

WHAT'S HAPPENING HOLIDAY SAMPLER



Silver City, a love story set in a Polish refugee camp in Australia, 1949.

Silver City

Australian filmmaker Sophia Turkiewicz' 1984 immigrant love story starring Gosia Dobrowolska and Ivar Kants.

At the end of the war in Europe, millions of people were "displaced" from their homelands; one and a half million of them immigrated to Australia in the late 1940s and throughout the 50s. *Silver City* takes place in 1949 in an Australian immigrant camp constructed of "silver" quonset huts and segregated wooden barracks. Here Nina (lovely Gosia Dobrowolska) and Julian (Ivar Kants), Polish war refugees, fall in love even though he is married to Anna (Anna Jemison) and they have a son. Through flashbacks following a chance meeting on a train many years later, the film traces the beginnings of Nina and Julian's awareness of each other on the boat coming over and the momentum that builds as they adjust to life in the hostel. Nina is young, open, and optimistic about her future; Julian is hungry for love (his marriage hasn't worked out for him) and unsure of his future. Anna is the good wife who befriends Nina, with whom she works in the camp laundry. Amazingly, Anna remains unconscious of the true nature of the relationship between her husband and her best girlfriend until Julian leaves her for Nina.

The lovers' story gently reveals their growing passion for one another, beautifully portrayed by the two main actors. Gosia Dobrowolska's feelings as Nina are entirely believable, iridescent and radiant. Ivar Kant shows us a man of considerable charm whose heart is torn between love and duty. However, Anna Jemison as the betrayed wife never reaches an emotional depth which engages our sympathies, and both the judgmental mother and the priest are overacted. Steven Bisley as Julian's buddy Viktor, on the other hand, gives a charming on-top-of-the-world upbeat performance. Gosia Dobrowolska is a joy to behold; she possesses those luminous qualities for which critics compare her to Hannah Schygulla. Dobrowolska, who made *Silver City* shortly after im-

migrating to Australia from her native Poland, closely identifies with the hopeful young Nina who "realizes her future in Australia."

Silver City is a good romantic love story; plot development takes place naturally, the characters are engaging, and the action is suspenseful. The film succeeds at being life-like, true to the eternal dilemma love poses when one partner is married. At the end of the picture, we return to the encounter on the train between Nina and Julian, twelve years after they have parted and he has returned to his family. The ending is satisfying and wholly consonant with

REVIEW

Nina's maturity and creative adaptation to her life and Julian's less-than-happy resignation to his fate.

Writer-director Sophia Turkiewicz has a strong sense of what she wants and how to make it happen on the big screen. Authenticity clings to her vision of immigrant life; she shows us the frustrations inherent in living in government housing and adapting to life in a new land. Turkiewicz herself came to Australia at age three; she and her mother lived in a migrant camp and in various small towns in Western Australia for much of her childhood. In *Silver City* she exposes the hostile attitudes and violence of some resident Australians (including the camp officials) to the newcomers; it feels true-to-life and is a shocking revelation. Turkiewicz probably had to make a film to tell this story. After graduating from film school in Australia, she went to study in Poland with film director Andre Wadja and others; there she began writing the script for *Silver City*.

"I'd grown up in Australia feeling I was Polish, but when I got there I found the Polish people were relating to me as a foreigner. It was an incredible shock, but it was the catalyst I needed to write about people trying to cope in a different culture."

Silver City is only the first feature film Sophia Turkiewicz has made; it surely will not be her last. She is a talented filmmaker possessing the skill and art to touch us deeply.

—Lois Wadsworth

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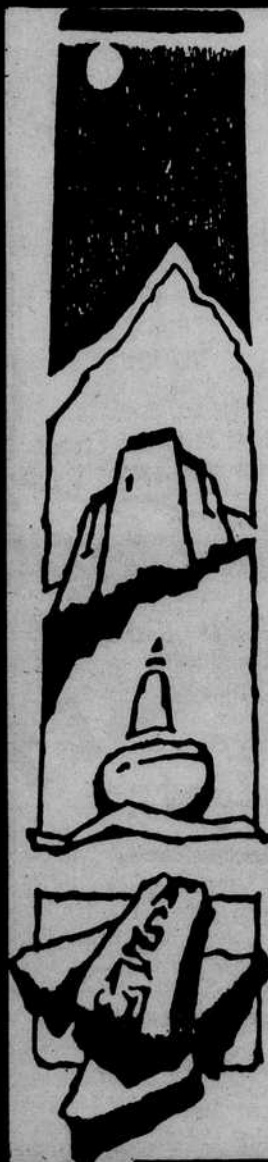
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