

Arts & Entertainment

'Terms' characters true heart-grabbers

By Steve Abarlotes

Is there a word that most accurately describes the feeling of happiness and sadness at the same time? Get the hankiechiefs ready, anyway. The anxiously awaited "Terms of Endearment" is here and it does indeed live up to all its excellent expectations. It is a film that relies heavily on the power and range of all its actors.

James Brooks is responsible for the precise first-time direction and the humorously lyrical screenplay, which

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is based on the novel of the same name, by Larry Macmurtrey. Brooks' prior experience is in television. He has worked on the "Mary Tyler Moore Show" and many other prime-time comedies.

"Terms Of Endearment" is a sentimental film about family interdependence and twirling emotion that comes dangerously close to being cute. It is a dark, cyclical "comedy," and I use the term comedy loosely because it is a unique blend of different styles, genres and moods. It is about ordinary people encountering the "big chill" and confronting all the terms of personal commitment that go along with it.

Aurora Greenway (Shirley MacLaine) is a tough-widow who lives in Houston and resides in a well-to-do house that is sprinkled with all the expensive little knick-knacks that make a house a home. She cares for her daughter Emma (Debra Winger) in a paranoid way, and confides in her as she grows up. They talk on the telephone constantly when they are apart and tell each other everything. Their conversations revolve around the weird men in their lives.

"Terms" takes place over roughly 30 years, highlighting all the important slices of Emma's life. We move fairly randomly from one point to another. For the most part, there is no foreshadowing of things to come, nor does Brooks think that it is necessary to add



Debra Winger and John Lithgow in "Terms of Endearment": "Happiness and sadness at the same time."

transitions. It works strongly the way is.

Emma grows up and gets married right off — against her mother's wishes. (Aurora doesn't like the idea of being a grandmother at the age of 50.) Emma weds, then beds, Flap Horton (Jeff Daniels), a rather dim-witted college professor. Flap is selfish and simple-minded, but he thinks he's sophisticated. You can't hardly fault the guy though. He is unaware of his indifference, and his self-devotion. And Emma loves Flap because he is cute.

Aurora hates Flap. She can barely tolerate him. She also tolerates her swinging and single next-door neighbor, "astronaut" Garrett Breedlove (Jack Nicholson). He is a hard-drinking, foul-mouthed, perverted skirt-chaser. Everything he says has some lewd sexual connotation, yet he is intrinsically good-natured and maybe even lion-hearted and you can't help

but like him a whole lot. He is the right stuff, only turned on its head and twice as interesting.

As Breedlove, Nicholson maintains his psychopathic presence. He is in control and you can see the wheels turning. His character is the film's most refreshing.

To Aurora, Breedlove is both appealing and appalling, but he is heads and tails above the rest of her suitors. MacLaine is vibrant and sparkling, pulling out all the stops when it is called for. As Aurora, her affection for Breedlove grows stronger and stronger, but her relationship with Emma is first priority.

Winger's Emma is goofy, gangly and loud. She has a deep, husky laugh and her voice breaks at the end of every sentence. She seems to plead a lot. Even though she bears three children, her childlike charm and curiosity stick with her. Winger lets fly with real emotional intensity while reaching effort-

lessly into her bottomless bag of method acting tricks. She is razor sharp and keeps you involved.

People might criticize "Terms" for all the big, theatrical acting. These are cartoon characters with feeling and it is intentional. Look at the names: Aurora Greenway, Garrett Breedlove, Flap Horton! Flap Horton is a big flappy guy who flops and limps around. We need to know where everyone's head is at so we can understand why the characters react, the way they do, and how they change. The comedy then comes more easily.

A lot happens when this thing gets going: love, hate, passion, jealousy, bitterness, humiliation, sibling rivalries and sneaking suspicions. They are cartoon characters with depth and the bigness of the acting enhances their attractiveness somehow.

John Lithgow plays Sam, a harmless homebody who understands all of the small workings of his unmeaningful job and life in general. He helps Emma pay her grocery bill which leads to extra-marital involvement. It is all Emma's doing. He's sweet, and she considers it a needed adventure. Besides, she has to get back at Flap for all of those late nights he says he spends at school. Lithgow gives off a sort of withdrawn naivete, but comes blasting back with some of the best lines of the movie. It is a good character and a good job from him.

