

## WITHNAIL AND I

The last few months of the '60s, two neighbors inhabit drab and unsanitary London flats; Marwood and Withnail (Paul McGann and Richard E. Grant). They are semi-hippies; unemployed actors, with longish hair and relatively conservative, though seedy, wardrobes. They drink and do drugs, and commiserate about their squalid surroundings. Withnail, from a wealthier family, drinks more, does more drugs, and is more depressed and depressing.

The two decide to holiday at Withnail's uncle's country cottage. This uncle (Richard Griffiths) is hilarious. Into root vegetables, he sports a radish on his lapel instead of a flower. He compares the admirable qualities of the firm young carrot to the worthless flowers — "pimps for the bees." Withnail gets use of the country cottage by a ruse, telling gay Uncle Monte a story so juicy that he later turns up at the cottage, pining for Marwood. His pursuit of the paranoid but achingly polite Marwood is one of many funny bits. The conversation is witty, though often acerbic. Some extremely funny scenes occur on the country holiday as the two bumbling young know-it-alls have serious troubles providing themselves with the simplest of domestic accoutrements — food and fuel. After a day of vegetables, Withnail shouts, "I want something's flesh." Later they botch abysmally dealing with a live chicken, and a surpassingly funny scene takes place in the local tavern with the town poacher — a paranoid schizophrenic basket case, if there ever was one.

This film has been called witty but monotonous. I found the constant cynicism of the two young men, particularly Withnail, to really get across the nihilistic mindset of the borderline counterculturists of the times. There were a lot of people who grew their hair kind of long, boozed it up, did their drugs, and waited. They trashed the popular culture models of the time, and cursed the establishment. Of this sweetly innocent, yet confrontationally dynamic time, the filmmakers have a neatly accurate diagram fleshed out with the noble and ignoble sufferings of the young and the guilty.

## INNER SPACE

Very funny and original comedy starring Dennis Quaid as Tuck Pendleton, military pilot scheduled to be miniaturized to cruise where no man has gone before — in a rabbit.

A hijack at just the wrong moment finds Tuck implanted into Martin Short, who plays Jack Tupper, a nerd of a grocery bagger at a Safeway store. Meg Ryan plays Pendleton's love interest and Tupper's Near Miss. We have here a charming portrait of an unrequited *menage a trois* and the first known example of male bonding from the inside out.

Supposedly Pendleton is in a race with death, as he will run out of air in his little craft if Tupper and girl friend can't get a computer chip back from the bad persons. It's the only one of its kind. Now you know, you're even supposed to have duplicates of your bookkeeping records in a separate location, but do they have a duplicate chip — no-o-o-o-o, of course not! But, this film was so funny, such minor technicalities didn't worry even a pseudo-intellectual first child such as myself for very long.

Short is wonderful as the bumbling nice guy who kind of grows on you. He's very good at the physical comedy called for. Meg Ryan was fine as the girl reporter fighting her yen for the dashing pilot, and Quaid, as the pilot, is dashing. He's good at macho, lusty but boyish humor, much in the same vein as Jack Nicholson, whom he both resembles and sounds like.

