

Features

'Wizard' studies love's power over loneliness, alienation

By Judith Trojan

New York (NC) — Much love has obviously gone into the making of "The Wizard of Loneliness" (Skouras), a quiet film about a 12-year-old California boy whose cynical, bitter nature thaws when he's forced to live in Vermont with his grandparents.

After his mother's untimely death and father's enlistment in the armed services during World War II, Wendall Oler (Lukas Haas) travels alone to a small New England town, where his paternal grandparents, Doc (John Randolph) and Cornelia (Anne Pitoniak), share a rambling old house with their adult son, John (Lance Guest), their married daughter, Sybil (Lea Thompson) and her 4-year-old son, Tom (Jeremiah Warner).

At first, precocious Wendall will have nothing to do with their loving care and concern. He happily alienates himself from schoolmates and neighbors, but try as he might, he can't discourage his family from loving him unconditionally and taking his surliness with a grain of salt.

Gradually, Wendall comes to care for his wonderfully wacky relations and to act not as their enemy but their protector when a mysterious stranger appears and threatens to destroy them.

Based on a semiautobiographical novel by John Nichols, "The Wizard of Loneliness" unfolds carefully through Wendall's wizened eyes. Director Jenny Bowen and her production crew have perfectly recreated the look and feel of 1944 small-town Vermont, the pervasive effect of the war and its casualties on the townsfolk and the warm bond shared by this all-American family.

The actors are top-notch, with special kudos to Haas who carries the film as Wendall and to Miss Thompson as his gently seductive Aunt Sybil. Randolph is charming as Wendall's uncritical grandfather, and first-time actor Jeremiah Warner practically

steals the show as Wendall's devoted little cousin Tom, a character who rings true until he is forced briefly to mimic adult lines about masturbation.

As a study of an adolescent impelled by unloving parents to hide his loneliness behind an armor of arrogance until he is given an unconditional second chance by his extended family, "The Wizard of Loneliness" is a poignant film about the healing power of love and acceptance. Although it recalls similar themes played out in the recent British and Swedish films "Hope and Glory" and "My Life as a Dog," "The Wizard of Loneliness" boasts a strictly American viewpoint and brassy young hero.

Because of much use of rough language by the youthful protagonist, a brief clothed but rough sexual encounter and a sense of menace that culminates in an assault on a child and a graphic murder, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

The following are capsule reviews of movies recently reviewed by the U.S. Catholic Conference Department of Communication.

"The Beast" (Columbia)

Set in 1981 and based on the play "Nanawatai" by William Mastrosimone, "The Beast" dramatizes the brutal destruction of an Afghan village by a squadron of Soviet tanks and its aftermath in which one lone, lost Soviet tank is stalked by Afghan rebels. Gruesome opening massacre and maiming sequence is eventually counterpointed with philosophical and psychological conflicts within the deteriorating tank and within the ranks of the Afghan rebels. Major trouble occurs between the heartless Soviet tank commander (George Dzundza) who follows military doctrine and his young tank



SECOND CHANCE — Wendall, played by Lukas Haas, arrives in Vermont to live with his grandparents in "The Wizard of Loneliness."

driver (Jason Patric) who empathizes with the brutalized Afghans. Director Kevin Reynolds includes too much graphic violence. The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-IV — adults, with reservations. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

"Moon Over Parador" (Universal)

Writer-director Paul Mazursky never quite decides whether he's supposed to be making a slapstick comedy about the vicissitudes of the acting profession or a satire about Latin American politics in this comedy about an American actor (Richard Dreyfuss) who is strong-armed into impersonating a secretly deceased Caribbean dictator. On orders from the chief of police (Raul Julia) to act or die, the actor soon grows to love the power trip and the dead dictator's mistress (Sonia Braga). Unfocused and unfunny. With scantily clad dancers and bathing beauties, lusty, clothed bedroom scene and other sexual innuendo played for laughs. The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

"Running on Empty" (Warner Bros.)

