

Paris, Texas

Directed by Wim Wenders; adaptation by L.M. Kit Carson; written by Sam Shepard; director of photography Robby Muller; with Harry Dean Stanton, Nastassja Kinski, Dean Stockwell, Hunter Carson.

A grizzled figure in a weather-beaten suit and tie stumbles across the chalk white Mexican border into Texas. He totes a plastic bottle of water which he discards when he catches sight of a dilapidated truck stop. Finding a freezer in a near empty tavern, he slowly munches on some ice before collapsing.

The man is Travis (Harry Dean Stanton), presumed dead, having disappeared four years ago. He doesn't talk, remaining totally silent when questioned by the doctor and when retrieved by his younger brother Walt (Dean Stockwell), who flies in from Los Angeles and drives to the nowhere hospital Travis has been taken to. The phantoms that drive Travis on have not left him, and he twice attempts to hit the road solo again, only reluctantly rejoining his brother in the car. Finally, on the second day, the silence is bro-

ken when Travis mutters "Paris." "What?" "Paris. Have you ever been there?"

Travis is like a child in his condition. His four years away have done more than simply change him; he seems purged of the past and now he slowly rebuilds, asking questions about his mother, re-establishing his relationship with brother Walt, pulling out the photo of a bare plot of land he bought years ago through a mail order. The land is in the small town where he believes his parents conceived him, the town of Paris, Texas.

Travis is rebuilding more than his memory, though. He is rediscovering his identity, and that entails meeting his seven-year-old son Hunter (Hunter Carson), who only barely remembers him if at all, and finding the wife he left years ago, Jane (Nastassja Kinski). Travis is out to rebuild the family that was destroyed all those years ago.

Paris, Texas is the brainchild of Wim Wenders, in my mind Germany's finest living director, and American playwright Sam Shepard, who penned the dialogue for the story he co-wrote with

Wenders. Like Wenders' previous works, most prominently *Kings of the Road* (quite possibly the finest film of the last ten years), and his 1978 Cannes Film Festival Grand Prize winning *The American Friend*, *Paris, Texas* continues the exploration of his favorite themes— isolation of man in today's world and the triumph of relationships in the face of such isolation.

This is a road picture, and for Wenders the road is the highway to self discovery and enlightenment. It is only natural for Travis to treat his life as a journey—from his family to the desert, from the desert to his brother's home (where he re-establishes his bond with his son), to his wife, and so on.

Like all of his previous works, this is a leisurely paced film with few words but more silent communication between characters than most people manage through conversation. Cinematographer Robby Muller's camera work is a veritable textbook of visual storytelling. At an initial dinner scene where tensions are still high, the characters are captured in tight single shots, isolated in their own space. In other scenes the camera slowly, elegantly moves into the



Harry Dean Stanton as Travis in *Paris, Texas*.

characters, isolating one, zooming in for the close-up, regrouping and re-establishing relationships.

Only once does the timelessness of Wenders' impeccable pacing lag, and that is during the inevitable meeting between Jane and Travis, a brilliantly conceived exchange where the two are separated by a pane of glass while talking through a telephone, unable to break through the walls of isolation they have built around themselves through time. Travis finally tells the story of what happened four years ago, and we sit watching Jane's expression as she slowly realizes who she is talking to. For a visual director like Wenders, the static scene is too long; there is more spoken in

this one exchange than in the entire rest of the film, trivializing the monologue by its sheer overabundance of words.

Yet this is only a minor flaw in an otherwise near masterpiece of filmmaking. *Paris, Texas* is a heartfelt, heartbreakingly beautiful meditation on human relationships and the American family, told in understated power by one of the world's most gifted directors. There's no denying that the film demands much from the viewer, but a film of this power and grace is so unique in the American cinema that the investment is well worth it. This is probably the finest American film made in years.

—Sean Axmaker

NOW SHOWING

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. National (344-3431).

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 *Smithereens*). Aidan Quinn (*Reckless*) plays the handsome projectionist Dez. Not a heavy message film, just a lot of fun. Mayflower (345-1022).

Fletch: Comedy. Chevy Chase is a newspaper reporter who assumes many and varied disguises to get the story. Cinema World (342-6536).

