

# Summer of '42: a very good year

Review by  
Jim Gray

In the celluloid jungle of the movie world, it's not too often that a truly outstanding movie comes along. So, when one does come along, it's really something to shout about.

Without a doubt, such is the case with *Summer of '42*.

**CENTERED AROUND** the sexual awakening of a 15-year-old boy in 1942, the film is, to say the least, a masterpiece of human emotion. Touching on experiences all-too-familiar to all of us, the movie is at the same time both screamingly funny and uncomfortably painful.

Set on an island vacation community in 1942, the movie is deeply entrenched in pieces of period nostalgia, all the way from two-tone suded coats to Bette Davis movies. Never, however is the sense of nostalgia overbearing, playing only a secondary role in the movie.

The tightly-knit plot concerns itself with a boy by the name of Hermie who, predictably, falls in love. Also predictable is the fact that he falls in love with an older woman.

Even more predictable is the fact that the older woman is married, to a soldier who goes

away to war no less. And of course, the husband is killed in action.

**THE INEVITABLE** seduction finally does occur, as the woman looks to the only source of attachment she still has.

Agreed, the plot is nothing new. Scripts like this are a dime a dozen in the movie world. What really sells the story is the approach.

Attacking the topic of sexual awakening with a deft scalpel Director Robert Mulligan does an impeccable job of exploring the nooks and crannies of the human sexual being. Using all-but-trite situations, Mulligan successfully portrays the frustrations, worries, fears and insecurity of a young person's sexual awakening, with a shocking accuracy.

Further, the movie points up the ridiculous duplicity of society's attitudes toward the adolescent—on one side urging the youngster into sexual experiences through braggadocio and the myth of "manhood", on the other side looking down on his frustrations with the antiseptic sneer of a drugstore man.

**TECHNICALLY** the film is excellent. The costumes are vibrant and exciting, the



Jennifer O'Neal and Gary Grimes...provide a nostalgic picture of awakening sexuality in *Summer of '42*.

Michael Legrand score moodily magnificent, the color photography artistically brilliant and the soundtrack well-paced and varied.

The acting is also extremely overpowering, with Jennifer O'Neal giving the performance of a lifetime as the boy's love-object. Equally stellar in his performance is Gary Grimes as the pubescent Hermie.

In the minor characters is where the film does fall down, however, lacking somewhat in depth of portrayal in all but the two leads.

Intentional or not, this lack of depth gives the viewer the feeling that the two are the only people in the film capable of feeling, which very much impairs the feeling of universality the movie tries to

present. ("In everyone's life, there's a Summer of '42.")

**EVEN SO** the movie does manage to come through loud and clear. After viewing the movie one comes out with the uncomfortable feeling of viewing oneself in a mirror, if darkly. And that makes *Summer of '42* an experience to remember, which in the movie world is something rare nowadays.

## LeMans: smooth-running machine

Review by  
BILL WALLIS

*LeMans* is a race-track documentary interrupted by vague, behind-the-scenes, romantic sequences involving rugged, handsome, craggy-faced Steve McQueen and gentle, lovely, exquisite-faced Elga Andersen.

There are two themes: the competition between men to win the race; and the competition of women with the race (that "professional blood sport," where "it can happen to you...and happen to you again") for the lives of the men.

The most obvious and rewarding theme to which the documentary might have lent itself is that of man's competition with the mechanical monsters he has created, man's will to survive the types of sport his competitive nature has created in the machine age. It did not.

The story is simple. As the tension of the race builds, the tension builds in the relationship of two would-be (or ex-) lovers. (Apparently her

husband was killed a year ago in a crash that involved McQueen. As the race is won, the tension between the two subsides, and she finally smiles at him through the crowd, and all ends well.

The documentary portions of the film are quite realistic and excellent. The camera places the viewer in the driver's seat for front and rear-view (mirror) shots in the cars following and preceding the pack, and from practically every desirable angle.

Most effective are the several slow-motion sequences of the accidents. One, an instantaneous re-living of the accident, which has just happened, in the mind of the driver (McQueen), is simply excellent and very effective.

The viewer is overwhelmed by the remarkable force of the mechanical beats shooting down the tree-lined tunnels at 250 m.p.h., and is terrorized by the beast when human control is lost and magnificent machines in seconds become piles of splintered fiberglass and steel. In one sequence, an injured driver runs from his wrecked auto and is literally blown into the air by

the explosion of the gas tank.

*LeMans* is effective documentary. It is a story of racing, and viewed as such it is quite good. Don't expect art, just a smooth-running machine of a film that never loses control.

### Bergman's "Anna" opens film season

*The Passion of Anna*, an Ingmar Bergman film, will be shown at 7 and 9 p.m. on Wednesday, September 22, for members of the Nebraska Union Foreign Film Society at the Nebraska Theatre.

The film stars Liv Ullman, Bibi Anderson and Max von Sydow and is a study of behavior.



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