

now showing

Aristocats: This re-release of the 1970 Walt Disney classic is in Technicolor, animated, and 78 minutes long. Cinema World (342-6536).

Blind Date: Bruce Willis (TV's *Moonlighting*) has a miserable date with Kim Basinger in a slapstick comedy by Blake Edwards. Springfield Quad (726-9073) and West 11th (342-4142).

Children of a Lesser God: Marlee Matlin won the 1986 Academy Award for best actress in her role as a strong, defiant deaf woman. William Hurt (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*) plays her teacher and lover. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

The Color of Money: After seven rejections by the Motion Picture Academy, Paul Newman won an Oscar for his reprise portrayal of pool pro Fast Eddie Felson. Tom Cruise as an upstart contender, plus fine camera work of the game add spice. Late night feature at the Bijou (686-2458).

Crocodile Dundee: Australia's Paul Hogan charms as writer and star of a movie that's breaking box-office records everywhere. Oakway Cinema (342-5351).

The Decline of the American Empire: Eight upwardly mobile and education people pass the day in conversation, the men in one place, the women in another. The topic for both: sex. Comedy. Bijou (686-2458).

Extreme Prejudice: Nick Nolte (*Down and Out in L.A.*) as Jack Benteen takes on six bad guys in this action-thriller from Tri-Star Pictures. McDonald (344-4343).

Hannah and Her Sisters: Best supporting actress/actor Academy Awards went to Dianne Wiest and Michael Caine in Woody Allen's comedy on his usual themes: city life, love and death. Double feature with *Radio Days* at Springfield Fine Arts (747-2201).

Lethal Weapon: In another twist on the buddy film, Mel Gibson and Danny Glover play two LAPD cops investigating a drug-related murder. The last half hour is solid action. Cinema World (342-6536).

Making Mr. Right: Susan Seidelman directs this tale of a woman's search for the perfect man, who turns out to be less-than-human. John Malkovich plays both android and the doctor who creates him. Rich cinematography. Springfield Quad (726-9073) and Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Platoon: Best picture and director of 1986, according to the Oscar-nominees. A no-holds barred view of life as a foot soldier, during the Vietnam War, starring Charlie Sheen, Tom Berenger, and William Dafoe. By Oliver Stone, who was there. Cinema World (342-6536).

Project X: Matthew Broderick (*Ferris Bueller's Day Off*) plays an air farce pilot with a chimpanzee as partner in a top-secret project. West 11th (342-4142).

Radio Days: With comic bits and some touching moments, director Woody Allen intercuts childhood memories with nostalgic glimpses of radio's celebrities. Double bill with *Hannah and Her Sisters* at Springfield Fine Arts (747-2201).

Raising Arizona: Nicolas Cage and Holly Hunter play a childless cop and robber who decide to kidnap the fifth quintuplet of a wealthy family. It's all in fun, with jokes, chases and crazy characters. National (344-3431).

A Room with a View: Lushly filmed in Florence, Italy. A young British woman with a proper upbringing is tempted by a less conventional lifestyle. Maggie Smith plays her governess. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

The Secret of My Success: Michael J. Fox is Brantley Foster, who uses his charm to get ahead in a large corporation, only to have it backfire on him in comic ways. Springfield Quad (726-9073) and Cinema World (342-6536).

Star Trek IV: Captain Kirk, Dr. Spock and the Enterprise crew are back. Strong characterizations, a witty script and a timely theme make *Trek*ies of a whole new generation. W. 11th (342-4142).

Therese: Catherine Mouchet awed audiences at the Cannes Film Festival in her portrayal of a young woman obsessed by spiritual love. Based on the true story of a young nun declared a saint in 1925, it's in French with subtitles at Cinema 7 (687-0733).

—Thank You Michael Sussman

Therese

Review by Lois Wadsworth

French director Alain Cavalier's *tableaux* depict the brief life of a young girl who becomes a Carmelite nun and dies a saint; it stars Catherine Mouchet.

Therese Martin is the youngest of four daughters, all of whom join the cloistered order of Carmel. At 15, she is a feverishly bright child who is convinced that her prayers have saved the soul of a criminal condemned to die. Told that she's too young and fragile for the rigors of the self-sacrificing, austere life of the sisters, she begs the Pope himself to let her join them. She dresses in a long, white wedding dress, and her beloved father gives her away. From this moment on, Therese (who will live a scant nine years) "is married in her mind" to a perfect, handsome, gentleman of a husband whom she strives mightily to please. Quietly obsessed with the idea of becoming a saint, she pursues her calling with single-minded devotion. Her faith is an inspiration to some of the sisters. After she becomes very ill with tuberculosis, her dying inspires them all. Her diary was published after her death in 1897, and she was canonized in 1925, called by Pope Pius XI "the greatest saint of modern times."

Surprisingly, this film won the Special Jury prize at Cannes, 1986. Despite that, it seems to me that the least likely persons in America to find such a story of faith worthy of praise would be the film critics of *New York* (David Denby), *Time* (Richard Corliss), *The New York Times* (Annette Insdorf), and *The L.A. Weekly* (John Powers). Unlikely as it seems, these people unanimously serve up accolades to this "simple movie," this "beautiful, perverse, and moving film about a true saint. . . ."

Well, I don't know what's wrong with me, but I just can't buy it. I think the film is really perverse—repulsive is the word I want to

use—and depressing to boot. Denial of the body brings up perversion of the flesh, and some of the sisters indulge in flagellation and wearing tiny sharp nails next to their tenderest skin. There's a lot of eroticism, righteously repressed of course, streaming out of their ideas of consummation with the divine bridegroom. A young sister who is obviously in love with Therese complains about her inability to love Jesus. Therese tells her to "fondle him." The spectacle of a young girl dying painfully without medical help because intense suffering is what is expected of her (and because the others want to get off on her glorious sacrifice) is obscene. David Denby describes the choices a viewer has: ". . . you either concentrate entirely on this mad, inspired girl or stop looking." I recommend the latter.

To be fair, one of the reasons why the critics like this picture is the minimalist *tableaux* style director Cavalier and cinematographer Philippe Rousselot favor. The camera faces the object directly, frontally, no angles; the camera is stationary, no tracking shots; between shots, the screen goes to black; the background is stark; there is little or no action. You can probably tell by now that I am not a fan of this stylistic manipulation of the image, either. I don't want everything framed like a work of art and displayed for me. I want variety, lots of information to choose from, and some continuity from one scene to the next.

I think that the critical climate is so favorable to this film (and so uncharacteristically *uncritical* of its manifest content) because it purports to be the polar opposite of films that glorify the pleasure principle at any price. But glorifying the suffering principle is going too far for me—I think it's a repressive, regressive, subtle piece of woman-hating. Amen.



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Therese

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