After unintentionally hurting a janitor when they bombed their college's government-funded napalm laboratory as anti-Vietnam War activists, a couple (Judd Hirsch and Christine Lahti) have been on the run from the FBI for 15 years. Although they now regret their action, they are helped to

survive on the road with their continually changing identities by an underground radical network. Problems arise when their devoted 17-year-old son (River Phoenix) wants to go to college and lead a normal life under his own identity. Director Sidney Lumet presents a universal family crisis within the context of an unusual family whose children have been forced to carry the burden of their parent's crime of conscience. Especially fine acting by Phoenix and Miss Lahti. Rough language and an implied sexual liaison between the two 17-year-old characters condoned by the boy's father. The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

"Young Guns" (20th Century Fox)

Director Christopher Cain explores the early years of William H. Bonney, a.k.a. Billy the Kid (Emilio Estevez), when he traveled with a group of young men known as the Regulators to avenge the murder of their good-guy cattle rancher mentor (Terence Stamp). Period flavor and historical accuracy lessened by anachronisms that see Billy and his buddies (Kiefer Sutherland, Charlie Sheen, Lou Diamond Phillips) cavorting like Robin Hood and his merry men out to destroy a corrupt rancher and his murderous gang. Some intense violence and bloodshed, much profanity, a sequence glorifying drug use, and implications of sexual impropriety. The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

A quiz to test attitudes about earning and spending money

By Linda L. Rome
NC News Service

Someone once said money is stored energy. So your attitudes toward money, how you earn it, how you spend it, and what importance you give it reflect a bit about how you value your time and energy, and what your priorities are.

Here is a little quiz to stimulate your thinking about money. You might compare your answers with those of a friend, your parents or your brothers and sisters. You may be surprised that what you take for granted might be unusual for someone else — or vice versa.

- 1) My parents expect my allowance to cover: a. lunches; b. school; c. movies and snacks; d. family gifts; e. savings; f. all of the above; g. I don't receive an allowance.
2) I have a part-time job where I earn approximately: a. \$5-\$10 weekly; b. \$10-\$20 weekly; c. \$20-\$30 weekly; d. \$30-\$50 weekly.
3) I use the money I earn for: a. extra clothes; b. entertainment; c. savings; d. to help out at home; e. other.
4) I save money for: a. college expenses; b. a car; c. I don't really save much.
5) I save approximately: a. 10 percent of my income; b. 20 percent of my income; c. the money I receive for birthdays and special occasions; d. I don't usually save.
6) On a night out I think it is reasonable to spend: a. \$10; b. \$15; c. \$20; d. \$35.
7) I think when a boy and girl go out together: a. each should pay his or her own way; b. whoever asked the other out should pay; c. the guy should pay; d. one should pay one time, the other should pay the next.
8) I think my parents should give me an allowance: a. even if I regularly earn money at a part-time job; b. regardless of the chores I do or don't do; c. I should be paid extra for big jobs like doing all the laundry.
9) I think an allowance is (choose as many as apply): a. a good way to learn about money management;

Coming of Age

- b. a weapon my parents use to make me behave; c. a luxury; d. mine to spend any way I want.
10) List in order of priority from 1 to 10 the expenses you would pay first if you had to pay the bills, with No. 1 being the bill paid first: phone; food; health-club membership; mortgage or rent; health insurance; music lessons; clothing; charity; cable TV; electricity.
11) If you had an employer who offered you a choice of two of the following fringe benefits, which would you choose? a. company car; b. health club membership; c. educational tuition; d. medical benefits; e. one extra week vacation per year.
12) I donate a portion of my money to: a. my parish; b. a missionary effort; c. school functions like football or band; d. a community service organization.
13) By the time you're 16, I think you should be responsible for buying all: a. your own clothes; b. books and school supplies; c. entertainment such as movies, records; d. the expenses related to buying and owning a car or motorcycle.
14) I usually treat my parents or family to dinner, a movie or dessert at least: a. once a month; b. every once and a while; c. for a special occasion; d. I never thought of it.
15) I think it's more important to pick a job or profession (rank in order from 1 to 5, with 1 being most important): a. by whether you make a big salary; b. by my inherent interest in the work; c. by where it is; d. by how it helps other people.
16) I agree most with which of the following statements: a. I don't think you can ever have too much money; b. I think too much money can be a burden; c. I've never experienced real poverty; d. I'm worth more than a minimum wage job.

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We received 10 correct entries identifying the Beatles as the group who formed and owned Apple Records.



The winner was Karen Coffey of Manchester

MUSIC TRIVIA

This week's question:

Who had the 1972 hit recording of "First Time Ever I Saw Your Face?"

A: _____

Name _____
Address _____
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Rules:

Each week, the Courier-Journal, in conjunction with the House of Guitars will feature a Music Trivia contest. All you have to do to enter is answer the question, fill in your name and address and the school you attend (if applicable), cut out the coupon, and send it in to the Courier-Journal. If more than one correct entry is received, a drawing will be held and one winning entry will be drawn. If yours is the winning entry, you will be mailed a coupon for a free album or tape of your choice redeemable at the House of Guitars, 645 Titus Ave. All entries must be received within seven days of this paper's issue date. Winning names and answers will be printed the week following each drawing.

The Courier-Journal
Music Trivia
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