

Movie examines dark side of the super rich

NEW YORK (CNS) — Based on Alan Dershowitz's book, "Reversal of Fortune" (Warner Bros.) skillfully recounts Claus von Bulow's legal appeal of his conviction on twice attempting to murder his wealthy socialite wife.

Von Bulow (Jeremy Irons) hires Harvard law dynamo Dershowitz (Ron Silver) to prepare the appeal, and the lawyer uses his students to attack the physical and circumstantial evidence that convinced a Rhode Island jury of von Bulow's guilt.

As the legal team strategizes, the couple's arid marriage is seen in finely-detailed flashback, eerily narrated by Sunny (Glenn Close) from her limbo-like existence in an irreversible coma.

Adultery is a common theme, with Sunny recounting how their affair began while she was still married to her first husband and how von Bulow subsequently began to take mistresses once they were wed.

The legal appeal is successful and a second trial ends in acquittal, but moral questions remain as to von Bulow's actual guilt or innocence.

Director Barbet Schroeder's film is a sordidly entertaining look at the dark side of the super rich.



Sunny von Bulow (Glenn Close) and her husband, Claus (Jeremy Irons), entertain at a garden party in "Reversal of Fortune," which depicts a sensational 1980s murder case. Warner Bros. Inc.



Attorney Alan Dershowitz (Ron Silver, right) discusses the von Bulow case with students Minnie (Felicity Huffman, left), Chuck (Alan Pottinger) and Carol (Annabella Sciorra). Warner Bros. Inc.

Little depth and subtlety creates flawed 'film noir'

NEW YORK (CNS) — A crafty drifter gets in over his head when he juggles two women in "The Hot Spot" (Orion).

When Harry Madox (Don Johnson) arrives in a dried-up Texas town and talks his way into a car salesman's job, 18-year-old Gloria (Jennifer Connelly) looks longingly at him, and the boss's trampy wife, Dolly (Virginia Madsen), does more than look.

On the lookout for a fast buck after a

quick tryst with Dolly, Harry engineers a solo bank robbery, buries the money and tries to bury his affair with Dolly in favor of Gloria.

Dolly's not about to take that lying down — in fact for starters she wants Harry to die in her older, wealthy husband. Harry owes her one as she alibied for him for the time of the bank theft, but he's more interested in shaking down Sutton (William Sadler), a local drifter who has some kind of hold over Gloria.

When the dust clears two men are dead and one woman sees through the murder, deceit and betrayal to make her move on the man she must have.

Director Dennis Hopper set out to make a provocative "film noir" but falls short by a long shot.

Connelly and Madsen turn in such respectively vapid and vampy performances they cancel each other out. There's no crackling tension between the characters, leaving holes in the plot.

It's a cinch to guess what Sutton is into and what Dolly is up to — subtlety has no place in this movie just as the characters have no depth.

Due to the adulterous relationship, recurring partial nudity, brief violence and occasional rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is O — morally offensive. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.



Orion Pictures Corp. Don Johnson stars as a drifter who gets in over his head when he juggles two women in "The Hot Spot."

Not your typical courtroom drama, the film is more a study in manners with life or death consequences, and carefully balances dry legalities with telling scenes from the couple's palatial estate, opening with the two occasions on which Sunny slips into a drug-induced coma with her husband nearby.

Irons portrays von Bulow as wickedly witty, an elegantly sinister aristocrat whose talent for self-mockery never erases his chilly arrogance. His performance is best when on-screen with Silver, who, in sharp contrast, is down and dirty, emotional and verbose.

The exposition is ingeniously constructed, especially by using the comatose

Sunny character throughout. Close's narration hovers over the proceedings and, in flashback, she presents Sunny as a bored, egocentric, self-destructive woman.

The frequent black humor is uncomfortably outrageous and may leave a sour taste considering the woman still languishes in a coma 10 years later.

"Reversal of Fortune" is a compelling, perhaps jaded, view of justice without moral certainty. Murder, suicide, frame-up? The truth remains elusive.

Due to adulterous relationships and occasional rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.



Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc. An army of flesh-eating zombies terrorizes people barricaded in a farmhouse in "Night of the Living Dead," a remake of the 1968 cult favorite.

Remake lacks 'bite' of original

NEW YORK (CNS) — Just when you thought it was safe, those flesh-eating zombies are back knocking on the doors in "Night of The Living Dead" (Columbia), a color remake of the 1968 cult classic.

For reasons unknown the dead are returning to life to munch on their fellow humans. Barbara (Patricia Tallman) flees to a rural farmhouse where she is soon joined by Ben (Tony Todd), whose escape vehicle has run out of gas. Two more frightened couples are discovered hiding in the cellar with a partially chewed-up, unconscious child.

The seven barricade themselves inside and come to blows over whether to make a run for it or lock themselves in the cellar as the dead-eyed ghouls gradually converge on the site.

For die-hard horror fans there are the familiar jolts of terror in this rehash of

George A. Romero's original stomach-wrencher. Surprisingly, with the addition of color this version seems less bloody, though the shots of cannibalism are still not for delicate stomachs.

The production values are marginally better but the screenplay has been altered for the worse. At least the humans in the original were basically decent people. This time around, the tragic, ironic ending has been abandoned for a zoo-like atmosphere of trigger-happy people relishing each zombie kill.

This version shouldn't have left the grave.

Because of grisly violence, momentary rear nudity and minimal rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is O — morally offensive. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.