

Leaven Reviews

Lovers and Other Strangers' Borrowed

A critic, I think, has two main responsibilities to his reader. He must state his true opinion; and he must do so in such a way that his reader will still have some gauge by which to judge the objective worth of what is being reviewed. Ideally, a good review attempts to educate its reader at the same time giving him enough information to draw his own conclusions.

Hence, the fairest way I can begin my review of "Lovers and Other Strangers" is to note that the New York Daily News called it "A rare, rewarding screen experience"; Playboy found it "Funny, real and touching"; and I thought it a pretentious, derivative bore.

Considering what "Lovers and Other Strangers" is, it's hardly surprising to see the American critical establishment vying with itself in praise. "Lovers" is a comedy, sometimes a very funny one. So was "Getting Straight"; so, too, was "Boys in the Band." What links these films is that each of them is a product of The Age of Significance, when everything from rock songs to comic strips reverberates with meaning. We even take dadaistic pop art seriously—and somewhere the gods are laughing at us for doing so—because meaningfulness and non-communication seem to be important statements about the human condition.

Hence, "Lovers and Other Strangers"—note the cuteness of the title—can come along and assume as its *donnee* that it need only skim the surface of a profound subject to send ripples of meaning to its bottom; and that, having done so, it then has a right to conclude—and hence be a "rare, rewarding experience"—that the mystery is deep and insoluble. This facile vision of life degrades the perception of its audience far more, I think, than merely clumsy, bad art: this is meretricious art; this is the real pornography.

"Lovers and Other Strangers," as you may already have guessed from the title, is a comedy about the relation between the sexes. It interweaves four, five, six, or seven plots depending on how you want to cut things. The cast is headed by, I believe, thirteen "leads"—though the only standout, for me was Richard Castellano, whose characterization of the gross Italian papa almost, but not quite, breaks through into full humanity. The direction, which is a combination of the too-slick and a simple lack of originality, is by Cy Howard.

The music, which I've mentioned in relation to a number of films, most notably "The Baby Maker" and "Junie Moon"—the music is the same old breathy mess which seems, with its

throw-together lyrics, to have done service for "The Graduate," "Goodbye, Columbus," "The Sterile Cuckoo," and so on. It has, in other words, a long and progressively less distinguished cinematic ancestry.

What with its multiple plots, "Lovers" apparently tries to give a comprehensive treatment to its subject. The problem is, first, that there are just too many plots; and, second, that you simply cannot (or not often) make a slapstick comedy which probes a human situation deeply. Hence, what we're faced with is thirteen stock figures, thirteen caricatures who are so rigorously straight-jacketed into their particular plot and disposition that they are disabled from acting in any human way.

The figures are so stereotyped that you can just about label them: there's the nervous groom-to-be ("I'm not getting married. Do you hear me? I'm not getting married"); the reluctant husband ("Not tonight, honey"); the crying woman, who regardless of the situation, bursts into tears on cue; the awkward stud; the intellectual girl; the sententious father, who keeps pattering, "no gap, no (generation) gap."

About the only thing you can do with such markers is move them around like checkers. Hence, we get the stock scenes: as I mentioned, the reluctant husband, who eventually goes down on his knees to beg his wife to let him be the master; the surrender of the wife, complete with baby-talk (vintage "Dinner at Eight"); the seduction of the intellectual girl ("Have you read...?")—and so on, too many to mention. By the time "Lovers and Other Strangers" is half an hour old, it has virtually exhausted itself. There'll be a few laughs left, but certainly no surprises—and you know it.

For the movie buff, "Lovers and Other Strangers" may be something of a delight—at least it will keep him on his toes spotting scenes wrenched almost bodily from other movies: the bedroom scenes from "Bob and Carol and Son" and a thousand other films; the wedding from "Goodbye, Columbus" (Where it was functional; here it is merely a plot device for grouping characters); the borrowing I've already mentioned from "Dinner at Eight"; cinematic devices, cutting and organization, stolen from, of all places, television comedy; and, unless I'm mistaken, one very funny parody of

"For Whom the Bells Toll," which unfortunately, is worked to death and then some. There is also a briefly amusing take off on "Tea and Sympathy."

