

Trio of movies features stellar performances

NEW YORK (CNS) — "The Fabulous Baker Boys" (Fox) charts the last hurrah of a duo of piano-playing brothers, who work the Seattle cocktail lounge circuit and take one last stab at revitalizing their third-rate careers.

When Frank and Jack Baker hire singer Susie Diamond (Michelle Pfeiffer) to jazz up their stale act, the smokey-voiced escort service veteran re-charges both the act and the brothers.

Older brother Frank (Beau Bridges) has to support a wife, two kids and a house in the suburbs, so by necessity he's learned to look at each miserable booking through rose-colored glasses. As their business manager, he's had to smile at empty tables and obnoxious lounge owners who have begun paying the boys not to finish their two-night contracts.

Frank also tries to keep cheerful for Jack (Jeff Bridges), who is his alienated younger brother. The more talented of the two, Jack has spent 15 years as a professional with Frank, playing the same old tunes, 250 nights a year. Emotionally numb, Jack gets his kicks by jamming in a local black jazz club, bed-hopping and seeing in silence as he plays along with Frank's desire to keep the act afloat.

When Susie shows up on the scene, Jack meets his match and the act and the brothers are never the same again. It's no surprise that the trio finally cracks over whether to keep the song "Feelings" in the act. All three have swallowed their real feelings for so long that something eventually has to give. When the song goes, so do the illusions and pipedreams that each used to rationalize their failures.

Kloves, who also wrote the sensitive adolescent romance "Racing with the Moon" (1984), has a remarkable feel for the lounge milieu, these fringe performers and the dreams and nightmares of being a brother. This film showcases the multititled Bridges brothers — starring together for the first time in a major film — and Pfeiffer, who sings her own songs in a sultry, utterly transfixing fashion.

Due to some profanity laced with sexual vulgarities and brief sexual situations with a flash of nudity, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

A Dry White Season

Director Euzhan Palcy attempts to boost the black perspective in "A Dry White Season" (MGM), her adaptation of Andre Brink's 1979 novel about apartheid in South Africa.

As a result, she manages to carefully jux-



Brothers Beau (left) and Jeff Bridges in "The Fabulous Baker Boys," portray Frank and Jack Baker, piano-playing brothers whose failing act is revitalized when a beautiful singer, played by Michelle Pfeiffer, joins them.

tapose the political awakening of the book's white protagonist with the horrifying plight of the black characters who jolt him into taking a stand.

Slowly — and without stooping to grand moral flourishes — the film traces the growing awareness of white Afrikaner schoolteacher Ben du Toit (Donald Sutherland) to the abuse of blacks during the 1976 Soweto uprisings. Somehow Ben and his privileged family have managed to remain blinded to the cruel reality of apartheid until their black gardener, Gordon (Winston Ntshona), and his young son become its gruesome statistics.

Although Ben uses his influence to investigate the young boy's disappearance during a demonstration by the black schoolchildren of Soweto, Gordon's own search for his boy leads him to his own grave.

The reality of Gordon's grim life finally sinks in for Ben when he's forced to identify Gordon's fatally beaten body. He hires a prominent human rights attorney, Ian McKenzie (Marlon Brando) and charges the sadistic police chief, Capt. Stolz (Jurgen Prochnow), with Gordon's murder. Cynical McKenzie knows the trial will be an exercise in futility, yet he takes the case and Ben seals his fate as an anti-apartheid activist working underground with Gordon's wife Emily (Thoko Ntshinga) and her activist friend Stanley (Zakes Mokae) to build a case against Stolz.

Brando's much-heralded presence here is too brief to be politically important, but Sutherland powerfully evokes Ben's naivete and painful realization that his

white compatriots are morally bankrupt. Bound by his conscience, which is remarkably absent in his racist wife (Janet Suzman), daughter (Susannah Harker) and employer, Ben forges ahead with Gordon's case with no thought of how his activism will ultimately threaten his own life.

Despite its brief but brutal scenes of violence in which school children are shot at point-blank range or beaten to death during their peaceful Soweto demonstrations and the clear implications of grim prison tortures, "A Dry White Season" can and should be shared and discussed by parents and older adolescent children.

Due to some brutal scenes of racist-inspired violence set within an historical context that did not differentiate between men, women and children, the USCC classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

Fat Man and Little Boy

Fine production credits and serviceable acting highlight "Fat Man and Little Boy" (Paramount), the latest and hopefully the last attempt to dramatize the behind-the-scenes creation of the world's first atomic bomb.