## ADVENTURES IN BABYSITTING

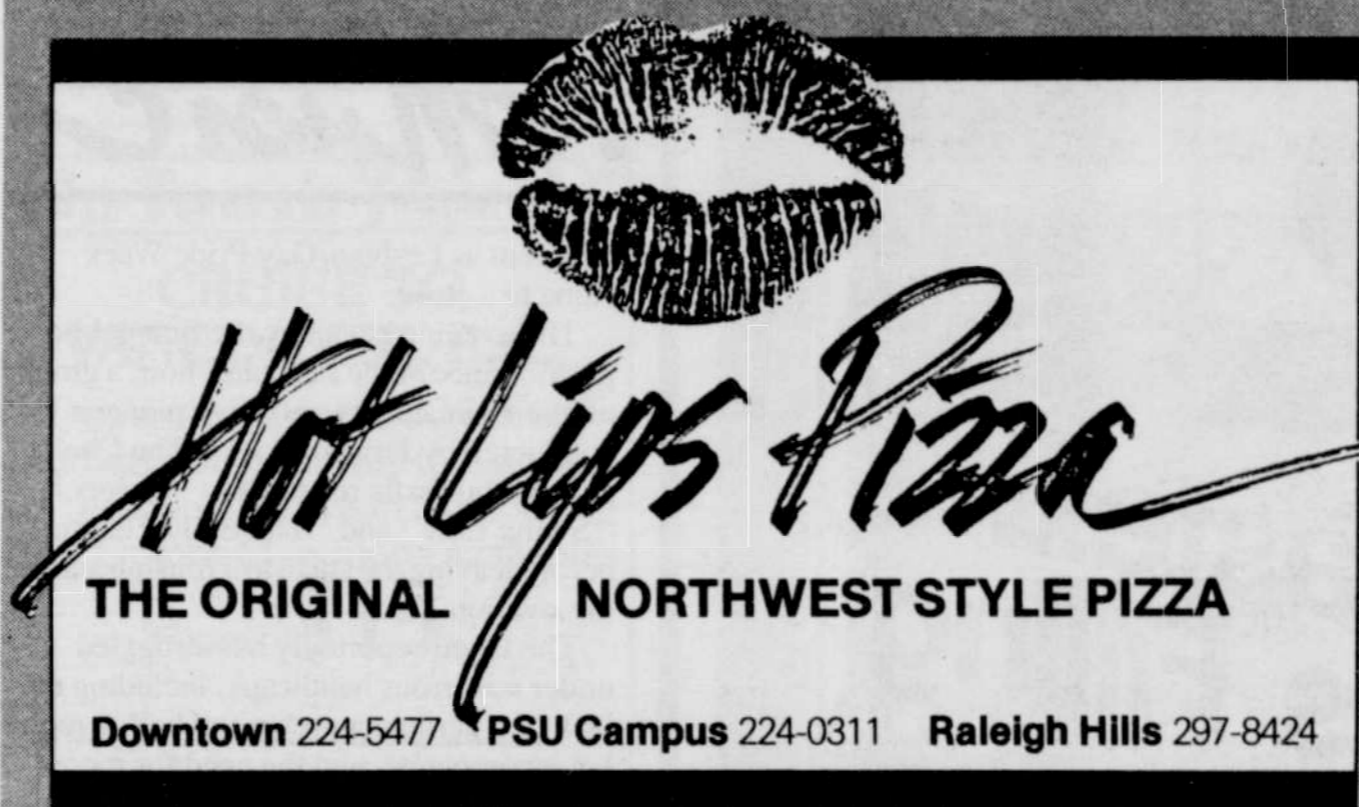
Much like a Martin Scorsese comedy of last year, *After Hours*, where a humble word processor goes from one impossible and dangerous adventure

to another, this story follows a babysitter, who takes her charges and a neighbor boy to the city in her mother's car on an errand of mercy. The bad news starts with a flat tire and no spare on the freeway, which leads them to a nightmare ride in a truck with a possible maniac, a bullet hole through Mom's windshield, being hijacked by a car thief, then menaced and chased all night by real mean chop shop and gambling mafiosi.

From one dangerous situation after another, the sitter and charges extricate themselves, through thinking fast, acrobatics, or just plain chutzpah. All the worst teen and preteen fears are treated. Sister

