

For 'A Man And A Woman,' Plaudits And Problems

New York — "A Man and a Woman" has received a prize from the International Catholic Film Office, but until an Academy Award as best foreign-language picture virtually forced it to, the U.S. Catholic film office would not even give it a rating, let alone a prize.

This is just one of the odd differences that have arisen over the French-made "Un Homme et Une Femme," a film that captured three major Academy Award nominations but which has been described by some as "banal." It's a film that one nun urged her entire high-school class to see, and which led one mother to report that it was the first time her daughter and she had taken a nun's advice about a movie worth seeing — and the last.

"A Man and a Woman" tells a rather simple love story about a race-car driver and a movie script-girl, both of whom have been married but whose mates have died. They each have a young child in a boarding school and it is while visiting there that the man and the woman meet. Drawn together by their concern for their respective children, they fall in love. They go to a hotel room to make love, but while there she is haunted by the memory of her dead husband, believes she is being unfaithful, and leaves the man. But he pursues her and shortly afterward they meet again in a train station; they embrace, kiss, and the film ends.

The film's main drawing power — it is one of the year's most successful foreign language films, financially — is believed to be its technique, consisting of inventive use of flashbacks, color (some scenes are done on colored filmstock — all blue or all amber) and attention to the mundane details of the two principals' jobs and their visits with their children.

It brought a best-director Oscar nomination for 28-year-old Claude Lelouch, a best-actress nomination for Anouk Aimee as the woman, and a nomination for the picture itself as best foreign-language film.

But although the Associated Press' Hollywood correspondent, Bob Thomas called it "a rare

and original movie," "A Man and a Woman" has been given a rough time by some other critics who accuse it of "making dazzling technology look like artistry" (Newsweek), and call it "doddering and does not know the story to begin with, (which) sounds like nothing so much as an existentialist 'Dear Abby' column in which sentiment has melted into sentimentality" (Time).

However, jurors for the International Catholic Film Office were obviously seeing something more in "A Man and a Woman" when they awarded their prize at the Cannes Film Festival last year. They too cited such cinematic techniques as a clever use of sound effects to show what a character is thinking, but the international office also observed that it was honoring the film primarily for "the sensitivity with which it handled the subject of a sincere search for human love."

"This genuine, real love, taking its point of departure from a child, expresses itself through mutual respect and understanding and flowers into lucid, generous, warmhearted fidelity," the office said, adding that the film "evokes both French classicism and the simplicity of the fabulist, La Fontaine."

"Those who think that the ideal film is one from which the spectator emerges 'happier, freer and better' (a reference to Pope Pius XII's definition of "The Ideal Film") can only give due recognition to Lelouch and his young troupe for having made living flesh of two characters so that they really become 'a man' and 'a woman.'"

The international office also noted in its commentary that Lelouch professes to love eroticism. He shows this in some rather long scenes in the film but he shows to a sense of discretion.

Nevertheless, it has been learned that several bed scenes in "A Man and a Woman," although not involving nudity, would give the U.S. Catholic film office no choice but to rate the film no better than "B" (morally objectionable in part for all), because of certain

"ground rules" the film office still uses when there is sex on the screen.

Thus, lest embarrassment be brought to the international film office — or to itself — the U.S. office had refrained from giving any rating to "A Man and a Woman," even though the film has been playing in the U.S. for more than eight months. But on the night of April 10, the film won the Oscar as best foreign-language picture, and on April 11 — aware that this would mean greatly increased calls to diocesan newspapers — the film office quickly classified it as "A-3" or morally unobjectionable for adults.

The "A-3" classification — unlike the "B" or "C" or even the "A-4" (for adults, with reservations) — does not require the film office to make any comment. It's believed that the film office considered this to be the best course to take at this date.

Regardless, there have been a number of moral skirmishes over "A Man and a Woman." One mother wrote angrily to her diocesan newspaper, complaining that a Sister had told her daughter's class that it was a film they shouldn't miss.

"For the first, and I assure you, the last time," she wrote, "we relied on the advice of a Sister, who urged the entire class to see the picture 'A Man and a Woman,' described by her as a beautiful picture."

"I accompanied my daughter to see this film and when it was over, neither she nor I felt we had gained one iota for our time or money spent. Rather, we saw actors acting out the most sacred fulfillment of love without benefit of marriage. 'This is beautiful!' — (Catholic Press Features)

Spring Concert At Kearney

Music Department of Bishop Kearney High School will present its fifth annual Spring Concert on Wednesday and Thursday, May 3 and 4 at 8 p.m.

Raymond J. Shahin heads the instrumental department and the vocal division is under the direction of Thomas Donahue.



Mary Sue Scariotta as Captain Hook and Nancy Cirrincione as the crocodile appear in a scene from "Peter Pan."

Eighth Graders To Present 'Peter Pan'

The eighth grade of St. Ambrose School, 31 Empire Blvd., will present J. M. Barrie's "Peter Pan," a play with music, on Saturday, April 29, at Nazareth Academy Auditorium, 1001 Lake Ave. There will be two performances, at 2 p.m. and at 7:30 p.m.

More than fifty members of the graduating class will take part in the adaptation of the famous novel of the "boy who would not grow up."

Appearing in major roles are Susan Sleyman as Peter Pan, Susan Comptone as Wendy, Mary Sue Scariotta as Captain Hook, Jackie Condoracci as Tinker Bell and Rose Marie Dornino as Tiger Lily.

The musical supervision is under Sister Elissa and Sister Laurene is piano accompanist. Tickets may be purchased from any student of the school or at the door. Playing time is approximately one and a half hours.

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Anouk Aimee as a widowed mother in "A Man and a Woman."

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'Clear Day' to be Staged

Julie Sage and Joe Larrabee rehearse in scene from "On a Clear Day You Can See Forever," to be held Saturday, April 29 and Sunday, April 30 at 8:15 p.m. at Notre Dame High School auditorium, Elmira. The musical is directed by Robert J. Lynough; band director is Philip Layton; choreographer is Miss Judy Ritter; choral director is Sister Mary Sarfo. All seats are reserved at \$1.50 and \$2.00. Call the school at 732-3457.

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