

# CINEMA

## 'Worth Winning' isn't even worth seeing

### Worth Winning

Mark Harmon, Leslie Ann Warren, Marie Halboe, Madeline Stowe

directed by Adam Greenberg

Closes tonight at Ram Triple  
 967-8284

What could be more perfect than three gorgeous women surrendering to your every wish and oblivious to the competition?

This is the fate of Taylor Worth (Mark Harmon) in *Worth Winning*, a not-so-worthy comedy directed by Adam Greenberg. Taylor is so in love

### DONALD BECK

film

with himself that even the most devoted Mark Harmon follower would gag. Viewers often had to ask themselves, "Worth winning what?" An Academy Award? An Oscar? A Golden Globe? No, and definitely not worth watching again.

The plot, as hackneyed as it is, is centered around Taylor Worth and his buddy Max. Max bets Taylor that he can't get three women to say "I do" within two months. The twist is that Max gets to pick the three and Taylor has to capture the lovely la-

dies on video camera (no Rob Lowe jokes, please) saying the magic words. Needless to say, Taylor takes the bet.

The only question asked without a predictable answer in this movie is whether Taylor will find "Mrs. Right" among his conquests. His choices are (1) a gorgeous dumb blond named Erin (Marie Halboe) who is protected by most of the Eagles football team, (2) a nymphomaniacal millionaire housewife named Eleanor (Leslie Ann Warren) and (3) a prim concert pianist named Veronica (Madeline Stowe).

Taylor is a popular meteorologist with a six-figure income and all the charm and luck in the world. Unfortunately, his charm doesn't show through on the screen.

Mark Harmon fills the role of the

perfectionist yuppie playboy well, but offers no commendable performance. His previous roles in TV's *St. Elsewhere* and a mini-series about the life of Ted Bundy were attributes to his career, but *Worth Winning* lacks that quality. Harmon's asides to the audience offer some humor but become so overworked that they lose their effect in the first 30 minutes of the film.

Madeline Stowe (*Stakeout*) does an adequate job as the hard-to-get pianist Veronica. Her scenes with Harmon are the most humorous of the three women. The conflict lies in their lifestyles which are totally opposite, and since both make their characters convincing, they are funny.

As for the others, Erin's blatant naivete and Eleanor's stupid antics

are simply foolish and don't contribute much to the laughs.

Director Adam Greenberg does a nice job keeping *Worth Winning* flowing without any severely boring moments. I suppose anyone trying to keep three women satisfied at one time wouldn't be bored either. However, this doesn't do much for the overall quality of the comedy.

Somewhere underlying this movie is the belief that opposites attract. Viewers can expect some laughs, but the success of this film will have to rely solely on Mark Harmon's popularity, because the not-so-spectacular script can't help much.

My advice to people who want to see the movie is to go buy a Mark Harmon poster, because *Worth Winning* just isn't worth it.

## Miller's 'Thief' enchants, but lacks Truffaut's energy

### The Little Thief

Charlotte Gainsbourg, Didier Berace, Simon de la Brosse

directed by Claude Miller

Varsity  
 967-8665  
 ●●● 1/2

*The Little Thief* was originally written by Claude de Givray and the late Francois Truffaut, and — although Truffaut did not have the chance to direct the movie himself before his death two years ago — Claude Miller's film resonates with Truffaut's sympathies and his spirit.

Janine Castang (Charlotte Gainsbourg) is an adolescent girl living in a provincial town in France. She has never known her father, and her mother has abandoned her to go live with a lover in Italy. Janine is left in the care of her aunt and uncle. She is stifled by her surroundings. School is a bore, and although her aunt and uncle are kind, they have no sense of anything beyond their day-to-day lives. She finds them crude and unimaginative and yearns for something more than just basic subsistence.

To escape her mundane life, Janine steals. She steals cigarettes, so she can smoke and seem sophisticated. She steals money, so she can go to the movies and see how glamorous people live. She steals silk lingerie, so she can have a luxurious secret under her rough clothes and next to her skin. In short, she steals so she can have a secret — something that is all her own, something beautiful which makes her existence bearable.

However, Janine's secret is discovered when she is arrested for stealing money from the local church's collection box. Her horrified aunt and uncle have no idea what to do with her, and taking advantage of this, Janine suggests that she leave school

### ZANDY HARTIG

film

and go to another town to work.

She finds a position as a housemaid to a nice, wealthy young couple. Since they let her off in the evenings, she continues to go see movies in search of excitement.

One night she accidentally falls asleep in the movie theater on a stranger's shoulder. To relieve her embarrassment, he takes her out for coffee. Janine is enchanted by the gentleman, Michele, because he is kind, protective and mature.

