



Trevor Howard plays a South African farmer and Jane Birkin plays his daughter in *Dust*. The film "becomes a metaphor for the human estrangement caused by the system of racial apartheid which forms the larger context for the story."

Dust

Belgian director Marion Hansel's film is based on South African writer J. M. Coetzee's novel, *From the Heart of the Country*, and stars Jane Birkin, Trevor Howard, and John Matshikiza.

On an isolated farm deep in the Veldt, Cape Province, South Africa, a white Boer farmer and his spinster daughter live in seething silence. The tension between Magda (Jane Birkin) and her father (Trevor Howard) grows unbearable when the farm's black foreman (John Matshikiza) brings his lovely young wife to be a maid in the house. Magda's repressed sexuality and her obsessive need to be loved by her father erupt violently when the old man begins fooling around with the young woman.

From the beginning of the film, Magda's neurosis is apparent. When she fantasizes hacking her father to death with an ax, however, her madness becomes evident. The film takes on an enigmatic quality as it becomes difficult to separate Magda's hallucinations from what is "really" going on in the story. After Magda kills the old man, she forges a

strange alliance with the servants Hendrik and Anna—a triangle which contains all the ambiguity of social and sexual relations between the races in South Africa.

On one level the film is a tale of the tortured loneliness of an invisible woman denied access to love; on another level, it becomes a metaphor for the human estrangement caused by the system of racial apartheid which forms the larger context for the story.

Belgian director Marion Hansel paces the film very slowly to show the everyday alienation and staggering silences which push Magda into madness. Jane Birkin (last seen in Rivette's *Love on the Ground*) gives an intense performance in a demanding role—passive but volatile, she's reasonable and gentle one moment and hysterically out of control the next. Birkin makes it all believable. Trevor Howard's father is an almost wordless role to which he brings an inspired performance. John Matshikiza is an actor in exile from South Africa who reveals the predictable and unpredictable depths of Hendrik's character with

Review by Lois Wadsworth

subtlety and confidence. Nadine Uwampa's child-like shyness and playfulness as Anna complement the brutal physicality of the other characters.

Dust was shot entirely in the Almeria region of Spain, not in the South African veldt it so closely resembles, because of sanctions against the Praetoria government by Belgium. The concrete isolation of the setting—its stark desert beauty and indifference—provide the perfect background for Magda's mental and spiritual anguish. The Vermeer-like interiors heighten the drama of Magda's loss of involvement with the ordinary world.

Marion Hansel's adaptation is said to closely follow J. M. Coetzee's novel. Reading Coetzee is a disturbing experience (*The Life and Times of Michael K* is another of his books). His bleak rendering of life in South Africa lacks the warmth that shines through Nadine Gordimer's work, for example. Despite his much darker view, however, Coetzee is an acknowledged expert in detailing the effects on the psyche of apartheid, and *Dust* does justice to his vision.

CINEMA 7 Arrum Bldg 687-0733

CAPE PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

TREVOR HOWARD
JANE BIRKIN

A Film By MARION HANSEL

DUST

Based on "IN THE HEART OF THE COUNTRY" By J.M. COETZEE

***—Jane Birkin gives a remarkable performance based on J.M. Coetzee's "In the Heart of the Country." **Winner Silver Lion** —S.F. Chronicle **Venice Film Festival**

Oregon Premiere—One week only thru Jan. 29. Shows Fri & Sat at 7:30 & 9:20. Sunday Bargain Matinee 4:30. Sun & Mon 7 & 8:50. Tues-Thurs 8 pm.

"HANDSOME...ARTFUL... INTELLIGENT"

DUST is artful and intelligent...it has a stark streamlined manner and an underlying urgency. The veldt in Cape Province (South Africa) has been hauntingly evoked...handsome...classical, and wild"
—Janet Maslin, NEW YORK TIMES

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Sun Bargain Mat. 4 pm \$3

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—Sheila Benson, Whole Earth Review

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Aliens: Warrant officer Ripley, who alone survived *Alien*, finds her reputation in critical condition. Stars Sigourney Weaver. Late show at Bijou (686-2458).

Bedroom Window: To protect his lover's identity, a man claims that he has witnessed a brutal beating. Stars Steve Guttenberg (*Cocoon*), Isabelle Huppert, and Elizabeth McGovern. Cinema World (342-6536).

Brighton Beach Memoirs: A weekend in Neil Simon's wisecracking youth, based on his hit Broadway play. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

The Color Purple: A Southern black woman endures, and finally arises from, a life of agony and struggle. Steven Spielberg sanitized Alice Walker's novel for this film. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Crimes of the Heart: Dramatic comedy. Three sisters reunite and consider their various notorious lives. Stars Oscar winners Diane Keaton, Sissy Spacek, and Jessica Lange. Based on the Pulitzer caliber play. Cinema World (342-6536).

Critical Condition: Comedy. Richard Pryor stars a patient in a hospital during a power failure. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Crocodile Dundee: A celebrated Aussie adventurer, naive to city ways, spends some time in the Big Apple. Oakway (342-5351).

Down By Law: A pimp, an out-of-work DJ, and an Italian tourist all end up in the same jail. Directed by Jim Jarmusch (*Stranger Than Paradise*). Bijou (686-2458).

Dust: Drama on a South African farm, home of emotionally desperate whites and oppressed blacks. This Belgian/French production was shot in English and filmed in Spain. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

The Golden Child: Eddie Murphy is the social worker chosen to find a kidnapped youngster in Katmandu. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

The Little Shop of Horrors: Rick Moranis (*Ghostbusters*) takes on Steve Martin in this wacky musical comedy about a bloodthirsty flower. National (344-3431).

The Mission: A former slave trader helps a Jesuit priest try to protect South American Indians from Spanish exploitation. Stars Robert DeNiro, McDonald (343-4343).

The Morning After: A woman awakens from an alcohol-induced sleep to find a dead man in her bed. Stars Jane Fonda, Jeff Bridges, and Raul Julia. West 11th (342-4142).

The Mosquito Coast: An eccentric inventor moves his Yankee family to Honduras, seeking a paradise, finding a hell. Stars Harrison Ford. Directed by Peter Weir (*Witness*). Cinema World (342-6536).

The Name of the Rose: A medieval monk investigates a series of murders within the monastery. Stars Sean Connery, with F. Murray Abraham (*Amadeus*). Cinema World (342-6536).

Star Trek IV: More adventure for Kirk and crew. This episode brings them back to our present to help us do what we alone cannot—survive! West 11th (342-4142).

Top Gun: Tom Cruise trains to be a hot-shot fighter pilot when he's not relaxing with Kelly McGinnis. Fine Arts (747-2201).

Wanted: Dead or Alive: Appears to be a modern version of Steve McQueen's old "bounty hunter" vehicle. This one stars Rutger Hauer (*Blade Runner*). Springfield Quad (726-9073).

The Wraith: Teenage drivers pay the price for bad driving and bloodshed. Lifestyles of the gory and stupid? Springfield Quad (726-9073) and West 11th (342-4142).

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