The cast, too, will be a buff's delight, for it is headed by Gig Young, and consists entirely of competent second-raters. Each is satisfactory in his role, but none is capable of holding the film together. An established star—for what the remnants of the "star system" are worth—like Steve McQueen or Paul Newman, at least has this virtue, that he makes a plot coalesce around himself. In "Lovers" every action isolates itself from the rest of the film, with the result that the entire movie flies apart. Doubtless, a star would have been out of place in "Lovers." And there is no reason why the device of multiple plots cannot work. It simply doesn't, here.

Ticket sales for the second Carolina Playmaker production, "The Knack," are now underway. Tickets can be purchased at the Carolina Playmakers Business Office in Graham Memorial and at Ledbetter-Pickard on Franklin St. Tickets for season ticket holders are already available. Sales to the general public will begin tomorrow. "The Knack" will be presented at the Playmakers Theatre from November 17-22 at 8 p.m. There will also be a Sunday matinee at 2:30.

"The Knack" focuses on the gentle art of seduction. Written by Ann Jellicoe, it debuted at London's Royal Court Theatre, where it enjoyed dazzling success. Mike Nichols directed the New York production in 1964. "New York Times" critic Howard Taubman called the play "one of the funniest evenings in town...an original and demented romp with inescapable laughter."

Ronald Osbourne plays Tolin who has the knack. William Brooke as Tom, fantasizes about assorted animals. Arthur Marcus portrays Colin who has no knack and envies Tolin. Karen Browne plays the naive, flighty girl.

Campus Calendar

COLLEGE LIFE: Location changed from Union to Faculty Lounge in Dey Hall (fourth floor). Time: 9:00-10:00. Speaker: Dr. Paul Dunham, Physical Education Dept.

The YM-YWCA tutors who are working at the Multipurpose Center will meet tonight at 7:00 P.M. in the second floor lobby of the Y building.

LOST: At Hector's, November 9, 1970, between 12:00 noon and 2 P.M. Large manila (brown) envelope containing very important tax returns. Envelope labeled RENFROW, BROWN & PARKER—C.P.A. Please return to Hectors. REWARD OFFERED!

LOST: Blue checkbook bearing the name of Lou Bonds. First Union checks. Please bring by DTH office or call 929-6747 for ransom.

Lost or Stolen: 1 Nikon Photomic FTN/50mm lens and case. Serial Number 6999292. Reward. Call 967-1923.

Lost: A green wallet. Why don't you just keep the money and the wallet and just kinda like return my ID and other personal stuff. J. Burdette 933-1753, 301 Granville East.

Hillel Films will present "Border Street," a movie centering on the Warsaw Ghetto uprising of the Second World War, Wednesday, November 11, 1970, at 8 P.M. in the Hillel House, 210 West Cameron Ave., Chapel Hill. Contributions to defray the film's cost are suggested.

Anyone who is interested in participating in a Sport Parachute Training Session to be given November 14 and 15, please call immediately either 933-4827 or 933-4916, for details.

The Christian Science Organization will meet at 8:15 tonight in the Wesley Foundation. All are welcome.

Bowling tryouts for the Southeastern Collegiate Bowling Conference are now being held at the Carolina Union Lanes. Call immediately for more information—933-4131.

Students for a Democratic Society meets at 7 tonight in the South Lounge Meeting Room of the Carolina Union.

Lost: A pair of octagonal wire-rimmed glasses in a blue flowered case. Lost in the vicinity of Murphey Hall. Call 933-1837.

Lost: Gold signet ring. Initials DLM. Call David Miles, 968-9117.

Lost: Men's Glasses. (brown frames—probably in black clip case). In or around Wilson Library. Call Kay William, 933-2066 (967-3802 after 5:30).

Lost: One grey male cat with a white star on his chest and a white flea collar. The cat's name is Barnaby and he was last seen around Whitehead Dorm. If you have seen him, please call Richard, Jeff or Lee at 967-4891 or come by 305 Pittsboro St.

Lost: Ladies' gold watch near tennis courts behind cemetery, late Sunday afternoon. Reward. Call collect (Durham) 489-4041, after 5:30.

Lost: Blue and white contact lens case containing brown lenses, with small pink bottle of wetting solution attached. If found, please contact Charlotte Gantt at 211 Winston, 933-6136. Reward offered.

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HINT: All exam questions will be answered throughout the "History of Rock & Roll" Broadcast on WCAR