Opening in 1942, the film explores the professional and personal agendas that motivated the two key players in a scheme of events that changed the world for ever.

Responsible for building the Pentagon, Gen. Leslie R. Groves (Paul Newman) was assigned the task of building the bomb. He selected physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer (Dwight Schultz) to oversee the two-year,

top-secret Manhattan Project in a remote New Mexico lab. Oppenheimer drew to Los Alamos top U.S. and European minds and together they turned energy into a force capable of destroying the entire planet.

Although the Germans were soon defeated and were never close to producing a bomb as rumored, and the Japanese were similarly reported to be close to surrender, Groves continued the project. He also strong-armed Oppenheimer, who struggled with a crisis of conscience and yet ultimately pushed for the bomb's completion as well. Groves is depicted here as a single-minded, self-aggrandizing military administrator who wanted to get the job done to prove U.S. military strength and to save face after having spent two years on a \$2 billion experiment.

Oppenheimer, on the other hand, is shown as a complex man with a communist sympathizer for a mistress and ingrained humanistic values. A troublesome security risk for Groves, Oppenheimer had, however, a genius for tapping and mediating the work of the diverse scientists at Los Alamos. But in the end, both the mistress and the humanism were discarded by Oppenheimer, who, like Groves, became obsessed with completing the mission no matter what its human cost or devastating future potential.

It's evident that director Roland Joffe ("The Killing Fields," "The Mission") employed top-notch technical and subject specialists to create an air of scientific and historical accuracy. He does slip up by injecting a gratuitous but brief sex scene between Oppenheimer and his mistress Jean Tatlock (Natasha Richardson) and by concocting a sappy romance between doomed young Chicago physicist Michael Merriman (John Cusack) and nurse Kathleen Robinson (Laura Dern).

Director of photography Vilmos Zsigmond ("Close Encounters of the Third Kind") and production designer Gregg Fonseca ("Honey, I Shrank the Kids") manage to create a striking visual tension for a story that could easily have sunk into a sea of tedious, technical mumbo jumbo (as witnessed in AT&T's recent TV version "Day One").

Despite some contrived, Hollywood touches, "Fat Man and Little Boy" comes as close as any dramatized account could to projecting the reality of this black moment in the history of humanity.

Due to a shadowed, adulterous sexual encounter with nudity, a grisly death from radiation and minimal rough language, 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.

MEDICAL DIRECTORY

Chiropractors

Dr. Robert S. Dalton
Dalton Chiropractic Office
2507 Browncroft Blvd., Ste 102 • Penfield
Family Chiropractic Care
Hours By Appointment
Low Back Pain
Mid Back Pain & Neckaches
Arm, Hip & Leg Conditions 383-1410

Space
Available

Would you like to reach 110,000 prospective clients a week?
Then try the Catholic Courier's new "Medical Directory"
Call: Kathy Welsh at 328-4340

Dentists

Dr. Frederick G. Herrick
Preventive General Dentistry
44 West Ridge Rd.
(near Maplewood Park)
Office hours by appointment
647-1348

Dr. Ann K. Kunkel
General Dentistry for Adults
and Children
30 Assembly Dr., Suite 103
Mendon, N.Y. 14506
624-5886

OB/GYN

Joseph A. Infantino, M.D.
515 Beahan Road
Rochester, NY 14624
247-3610

Opticians

PENFIELD OPTICIANS
1822 PENFIELD ROAD
PENFIELD, N.Y. 14526
(716) 381-3410
LARRY WHITESIDE
LICENSED OPTICIAN

Physical Therapy

Marian Carragino, RPT
716/271-3360
SOUTHVIEW PHYSICAL THERAPY
AND SPORTS REHABILITATION
880 Westfall Road, Suite D
Rochester, NY 14618

WILDAM TRAVEL PRESENTS
IN NEW YORK CITY
RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL
CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR
STARRING THE ROCKETTES.
DEC. 5-7 and DEC. 27-29
\$229⁰⁰ p.p/dbl. occ.
includes SHOW • HOTEL • TRANSPORTATION • MORE
ATTENTION GROUP LEADERS
Ask about our discount for large groups.
WILDAM TRAVEL
call 482-9427 (any day)