

'Manon' is compelling saga of love, revenge

By RICHARD SMITH
Staff Writer

"Manon Of The Spring"

★★★★

Directed by Claude Berri. Screenplay by Claude Berri and Gerard Brach from the novel by Marcel Pagnol. Starring Yves Montand, Daniel Auteuil and Emmanuelle Beart.

At last, "Manon Of The Spring" has come to Chapel Hill. Fans of "Jean de Florette" (and there are many) can finally see the final act of this remarkable French epic. No one should be disappointed.

Ten years have passed since the manipulative Cesar Soubeyran (Yves Montand) and his unwilling nephew Ugolin (Daniel Auteuil) succeeded in acquiring Jean de Florette's land that contained the natural water source they kept hidden from the hunchbacked farmer, and the evildoers are now reaping the benefits. Little do they know that they will fall victim to the consequences of their actions.

"Jean de Florette" is very much a prequel to the events of "Manon," which takes the drama a step further and beyond. It is of little wonder that critics have drawn parallels between this saga and the popular stories of Dickens.

Everything is here: revenge, intrigue, guilt, love, death and, most importantly, the unmistakable smell of fate.

For the Soubeyrans will pay for their misdeeds, however misguided. Manon, the hunchback's daughter who has grown into a stunningly beautiful shepherdess, exacts her revenge by blocking the entire village's water supply. Only now do we really see that the guilt from de Florette's death has affected not just the Soubeyrans but most of the village's leaders.

But revenge is not this cheap. Nature and fate also have something to say. Ugolin sees it — he's the only character who can — and it affects him deeply. He has not been able to deal with the guilt, a disability made all the more painful by the fact that he falls in love with Manon. His love is not passionate so much as frenzied, as is his reaction to the village's loss of water.

And it does not stop here. Soubeyran himself falls victim to the events he personally set in motion. The revenge is so total, so complete and out of anyone's control that it is almost too excruciating to watch. The drama



Yves Montand as Cesar Soubeyran in "Manon Of The Spring"

is tied up perfectly with not a loose end in sight. It is an exquisite production.

Collectively titled by Marcel Pagnol as "L'Eau des Collines" ("The Water Of The Hills") it is a wonderful story told as beautifully on the screen as it is in book form. It has all the qualities of a one-dimensional myth, yet Claude Berri and Gerard Brach lend a rich characterization to "Manon Of The Spring," more so than in the prequel.

"Jean de Florette" had a simple, essentially primal feel. "Manon" expands on this, and although we never leave the fictional village of Provence, Berri shows a bigger view. Destiny and fate are in the air, and not just in the form of thunderclaps. The film required scenes to be shot in all four seasons. Time very definitely passes in "Manon" and the lack of control of human nature is explored to an uncanny degree.

Exemplary acting by Montand,

Auteuil, Beart and their supporting cast make "Manon Of The Spring" a further joy to watch. "Jean de Florette" and "Manon Of The Spring" are great examples of how popular foreign films can be. This is due at least in part to the visions of individual filmmakers and the quality of some recent foreign films. Berri's double here is a remarkable cinematic achievement; there is no doubt in my mind that this is about as good as it gets.

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General College

After Courtney receives a note from Jason on how to deal with cocaine addicts, she visits Anne, who asks her to go in on an eight-ball from Tessa. When Courtney refuses, Anne furiously tells her she wants nothing more to do with her.

As Alex leaves Cobb to meet Jack for an afternoon date, Trisha is waiting to harass her. Before long, the two are exchanging punches and scratch marks in a heated cat fight. When Alex wins, Trisha screams in anger that she'll pay.

In preparation for the eminent nuptials, Brendan and Mary Catherine take wedding attendants Billy and Sarah on a jaunt to the mall.

Anne's money dilemma is easily

solved when fellow dorm resident Lisa confides that a diamond necklace worth more than a grand is hidden in her room, the lock of which is broken for the night. Smiling sweetly, Anne assures Lisa that she need not worry.

As Meg sleeps fitfully, Paige, Jason and others visit her dreams, taunting her with the suggestion that she wanted to be raped. When she awakes screaming, an alarmed Paige finally convinces her to admit what's wrong. In tears, Meg recounts the rape to her roommate.

Who's caught? Who escapes? Who's betrayed? Who dies? Answers next week on the season finale of STV's "General College," Monday through Thursday at 11 p.m. on Carolina Cable 11.

Road Trip

ville has its own late-night equivalent of Hector's. Instead of gyros or Greek grilled cheeses, the big late night snack is the Gus Burger at White Spot Restaurant. Although White Spot gives the term "greasy spoon" a new meaning, people still pack the restaurant from 12 to 2 a.m. and on into the night.

Of course, Charlottesville has a lot to offer on sunny afternoons, too. Humpback Rock, a huge boulder at 2,000 feet elevation, makes a nice hike and offers a spectacular panorama of the Virginia countryside. Humpback Rock is located on Rt. 64 and is only 20 miles away from Charlottesville. Another favorite nature spot is Pancake Falls; apparently there are

a lot of other amazing little waterfalls, you just have to know where to look. A good idea is to get a blanket, some tunes, and a good companion and have a picnic at one of the many scenic spots right outside of the city where you can go exploring.

Charlottesville is as tradition-ridden as Blue Heaven, and a favorite is the Foxfield Horse Races. Held once every semester, Foxfield Races is a huge social gathering for the sororities and fraternities held under the pretense of watching horse races. If you go, be sure to bring a feast and plenty of alcohol, because the

party lasts all day. If you're really interested in the races, pool your money together with some friends and bet on some horses. Who knows, you might even pick up a few extra bucks. If you're planning on blowing off studying for exams, the next Foxfield may be a good way to do it, as it's scheduled for April 30.

Although UVa may not be as much of a thrill as the Hill, it's a great place to get away from it all. Go sightseeing, catch a lacrosse game, or just visit some friends. Just remember that you will always be true blue instead of Wahoo orange.

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