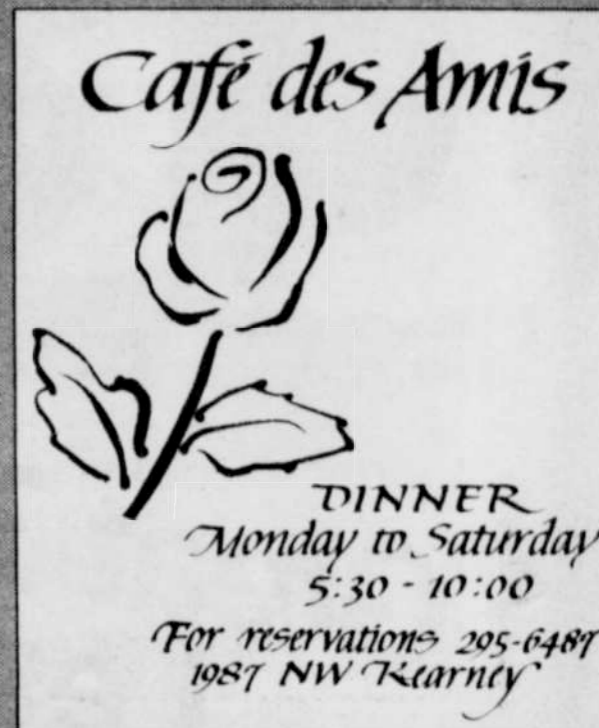
tells the sitter about her brother's crush on her. Mom mentions the poor kid's acne in front of Chris, the sitter. A one-armed man shows up right after a grisly story about a one-armed homicidal maniac. The sitter's boyfriend is found to have broken their date to go out with a looser woman. All the adults around are rude or menacing.

Elizabeth Shue as Chris gives a lovely performance as the sweet young thing who learns a lot and squeaks by in style during the adventuresome night. As the winsome, but resourceful, high school miss, she's engaging and solid. The yuppie sitters are clean and cute as pedigreed puppies. A good time is had by all, even the audience. ●