Michele works at City Hall and supplements the regularity of his life by leading a choir after work. Although he is reluctant to marry her, Janine convinces Michele to enter into an affair.

Despite their difference in age, both Michele and Janine provide something special for each other. Michele finds Janine's innocence and enthusiasm for life invigorating. He admires her intolerance for monotony, her brutal honesty and tempestuous emotions. He is charmed by the fact that she is a mass of contradictions. She admits she tells lies, yet she is completely honest in her feelings. She is innocent in love, yet furiously pursuing experience. She is gentle in spirit and tough in practice. In an older person, all these contradictions would seem hypocritical, yet in Janine they mesh pleasingly.

For Janine, Michele provides stability and culture. He is the father she never had. He takes care of her and tries to steer her in some definite direction. He is her teacher. He stimulates her to read, listen to music and love. Michele also tries to provide her with some sense of responsibility. He is the first person who has ever shown an active interest in her, and Janine, who desper-

ately wants to be an adult, loves the idea of having a 43-year-old, married man as a lover.

However, Michele cannot provide spontaneity and excitement for her, and when Janine joins with another young thief, Raoul, he fulfills these needs.

Raoul is basically a loser. He is not bright, and is not too good at anything, not even stealing. His bluster is more impressive than his real performance. But to Janine, who concentrates more on appearances than on inner qualities, Raoul's per-

*She steals so she can have a secret — something that is all her own, something beautiful that makes her existence bearable*

formance is captivating. He is handsome and contains a certain youthfulness and enthusiasm which is unfettered by responsibility. He convinces her that the life she is leading, her affair with Michele and her job, is just another dead end.

Raoul offers her adventure and vitality, and she grabs at it with both hands. She steals from her employers and runs away with Raoul, leaving bourgeois society behind.

However, society catches up with Janine and intrudes into her carefree life. The police arrest her, while Raoul, who has always been a coward, runs away and gets off scot-free. Janine is thrown into a reform school. This marks a turning point in her life. For the first time, she realizes her whole purpose in life has been to

steal beauty whenever she can find it, in order to make herself "exceptional."

What Janine does not realize is that beauty is not merely a material quality, such as money, that one can appropriate, but it is a spiritual attribute to keep inside one's heart. It is this spiritual beauty that enhances life, making it exceptional, and the rest of the movie deals with Janine's development of the spiritual beauty within her, instead of stealing material beauty from others.

The cast of *The Little Thief* is wonderful. In particular, Charlotte Gainsbourg is lovely as Janine. She embodies the gamine quality of a teenaged girl aching to be sophisticated in a small, rural town. Her face and her body, although she is tall, are still a child's; and even when she tries to act seductive, there is a charming look of a little girl playing grown-up. She is not beautiful, yet when she smiles, her face is pure sweetness and her voice is soft and silvery. She is enchanting, and this is essential — otherwise all her thieving and insensitivity to others would make her completely inaccessible to the viewer.

Claude Miller, in his sympathetic treatment of youth's frustrations with everyday life and its conventions, is Truffaut's compatriot. He is also like Truffaut in that he does not dictate morality to the moviegoer, the way most American film makers do. A judgment on Janine's thieving is left to the viewer. Is she a corrupt, disrespectful and disturbed child, is she a carefree and vital spirit, or perhaps a combination of both? Moral decisions are left to the viewer, which lends

another level of complexity and intelligence to the film.

Yet Miller's style is not as lively or well-defined as Truffaut's. There is something missing from this movie — "energy." *The Little Thief* is never boring, but I never felt as if I were caught up in the story as I was in *Small Change*. And the ending to the film was absolutely bizarre in its abruptness.

Perhaps Miller was trying for a deliberate sense of incompleteness, because as Janine states, "Beginnings I prefer, endings are always sad." But Truffaut, even in his unresolved endings, such as *Breathless*, always maintained a certain tightness of style that made the viewer feel satisfied in their suspension. *The Little Thief* does not do this. Instead the viewer feels as if the movie is unfinished.

Because of this lack of finesse, *The Little Thief* did not steal my heart, although many aspects of this film are very fine indeed.

### Top Ten Films

Figures indicate total gross

1. **Look Who's Talking**  
\$59.6 million
2. **The Bear**  
\$9.9 million
3. **Shocker**  
\$9.3 million
4. **Crimes and Misdemeanors**  
\$6.2 million
5. **Second Sight**  
\$2.2 million
6. **Phantom of the Opera**  
\$2.1 million
7. **Next of Kin**  
\$11.6 million
8. **Sea of Love**  
\$51.3 million
9. **Gross Anatomy**  
\$7.5 million
10. **The Fabulous Baker Boys**  
\$12 million

### The Ratings

- — miserable
- — mediocre
- — enjoyable
- — quite good
- — unmissable