition that he spend it all in 30 days. McDonald (344-4343).

Care Bears: West 11th Tri Cinema (342-4142).

Code of Silence: Chuck Norris blows 'em away. Shows with *Terminator* at West 11th Tri Cinema (342-4142).

Desperately Seeking Susan: A good girl-bad girl social satire that offers rock star Madonna as the Manhattan queen of sleaze whose glitter, street-wise lifestyle is coveted by a bored, virginal New Jersey housewife (Rosanna Arquette) who is married to a hot tub king. Someone aptly described this film as a "New Wave Alice in Wonderland." Susan Seidelman directed (her first film was *Smitherens*). Aidan Quinn (*Reckless*) plays the handsome projectionist Dez. Not a heavy message film, just a lot of fun. Mayflower (345-1022).

Girls Just Wanna Have Fun: Not Cindi Lauper. Siskel and Ebert were disappointed. Maybe the whole world doesn't want to continuously relive their teen years. Springfield Quad (726-0973) and West 11th Tri (342-4142).

Just One of the Guys: A girl wants to be a football player. Springfield Quad (726-0973).

Ladyhawk: Medieval Romance. Rutger Hauer (the evil replicant in *Blade Runner*) is the dashing swordsman Navarre who suffers from the unrequited love of the fair Isabeau (Michelle Pfeiffer, *Scarface*). John Wood (*Wargames*) is her rejected jealous lover who bestows a curse which transforms Isabeau to a hawk by day and Navarre to a wolf by night. Directed by Richard Donner (*The Omen*, *Superman*). Cinema World (342-6536).

Lost in America: Albert Brooks wrote, directed and acted in this funny, Winnebago-Easy Rider comedy about a Yupwardly mobile couple who quit their high-paying L.A. jobs, buy a winnebago with a microwave, and hit the road to "find themselves." Shows with *Purple Rose of Cairo* at Cinema World (342-6536).

Man of Flowers: From the directory of *Lonely Hearts*. "Director Paul Cox scores again with this black comedy about a repressed and wealthy man who admires beauty in all its forms but refuses emotional entanglements. Norman Kaye... is the curious voyeur... Werner Herzog is the punitive father. Alyson Best is lovely as the model who poses with seductive sweetness for Kaye." —Judy Stone, *SF Chronicle*. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Mask: Cher is the perfect biker mama in this "Elephant Man" (true-life) story about a teenage boy with a horribly disfigured face. Newcomer Eric Stoltz (*The Wild Life*) is sensitive and poignant as the misfit whose mother's love gives him the courage to live. Cher is tough and funny and sweet. The bikers give the film its comic relief, and provide a support community of misfits in which Mom and son live, work and play. National (344-3431).

Pete's Dragon: Disney animated cartoon shows with *Baby, Secret of Lost Legend* at Oakway (342-5351).

Purple Rose of Cairo: An entertaining and thought-provoking parable from Woody Allen about the movies and what they are—for the creators and the audiences. Mia Farrow plays an insecure 30's waitress who is trapped in a marriage to a jerk, and rather than leave him, escapes at the movies. One day her film hero (Jeff Daniels) actually walks off the screen and into her arms. The rest is pure Allen cleverness and magic. Shows with *Lost in America* at Cinema World (342-6536).

Rambo—First Blood Part II: Sylvester Stallone shoot-'em-up. Springfield Quad (726-0973) and West 11th (342-4142).

Rustlers' Rhapsody: A spoof of spaghetti Westerns. This film is kind of a poor copy of *Blazing Saddles* and is funny in parts. Shows with *Lust in the Dust* at Cinema World (342-6536).

Stop Making Sense: The Talking Heads concert film. Jonathan Demme directs this document of the enigmatic figure David Byrne and his band of contempo tribals. Alos the Late Night feature at Bijou (686-2458).

A View to Kill: James Bond (Roger Moore) engages in mortal battle with a psychotic industrialist (Christopher Walken, *Brainstorm*) and Villainess Grace Jones to save Silicon Valley from being captured, blown-up and GASP! tumbled into the ocean. Springfield Quad (726-0973) and Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Witness: Shows with *48 Hours* at Fine Arts (747-2201).

—S.R.

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