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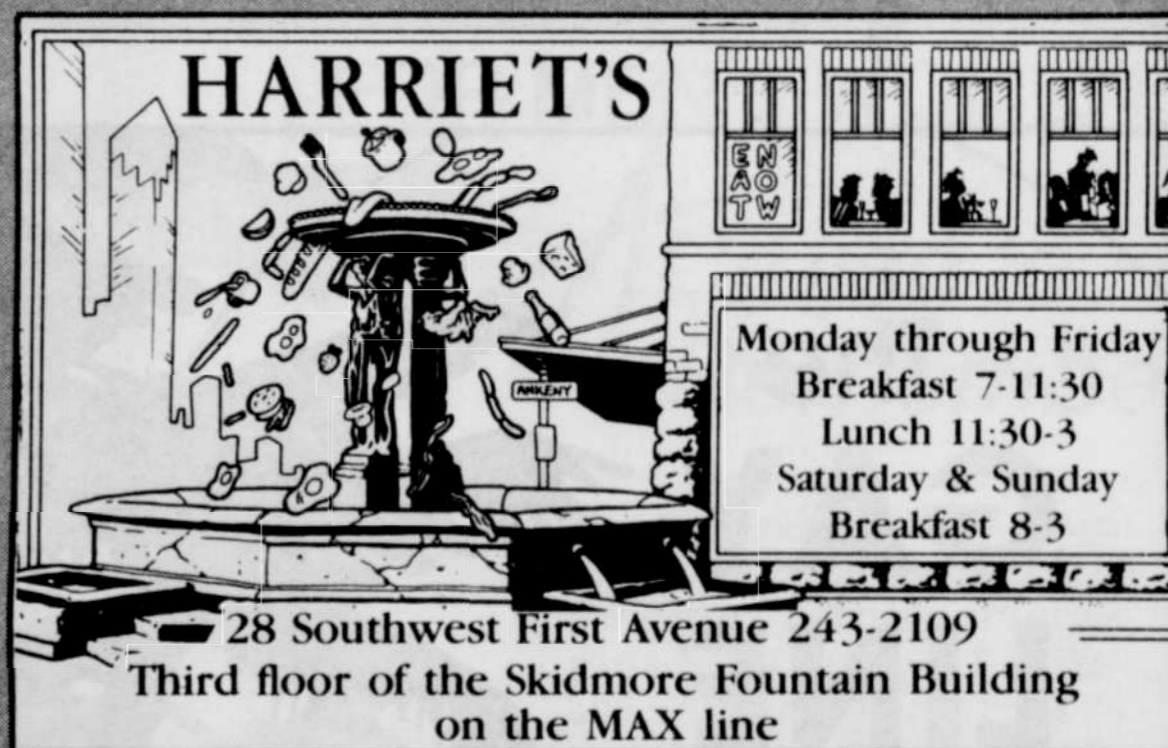
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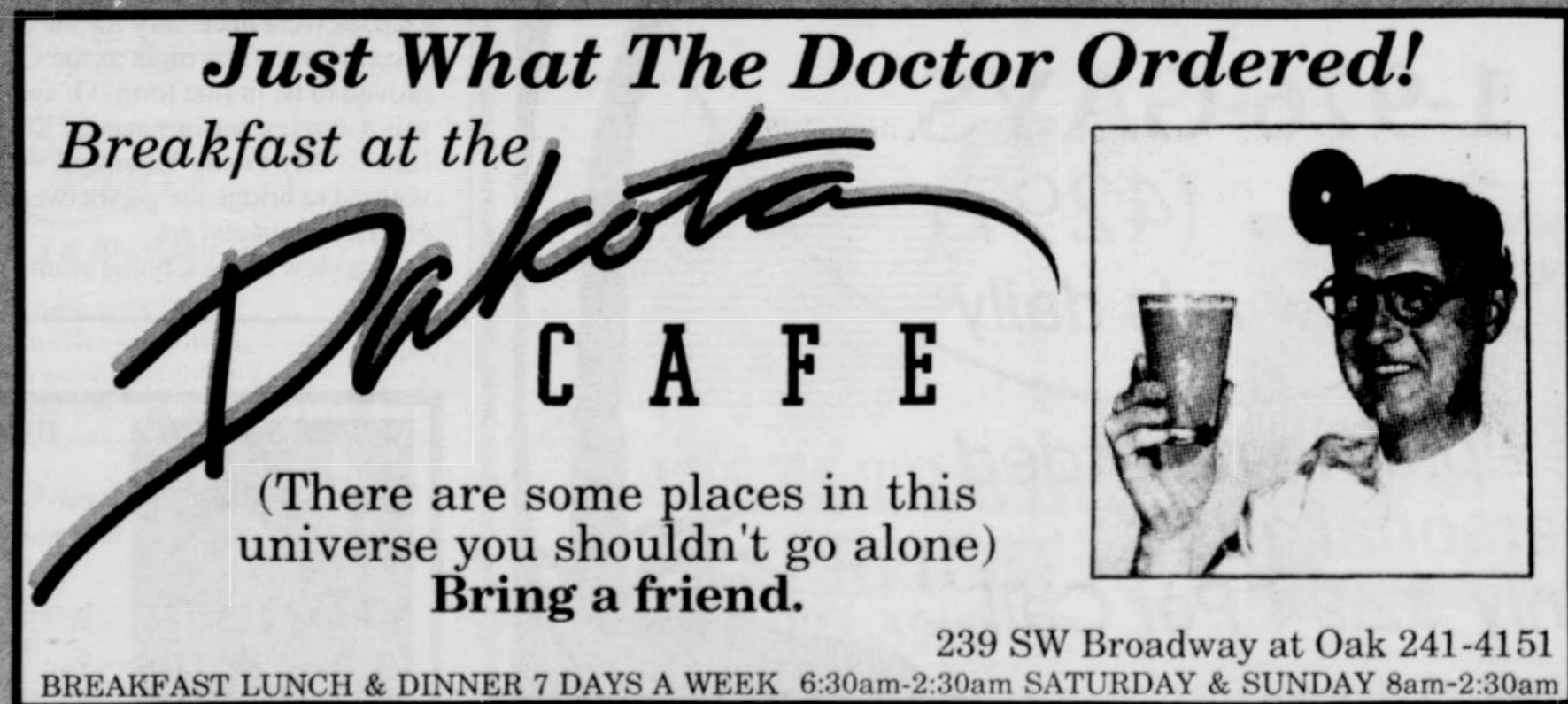
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