

ENTERTAINMENT

'Avalon' portrays life of European immigrants



By Chris Bouneff
Emerald News Editor

For someone who has grown up in an Eastern European family, *Avalon* will hit close to home.

For someone who hasn't, *Avalon* will document how close-knit families grow apart and how family traditions fall by the wayside as time change.

Avalon, director/writer Barry Levinson's newest release, portrays an accurate picture of family life for Eastern European immigrants. But unlike most films on this subject, *Avalon* goes one step further.

The story delves deeply into how changes — emigrating to a new land or, even more powerful, technological advances — affect future generations.

The story revolves around Sam Krichinsky (Armin Mueller-Stahl), who came to Baltimore from Czarist Russia in 1914, and appropriately arriving on July 4.

The plot is told mainly from Sam's point of view through dialogues at the dinner table during Thanksgiving, when the family is together, and at other times when Sam spins his tales for the grandchildren.

Sam is the fifth and final Krichinsky brother to come to America. The family settles in the Avalon neighborhood of Baltimore. At first, the family stays close and adheres to tradition.

Conversation over Thanksgiving dinner is lively and focuses on the elders reminiscing about the old days when they first came to America. Although the women complain about the stories, Sam retorts that it's important for the children to hear the family history.

On the surface, much of the bantering seems trivial, but underneath the surface you find that the details about which the brothers argue are very important if the stories are to live on.

At one point during dinner, Sam and his brother Gabriel (Lou Jacobi) argue over what year they paid for their father to come over from Europe, either 1925 or 1926.

Sam's son Jules (Aidan Quinn) asks what's the difference between the two years, and Gabriel replies, "There's a big difference. One is '25 and the other is '26."

And while this may seem trivial, for the tale to survive orally, the details must be exact.

Through these gatherings, the dinners and family circle meetings, the family tries to stay together; but over the course of time subtle changes form large wedges as the family divides.

Even age-old traditions, such as waiting for the always-late Gabriel before cutting the Thanksgiving dinner, fall by the wayside. Again, this may seem trivial, but the issue of cutting the turkey only when all the relatives are present can be

an important family matter.

The family also drifts apart as television becomes more prevalent. In the end, instead of lively dinner conversation, the family eats from trays in front of the TV.

The decline culminates when Sam's wife, played by Joan Plowright, dies and family members don't attend the funeral. Sam remarks that this isn't the family, and he's right. Their ethnic roots have been severed.

Levinson's writing is sharp and very entertaining, and the photography is simply beautiful.

The real charm in *Avalon*, however, are the characters, who give subtle but powerful performances.

Mueller-Stahl (*Music Box*) portrays the grandfatherly role of trying to keep the generations together. He is wise but simple, and is never one to let a wonderful memory slip away. His performance draws viewers into the family, pulling at heart strings without forcing it upon them.



Jules (Aidan Quinn), a young salesman, dances with his wife, Ann (Elizabeth Perkins), in *Avalon*.

Local bands open Halloween bash

Rock 'n' roll, blues highlight festivities

By Ming Rodrigues
Emerald Reporter

Come as you aren't and have a howl of a time with two of the Northwest's finest dance bands at the WOW Hall's Halloween bash tonight.

Eugene's own Nine Days Wonder and Ashland's Uncle Chester promise to stir up more than just a few good spirits at the Halloween celebration kick off this year.

"We hope to make this Halloween bash a tradition," WOW Hall publicist Mike Walker said. "We want everyone to come dressed in their best Halloween garb and just have loads of fun."

What Portland's *Events* magazine labeled "Southern Fried San Francisco Sound" — an alternate blend of improvisational rock and blues, electric boogie-blues and good ole' rock 'n' roll — the music of Nine Days Wonder couples innovative jamming, originals and tight vocals in a commitment to an ever-evolving style.

By definition, a "nine day wonder" is a "short-lived sensation." This pessimistic label is perhaps tongue-in-cheek, and for five years down the road, the six-man band (including three former



Nine Days Wonder will present innovative jamming and tight vocals in a commitment to their ever-evolving style, tonight at WOW Hall.

University students: Ben Sturgill, lead guitarist; Dave Cooy, bassist; and Mike Walker, keyboardist and WOW Hall publicist) continues to play a tight circuit in Eugene and Portland.

This is also their first appearance since their successful Rocky Mountain Tour, and their last before heading into the studio to produce their first major release.

Uncle Chester is another regular WOW Hall ensemble, noted for their world-beat groove complemented by a powerful horn section and driving rhythms.

Showtime is 9:30 p.m. and doors open at 9 p.m. Admission is \$5 at the door. There are no student discounts. All ages are welcome and adult refreshments are available to those with ID.



Eva and Sam Krichinsky (Joan Plowright and Armin Mueller-Stahl), daughter-in-law Ann (Elizabeth Perkins), son Jules (Aidan Quinn), and nephew Izzy (Kevin Pollak) enjoy a parade unexpectedly passing through their neighborhood in *Avalon*.

Courtesy photo

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