Goonies: Steven Spielberg (executive producer on this one) has kept the story a secret. What happens to this group of adventuresome kids from the Northwest? Shot in Astoria, OR. Directed by Ric Donner (*Omen, Superman*). Shows at the McDonald (344-4343).

Just One of the Guys: Comedy. A girl (Joyce Hyser) who feels she's being treated as a second-class student, disguises herself as a boy, falls in love with her best male buddy (making complications for him) and volleys teenage one-liners with her little brother throughout the film. Young teens seem to laugh at this movie directed by Lisa Gottlieb. Shows with *Lost in America* at the Fine Arts (747-2201).

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*). Shows with *Rustler's Rhapsody* at Oakway (342-5351).

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 *Just One of the Guys* at Fine Arts (747-2201).

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. Springfield Quad (726-9073).



By the author and filmmakers of *Watership Down*, *Plague Dogs* pits two dogs against the scientist/captors who were using them for medical experimentation. This serious animated film—rated PG—is showing this week at Cinema 7.

Paris Texas: Nobody does "On the Road America" like West German director Wim Wenders. (Recall *Kings of the Road* and *Alice in the Cities*.) In this story, a displaced man (who is presumed dead) returns home after a mysterious four-year disappearance to find his wife gone and his brother and sister-in-law parenting his child. Harry Dean Stanton (the sleazy car-repo guy in *Repo Man*) gives a brilliant performance as the lost father trying to reclaim his identity. Hunter Carson plays the irresistible child; with Nastassja Kinski as the wife, Dean Stockwell as the sensitive brother and Aurora Clement as the sister-in-law. (This film won the top award at Cannes in 1984). Written by Wenders, Sam Shepard and Kit Carson. Bijou (686-2458).

Perfect: Based on a *Rolling Stone* article (*Looking for Mr. Goodbody*) the film features John Travolta as a reporter investigating health clubs. Travolta falls in love with the Club director (Jamie Lee Curtis) and exciting things reportedly happen. Real-life *Rolling Stone* magazine publisher and editor Jann Wenner plays a fictional editor in the film. Directed by James Bridges. Cinema World (342-6536).

Plague Dogs: Take the kids! From the creators of *Watership Down* and the best-seller novel by Richard Adams. A new animated film about two dogs who escape an animal research lab in search of freedom and are chased because they are rumored to have the plague. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Police Academy 2: Their First Assignment. Cop comedy. A punk gang terrorizes the precinct, and inept rookies foul the rescue attempt. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Prizzi's Honor: Mobster hit man Jack Nicholson marries a beautiful woman (Kathleen Turner, *Romancing the Stone*) who turns out to be a bona fide hit woman herself. Should be intense. John Huston directs. Cinema World (342-6536).

Rambo—First Blood Part II: If you liked *Code of Silence*, you'll love *Rambo*. This film picks up where *First Blood* left off—that is, with Sylvester Stallone in prison for shooting apart a whole town. The government hires Rambo to go to Vietnam and get proof of POW's. West 11th (342-4142) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Return of the Soldier: From Rebecca West's 1918 novel. Directed by Alan Bridges. A shell-shocked captain (Alan Bates) has amnesia and has forgotten 20 years of his life. The three women who love him (Julie Christie, Glenda Jackson and Ann Margaret) consider confronting him with the awful truth or leaving him in his innocently childish and happy state. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Romancing the Stone: Kathleen Turner (*Body Heat, A Breed Apart, The Man with Two Brains*) plays a strait-laced writer who with mercenary-rogue Michael Douglas (the film's producer) searches the jungles of Columbia to find her missing sister. West 11th Tri Cinema (342-4142).

Rustler's Rhapsody: Directed by Hugh Wilson (*Police Academy*, TV's *WKRP in Cincinnati*). A western spoof reported to be somewhat in the genre of *Blazing Saddles*. Stars Andy Griffith and Tom Berenger (*The Big Chill*). Shows with *Lady Hawk* at Oakway (342-5351).

Secret Admirer: An anonymous love-letter throws a group of people into confusion and self-deception. Cinema World (342-6536).

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 GASPI tumbled into the ocean. Springfield Quad (726-9073) and Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Yellow Hair: West 11th (342-4142).

—S.R.

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