

Entertainment

Mid-life crisis perceptively treated in 'Another Woman'

By Judith Trojan

NEW YORK (NC) — Woody Allen stands alone among male American filmmakers in his courage to examine the dichotomy between male and female longings and fears, and to take women seriously as his key protagonists. In "Another Woman" (Orion Pictures), he has once again detoured from comedy into heavy drama, forgoing acting for another turn as writer-director.

Allen's "woman" in this case is Marion (Gena Rowlands), an esteemed philosophy professor who passes her 50th birthday with a growing sense of unease. Controlled and unemotional, Marion prides herself in her intellectual pursuits and ability to monitor her own and others' passions before they get out of hand. She believes she is loved by her younger, less-accomplished brother Paul (Harris Yulin); her second husband, Ken (Ian Holm), a noted cardiologist; his teenage daughter Laura (Martha Plimpton); and numerous intellectual friends and acquaintances. She's wrong, and Allen creates in her an emotional crisis that forces this tightly wound automaton to confront her failures or self-destruct.

Marion's journey to self-discovery is not unlike that of Ebenezer Scrooge. Unexpectedly, ghosts from her past pop up in dreams and sequences that may or may not be the figment of an imagination of someone on the verge of mental collapse. There is a character aptly named Hope (Mia Farrow), a severely depressed young pregnant woman who visits a therapist next door to Marion's office apartment. Hope's despairing revelations during therapy filter through Marion's heat vents, a happenstance that both shocks and transfuses Marion.

Hope's miseries, in fact, serve to provoke Marion and become indistinguishable in the end from Marion's own troubles. Hope catalyzes Marion's frightening self-realizations and may even be Allen's personification of Marion's alter ego.

Allen populates this film with a bevy of pivotal characters who, like it or not, revolve around Marion as acolytes. They play the role of adoring companions, but if truth be known, they resent and even hate her for her aloof control and sense of superiority.

Although on paper this sounds like a somber, effort in the style of Ingmar Bergman, "Another Woman" is, in fact, a life-affirming, wonderfully acted exploration of a late-in-life crisis. Like Bergman, however, Allen is fascinated by and deeply sensitive to women's needs and changes. It is obvious he sees women as superior to men, but Marion's trauma still is one to which aging men may easily relate. It's hard to believe that anyone who reaches the mid-century mark is not faced with such questions and regrets.

Marion's quest no doubt is Allen's quest. It takes a lot for people to examine their failures and move above and beyond them. It takes guts to lay them out on film.

In what amounts to a one-voice narrative, "Another Woman" is a tour-de-force showcase for Rowlands. Also superb are Sandy Dennis as Marion's estranged college friend, Claire; Holm as Marion's self-righteous, philandering husband, Ken; and Gene Hackman as the passionate lover Marion turned away.

As a courageous and perceptive attempt at late-in-life self-exploration by a filmmaker who, like his protagonist, is learning to take creative and personal risks in age, "Another Woman" is well worth the price of admission.

Due to some brief talk of explicit sex, recollections of marital infidelity and a misguided abortion in the protagonist's distant past, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

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"THE ACCUSED" (Paramount) written by

Retreat weekend for women scheduled for High Acres

"Responding to the Touch of the Spirit," is the theme of a retreat weekend for women on vocation discernment November 18 and 19, at High Acres, the Mercy retreat house in Geneva.

Sister Audrey Synnott, RSM, the presenter of the program, will develop themes around vocation discernment.

Dinner auction planned for Our Lady of Mercy

Our Lady of Mercy High School has scheduled its fourth annual dinner auction on Saturday, Nov. 19, beginning with a cocktail hour at 6:30 p.m.

The theme of this year's gala is "Celebrate '88." The auction is being sponsored by the

playwright-journalist Tom Topor ("Nuts") and directed by Jonathan Kaplan ("Heart Like a Wheel") is a powerful film about rape and justice, and most audiences will find it disturbing and enlightening.

Sarah Tobias (Jodie Foster) is a young woman with few options and many vices. Foul-mouthed and uneducated, she drinks and smokes dope to smooth out the edges of her life. She hangs out once too often in a bar called The Mill.

On a binge after a fight with her live-in ne'er-do-well boyfriend, she enters the bar in seductive garb and, with her waitress pal Sally (Ann Hearn), chats up and eyes down the macho clientele. One guy, Danny (Woody Brown), takes her come-ons seriously, and proceeds to force himself on her physically. When he overpowers her and begins to rape her violently atop a pinball machine, his cohorts in the bar cheer him on and goad two others (Steve Antin and Kim Kondrashoff) to rape her as well.

The film begins not with the rape but with its aftermath, as Sarah runs screaming from the bar into the dark, rainy night and into the arms of insensitive police, rape counselors and an assistant district attorney named Kathryn Murphy (Kelly McGillis).

Fearing Sarah's inability to take the stand as a credible witness on her own behalf, Kathryn initially opts for the easy way out and plea bargains the rapists to jail on the lesser charge of reckless endangerment. Sarah's rage at this sellout and her obvious emotional scars from the rape led guilt-ridden Kathryn to bring to trial three of the key heckling barflies who goaded the rapists into brutalizing Sarah.

The trial — for the crime of criminal solicitation — is a monumental one and this, not the rape trial, is the focus of the film. Through the closing testimony of young college student Ken Joyce (Bernie Coulson), the only male in the bar who made any attempt to call for help, the gang rape is finally depicted on screen in all its harrowing details.

Not for the squeamish, "The Accused" takes as its very loose base a similar atrocity perpetrated in a Portuguese community bar in Massachusetts. But the film, set in the Northwest, is a self-contained examination not so much of the rapist mentality as of the venal individuals who stood by and actively encouraged others to commit the rape.

