

After Hours

Directed by Martin Scorsese; written by Joseph Minion; with Griffin Dunne, Rosanna Arquette, Teri Garr, John Heard.

The easiest thing to say about *After Hours* is that it's unlike any other film Martin Scorsese has made. For one thing its protagonist, Paul Hackett (Griffin Dunne), is a computer programmer who never strays from his mundane existence, that is until he takes a chance on seeing a woman he just met a few hours earlier in a coffee shop. This isn't the world of obsessed taxi drivers and world class boxers driven to make their mark on the world by sheer guts and determination. Paul is simply a white collar worker from the right side of town driven by desperation to escape the insane little world he finds in Soho. He doesn't want to leave his mark on society; he just wants to make it through the night.

This is a black little comedy, one of those "worst night of my life" stories peopled with bizarre characters and sparked by an in-

genious screenplay that presents disparate little set piece gags and slowly pulls them all together into a tightly woven narrative tapestry in the best tradition of screwball comedy. Scorsese brings the screenplay alive with his solid direction, giving his actors room to take their characters to the limits. Thus Rosanna Arquette brings a truly creepy presence to her portrayal of the fragile Marcy. Teri Garr brings a very real sense of vulnerability to her "Miss Beehive 1965" waitress, and Vera Bloom creates the most touching

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vignette in her portrayal of the lonely old punk club groupie Jane, just the most incredible character I've seen all year.

Scorsese handles the whole thing with a crazed style that accentuates Paul's alienation. The beautiful photography, handled by Fassbinder regular Michael Ballhaus, brings a dingy beauty to the Soho, celebrating the art, architecture and character of this unique district. Scorsese's eye for

detail brings out the magical properties of everyday objects—a twenty dollar bill floating gently to the street, a set of keys falling from an apartment window, a lit cigarette. My favorite stylistic flourish is the lightning-quick dolly work which opens the film and reappears everytime Paul reaches for a phone. The jolting rush is a visual interpretation of his alienation and desperation.

After Hours has all the hallmarks of a great modern screwball comedy, perfectly paced at a frenzied pitch, cleverly spiralling inward from a seemingly unrelated series of gags. If there is a flaw, it would be Scorsese's distance from his harried hero. Amiable but cynical and sometimes self-centered and cold, we can feel for Paul but we rarely feel with him. Of course, the sheer perversity of much of the humor may explain this, and Scorsese and Minion make this the blackest, most twisted of comedies. It's obvious why *After Hours* is an independently made feature; it's simply too wild and original for Hollywood to handle.

—Sean Axmaker

NOW SHOWING

After Hours: Comedy. A taxi trip to downtown Manhattan leads to a maze of strange people and circumstances. Directed by Martin Scorsese. With Rosanna Arquette, Teri Garr, Cheech and Chong. National (344-3431).

Agnes of God: A court-appointed psychiatrist (Jane Fonda) investigates whether a young nun (Meg Tilly), charged with murdering her newborn baby, is capable of standing trial. Anne Bancroft plays the mother superior. McDonald (344-4343).

American Ninja: Your guess is as good as mine, I'm afraid. West 11th (342-4142).

Back to the Future: A boy trips back to the past, and meets the teenagers who'll become his parents. West 11th (342-4142) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Better Off Dead: Romantic comedy. Cinema World (342-6536).

Blood Simple: A sleazy private eye is hired to kill. Unusual suspense and comedy, trimmed with blood. Late show through Saturday at the Bijou (686-2458).

Commando: Arnold Schwarzenegger as Chuck Norris as Rambo. Cinema World (342-6536) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Day of the Dead: All decked out for Halloween. Trick or treat? Cinema World (342-6536).

E.T.: Steve Spielberg's lovable, mega-money-making alien finds a temporary home in suburban America. With *The Goonies*. Playing at Fine Arts (747-2201).

The Goonies: Adventure. Kids searching for treasure must outwit bandits and bank robbers. Plays with E.T. at Fine Arts (747-2201).

Jagged Edge: Murder mystery. Glenn Close as a lawyer wondering whether her client deserves love or prison. Co-stars Jeff Bridges. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

The Journey of Natty Gann: A girl searches for her father during the Depression. A Disney release. Springfield Quad (726-9073) and West 11th (342-4142).

Kiss of the Spider Woman: A leftist journalist shares a Latin American cell with a gay film devotee. Beneath their personal conflicts lie analogous, impossible yearnings. Stars William Hurt, Raul Julia, Sonia Braga. Playing at the Bijou (686-2458).

Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome: This is Mel Gibson's third fling as Australia's postapocalyptic hero. Eternal rock star Tina Turner provides the challenge. Be ready for lots of violent action. With *Pale Rider*. Oakway (342-5351).

Maria's Lovers: A soldier returning home after World War II and captivity in a Japanese POW camp faces a difficult period of adjustment. With Nastassia Kinski, John Savage, and Robert Mitchum. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Marie: "True story" of the woman who stood fast against slander and threats to bring down corrupt politicians in Tennessee. Stars Sissy Spacek. With *Year of the Dragon* at Mayflower (345-1022).

Pale Rider: Clint Eastwood rides again. Shows with *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*. At the Oakway (342-5351).

Pee-wee's Big Adventure: TV nerd Pee-wee Herman stumbles onto the silver screen, where he's out to recover stolen goods. Shows with *Rome Williams—The Adventure Begins*. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Rome Williams—The Adventure Begins: Pop paperback hero stuff. With *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Silver Bullet: Werewolves, a la Stephen King. Horrors. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Sweet Dreams: Jessica Lange portrays country-western singer Patsy Cline. Co-stars Ed Harris. Cinema World (342-6536).

Year of the Dragon: Mystery and ultra-violence amidst New York City's oriental mafia. With *Marie*. Mayflower (345-1022).

—Michael Sussman

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