Many familiar local faces appear, including Troy Bishop as one of Emma's kids. In fact, he breaks a few hearts and nearly steals some scenes in the process.

The photography is soft and lush. It radiates a kind of tranquillity that contrasts nicely to the high comedy to which the film initially aspires. If it is true that every reaction has an opposite reaction, then chances are that "Terms of Endearment" will cause you to feel sad, but you will leave the theater feeling glad you came.

The musical soundtrack provides several "tugs at heartstrings." The "tugs" are by composer Michael Gore.

And oh, I believe that one would be inclined to think that Lincoln does photograph quite nicely.

Gifts from Neiman's truly priceless



The Christmas season is upon us (and I do mean the Christmas season, not the X-mas season), and our thoughts are turning to the gifts we can buy our friends and loved ones.

Naturally, American capitalism stands ready to serve society by meeting these needs. One store that



Jeff Goodwin

caters to a certain segment of American society that most of us don't fall into is Neiman-Marcus.

Out of its Dallas headquarters, Neiman-Marcus caters to the American elite. Since all of you may not have access to one of their catalogs and since they don't have a store closer to Lincoln than Chicago, the Daily Nebraskan, in yet another of its public service, brings you Christmas suggestions from

Neiman-Marcus.

The first page of the catalog has this quotation from Charles Dudley Warner: "The excellence of a gift lies in its appropriateness rather than in its value."

That quote is somewhat at odds with the gifts in the catalog.

Everybody loves dogs. What could be better for your son/daughter, little sister/brother, niece/nephew, than a Shar-Pei puppy?

These rare dogs (they come from China) sell for only \$2,000, if you buy them from a Neiman-Marcus store. They will hand deliver in the continental United States, but there is an added fee.

Of course, you can't have your Shar-Pei living in the basement so you'll need an Oriental pagoda dog house for him, available for a scant \$2,750. For those times when little Mao wants to escape the drudgery of the dog house, buy him a sleeping mat of black velour for only \$65.

Say the kids already have a doggie, but they want a horse. No problem. N-M has Lasma Arabian horses for just this situation. Prices begin at \$5,000.

Of course, there are all kinds of clothes offered.

A man's crewneck sweater, with a pheasant on it no less, costs \$160. Just the thing for pheasant season. For you ski bums, there's a hot little number that goes for only \$225. So you won't be able to afford a lift ticket. At least you'll have a nice sweater.

For the little person in your life, and I do mean little, N-M offers a miniature American walnut high-boy, circa 1700, for only \$7,200. Cheap, huh?

For miniature music lovers there is a 3 7/8 inch violin that goes for a mere \$1,800.

What people do with these things I don't know. Look at 'em, I guess.

Now don't be misled. Not everything in this catalog is expensive. There's even a special category of gifts priced under \$25. Included in this category are essentials like satin covered clothes hangers, a bargain at only \$12.

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HOTSPOTS

Television

• The ever-erudite Dick Cavett is guest star on the acclaimed comedy series "Cheers" which airs at 8:30 p.m. on channel 3. Cavett plays his archetypal role — Dick Cavett. This time around, he urges Sam (Ted Danson) to write his memoirs, something which Cavett has had plenty of practice at.

At the Sheldon

• Today's line-up for the French Film Week film series includes "The Grand Illusion" (taken from "The History of French Cinema by Those Who Made It"), "Remorques" and "Andre Masson et les Quatre Elements." The shows begin at 3 and 7 p.m. Tickets are \$3.

At the Kimball

• The UNL Flute Choir, under the direction of David Van de Bogart, will open the holiday season with its annual Christmas concert. The show begins at 8 p.m. The program will feature the world premiere of "Oscilloscope for Flute Choir," written for the UNL Flute Choir by composer John Harmon. There is no admission charge.

On Campus

• "Clint Eastwood is Harry Lackman." In three films, Eastwood has portrayed the violent anti-hero, and tonight UPC's American Films Committee will be screening the first and most successful of that series, "Dirty Harry." Showtimes are 7 and 9:15 p.m. Admission is \$1.50 for UNL students with an I.D. The film will also show on Friday.

• The Annual Christmas Pottery and Print Sale will be today and Friday in the Centennial Room of the Nebraska Union. Hundreds of affordable and decorative gifts will be on sale from 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.