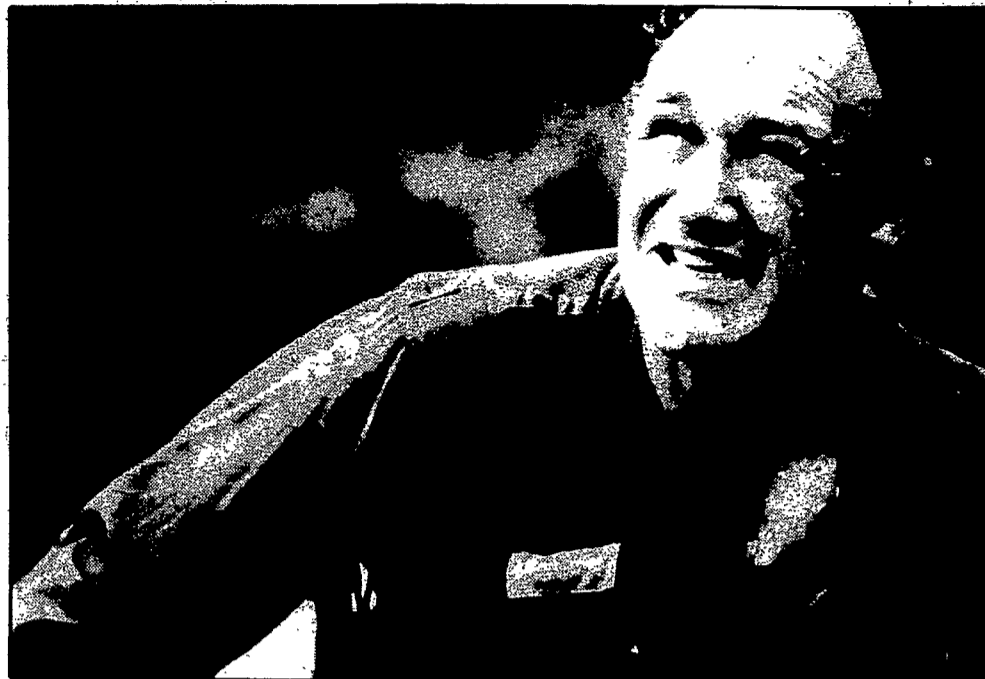
The fact that the rape, the rapists and those accused of criminal solicitation are all condemned and receive their just desserts in the end gives the film a sense of strong moral purpose that overpowers the gruesome, explicitly filmed rape sequence. Foster is stirring as the victim whose loose demeanor is still no justification for the heinous crime committed against her.

Due to much profanity and a lengthy, graphic gang rape sequence involving much violence, nudity, explicit sexual activity and vulgar language, the USCC classification is O — morally objectionable. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

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"BAT 21" (Tri-Star) is one of the more human and tightly focused films about Vietnam War heroics in a long while.

Directed in crisp, no-frills fashion by Peter Markie "BAT 21" relates the suspenseful real-life story of Air Force Lt. Col. Icel Hambleton (Gene Hackman), a 53-year-old officer who is shot down behind enemy lines during a reconnaissance mission. With no actual hand-to-hand combat experience, career officer Hambleton is more at home on Vietnamese golf courses than he is in the jungle.

Faced with sure capture and torture, he is forced to live by his wits, moving just one step ahead of the Viet Cong. He is connected by radio to an Air Force spotter pilot, Capt. Bartholomew Clark (Danny Glover), a 35-year-old black man nicknamed "Bird Dog," who becomes obsessed with bringing "the old man"



Gene Hackman plays Lt. Col. Icel Hambleton, an Air Force officer shot down behind enemy lines during the Vietnam War, in "Bat 21."

back alive even after rescue teams have been wiped out and Clark has been grounded.

Since this true story is based on a book by William C. Anderson and opening titles credit the real-life Hambleton as an adviser on the film, it's obvious that Hambleton survived the ordeal.

As a high-level intelligence officer who had planned an upcoming massive air strike of the area into which he was forced to parachute, Hambleton was someone whose immediate rescue was top priority.

Suspense is generated from his struggle to evade the Viet Cong by land and radio waves — communicating with "Bird Dog" in a code laced with golf terminology to divert the enemy — and to survive intact until a safe rescue location can be maneuvered.

Meanwhile, Hambleton is forced to watch as U.S. air raids wipe out Vietnamese soldiers and civilians and as Viet Cong slaughter an entire helicopter of young Air Force cohorts who have taken a daring risk to rescue him. He is also pushed by circumstance to kill a Vietnamese civilian whose grieving wife and children understandably ignore Hambleton's agonized apology.

It should come as no surprise that Hackman adds much to the role of Hambleton, an officer who unbelievably managed to live out several foreign wars without experiencing the horrors of combat firsthand. Hackman turns the role into one that inspires compassion, despite the fact that many people on both sides seem to have been killed in order to save him.

Glover's "Bird Dog" is also a sensitive guy whose guts boggle the mind, given the fact that he flies a light plane over enemy-infested terrain to keep tabs on Hambleton and eventually commandeers a stolen helicopter to pluck his man out at the 11th hour.

The tragic flaw in this otherwise touching film about an officer forced to play the game of war for real and to accept his responsibility and disgust for its horror is that, in the end, it dismisses the true hero of the piece. While end titles assure viewers that Hambleton is currently safe and sound on the golf course in Arizona, nothing is said about the whereabouts of "Bird Dog." It's a jarring omission that immediately raises the issue of racism and ultimately questions the veracity of the "Bird Dog" character, whose reality is key to the suspense and power of Hambleton's story.



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