

Strong performances save 'Lemon Sisters'

NEW YORK (CNS) — The shaky economy of Atlantic City provides the backdrop for the similarly shaky futures of three lifelong girlfriends in "The Lemon Sisters" (Miramax).

With the closing of the local nightclub where the friends sing as The Lemon Sisters, the trio have to adjust to a changed life.

Franki (Carol Kane) tries to keep her singing career afloat despite her whispery voice and tiny stature. The eccentric Eloise (Diane Keaton) prefers collecting statuary and avoiding the emotional commitment her beau C.W. (Ruben Blades) seeks.

Nola (Kathryn Grody), meanwhile, has her hands full with three little daughters and a husband (Elliott Gould) who imagines their taffy shop will succeed with his inspired "taffits" — salt water taffy rabbits.

Their dreams are dashed — Franki flops at her solo auditions, Eloise loses the treasured tiny museum that was her livelihood and Nola's shop goes bust. But their friendship is zestier than ever and from it they overcome these setbacks to better appreciate the men in their lives and make a fresh start.

Director Joyce Chopra's lightweight comedy has a strong cast who turn in endearing performances. Keaton is sympathetic whether she is dancing with her favorite nude statue or dissuading potential home-buyers with stories of mass murders and unfound heads when Nola's house goes on the market.

Kane is airily amusing as the ditz blonde who can't sing but unwittingly makes the audience laugh. Blades and Aidan Quinn also shine in lesser roles as their boyfriends.

Because of a brief instance of rough lan-



Diane Keaton (left), Kathryn Grody (center) and Carol Kane star in Miramax Films' 'The Lemon Sisters.'

Patrick DeMarchelier/Miramax

guage, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

'Postcards' effectively depicts life in the Hollywood fishbowl

NEW YORK (CNS) — Shirley MacLaine and Meryl Streep shine as a mother and daughter at odds over their respective addictions in "Postcards from the Edge" (Columbia).

Suzanne (Streep) is the actress daughter of flamboyant former movie star Doris (MacLaine). Her mother is an alcoholic and Suzanne is addicted to pills, but neither wants to admit it. "I'm not an alcoholic — I just drink like an Irish person," insists Doris.

Following a near-fatal overdose and a stint in a drug rehabilitation center, Suzanne is forced to live under her mother's watchful eye or lose a film job she needs. Their long-simmering conflicts surface as Suzanne tries to assert herself in the face of a well-intentioned but domineering mother who always has overshadowed her.

After Suzanne discovers she's just one more notch on the bedpost of her new boyfriend (Dennis Quaid), she gingerly

starts taking control of her own behavior. Mother and daughter bury the hatchet with good-humored barbs as both gain some insight about their fragile but precious relationship.

Directed by Mike Nichols, actress Carrie Fisher's screenplay is based on her semi-autobiographical novel about life in the Hollywood fishbowl.

MacLaine, dripping in diamonds, and the denim-clad Streep are a fascinating study in the contrasts between the Hollywood of yesteryear and the reality of it today. The pitfall of choice may have veered from alcohol to drugs, but coping with the strain of superficial values in such an artificial environment continues to take a human toll.

However, these heavy topics of addictions and relationships are given the light touch of comedy which makes the film enjoyable and no less incisive. The two actresses vividly animate their characters with witty dialogue that never flags. MacLaine nearly steals the movie outright when she sings "I'm Still Here," but Streep more than holds her own with a spirited version of "Heartbreak Hotel" that goes from a whisper to a roar. Gene Hackman, Richard Dreyfuss and Rob Reiner round out the fine cast with cameo appearances.

Some may object to drug and alcohol abuse as a source of comedy, but the film does not glamorize their use. On the contrary, Suzanne hallucinates during her overdose that she's in a gallery where all the portraits are of celebrities who died from such abuse.

"Postcards from the Edge" can be savage in its humor, but it amply demonstrates that family relationships are worth fighting for.

Due to comic treatment of drug and alcohol abuse, intermittent rough language and several references to promiscuous relationships, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.



Suzanne Vale (Meryl Streep, left) is an actress struggling to rebuild her life and to find a common ground with her mother, Hollywood legend Doris Mann (Shirley MacLaine, right) in the bittersweet comedy 'Postcards From The Edge.'

Columbia Pictures

'Narrow Margin' provides sleek, contemporary thriller for viewers

NEW YORK (CNS) — A train hurtling through the Canadian wilderness feels like a deathtrap to two passengers who are targets of professional hitmen on board in "Narrow Margin" (Tri-Star).

The unnoticed witness to a mob rubout during a blind date with the victim, Carol (Anne Archer) flees to a deserted cabin in the Canadian wilderness, hoping neither the mob nor the police will find out about her.

Both do however, and when a deputy district attorney, Robert Caulfield (Gene Hackman), arrives on the scene to haul her back to testify, they barely escape with their lives onto a Vancouver-bound train. Two professional hitmen (James B. Sicking and Nigel Bennett) whisk on board and thus begins a cat-and-mouse game of concealing the frightened witness until Caulfield can get help.

Based on a 1952 movie of the same title

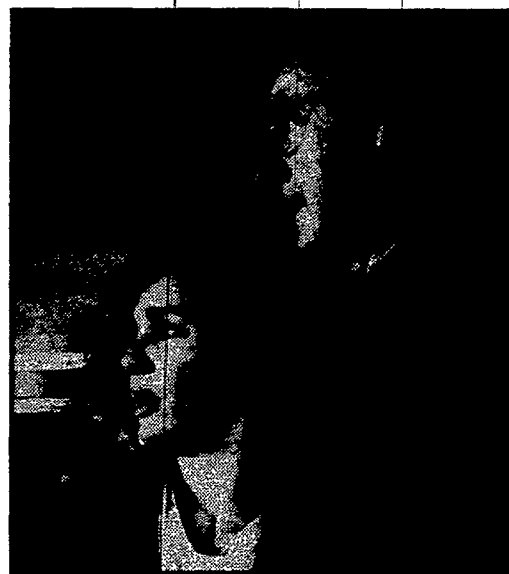
and written, photographed and directed by Peter Hyams, the film has a sleek, contemporary look and turns out to be a surprisingly compact thriller.

There are no wasted shots or frivolous dialogue — every scene gets straight to the point of creating and intensifying suspense.

It also must be mentioned that the silent star of the movie — the breathtaking outdoor scenery of the Canadian Rockies — makes for a real feast for the eyes.

Even though 90 percent of the movie's action is confined to what goes on above the tracks of a train, there are enough turns and curves along the route to keep it fast-moving and compelling — by more than a narrow margin.

Due to intermittent violence and minimal rough language, the USCC classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.



Gene Hackman and Anne Archer in a scene from Tri-Star's murder-thriller 'Narrow Margin.'

Tri-Star Pictures, Inc.