# CINEMA

## 'Down And Out' is just that



I've always had some respect for Paul Mazursky, primarily for his early films — 'Blume in Love, 'Harry and Tonto,' and 'An Unmarried Woman' Recently, however, he has taken to re-interpreting classic works

for middle-class Americans

The trend started with a remake of Truffaut's "Jules and Jim" ("Willie and Phil") and continued with an updated version of Shakespeare's "The Tempest." Now his sights are raised to Jean Renoir and he presents his modern interpretation of the classic "Boudu Saved From Drowning" as "Down And Out In Beverly Hills."

At best one might expect an American interpretation of the classic tale — a natural, unrestrained individual enters civilized, restrained society and raises havoc. Mazursky manages neither, however. His tramp, Jerry Benson (Nick Nolte) appears to be the Rennaisance man and turns out to be a sham playing out what he thinks society wants him to be, and his bourgeois identification figure Dave Whiteman (Richard Dreyfuss) is a sweatshop owner who feels that the epitome of civilization is a dental plan for his below.

The story is essentially the same as the Renoir original, with a modern interpretation. Jerry loses his dog and in a fit of sorrow tries to drown himself — in a Beverly Hills swimming pool. Dave jumps in and saves the wretched creature and then invites him to live in his house, much to the dismay of his wife Barbara (Bette Midler) and his maid Carmen, Jerry disrupts the household as Dave tries to find in the tramp the instinctive, immediate qualities he lost in becoming a leader of society. Meanwhile, Jerry seduces both Barbara and Carmen (with whom Dave is carrying on an affair), advises the Whiteman's

sexually-ambivalent son Max on a shade of lipstick and then starts working on the daughter, landy

The treatment of the issues raised, however, is nothing less than pedestrian. The whole joy of Boudu, was the contrast between the natural and the civilized, the best and the worst of both poles, with the point-of-view figure somewhere

in between.

The poles are out of focus in "Down and Out." Dave seems to be the only member of his family who is able to relate to Jerry, yet he exhibits no tendencies toward subversing his position in society or differing from the tendencies of his family. The only difference between Dave and his family is his family's tendency to buy into fads, trends and neuroses. Barbara is a guru nut. Jenny a weight-conscious fanatic and Max a young man obsessed with androgyny.

Perhaps "Down And Out" would seem funnier to filmgoers who aren't familiar with the classic "Boudu," but even Mazursky's gags seem threadbare. One of the spotlight gags, a bit of dog psychology where Jerry feeds Dave's pet Matisse, is telegraphed minutes ahead of time. Thus, the

final punch loses its impact.

Public opinion seems to be unanimous in proclaiming the dog the funniest performer in the film. I personally like Little Richard's musical number during the party finale. But neither of these are enough to support 100 minutes of screen story, which ranges from the trite to the marginally clever.

Maybe it's just me, since box office totals show this to be an audience favorite, but I find Mazurky's politics appalling and his humor unappealing. Give me Renoir's "Boudu," any day

By Sean Axmaker

## Ex-Holy Modal Rounder recalled

"Richard Tyler was a totally committed musician. We worked together in the Pete Carnes Blues Band in 1980. He's left a big impression on everybody he played with over the last 10 years in Portland."

Randy. 'Ratso' Reece, saxophone player for James T. and the Tough, spoke fondly in remembrance of blues planist Richard Tyler, who died of internal bleeding February 12 in Portland.

Tyler made 14 albums in the 1960s and '70s, mostly with the Holy Modal Rounders, who were perhaps best known for their counterculture anthem "Don't Bogart Me" and the rollicking, ribald "Boobs A Lot." Tyler had appeared on national television

before he was old enough to vote.

"He made an awful lot of money in a short time," said Reece, who added that Tyler suffered from musicians' disease — the drug and alcohol abuse which often accompany performers on the ride to the top. "We're talking tens of thousands of dollars," said Reece. "So much success so young caused frustration, and contributed to Tyler's alcoholism.

"He'd wake up every morning with a bottle of booze, and generally he'd make jokes about it," added Reece. "Somehow, his drinking did not seem to interfere with the quality of his playing, when we were with Carnes."

Reece explained, "Everyone in the band

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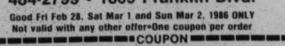
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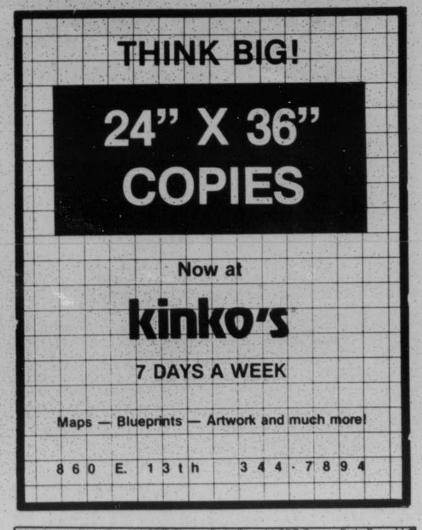
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