

# Actors true-to-form in "Breaks"



A ruthless hired killer stalks a band of horse thieves in *The Missouri Breaks*. Academy Award winners Jack Nicholson and Marlon Brando star in the film.

By Marella Synovec

Standing out and demanding attention in *The Missouri Breaks*, an Arthur Penn film now showing at the Douglas 3 Theater, are a superb cast and memorable technical effects.

The talents of Jack Nicholson and Marlon Brando are paired for the first time in this potpourri western mixing humor, drama, romance and hints of moral philosophy.

Nicholson is cast as Tom Logan, a horse thief whose character is a juxtaposition of cunning and compassion, who falls in love with the daughter of the rancher who hired a bushwacker to kill him. Delivering a performance consistent with those which won him an Academy Award and five award nominations, Nicholson follows the film's moods with precision.

Brando, twice an Academy Award winner and a contender seven times, does not appear until 40 minutes of the film have elapsed. He enters as a pompous, overweight leprechaun whose antics belie his ruthless callings.

Brando's performance as Lee Clayton, an eccentric, heartless hired killer, does not falter. He merges the role and the actor.

Nicholson and Brando are complemented by a fine supporting cast. The film co-stars Randy Quaid (*The Last Detail*), character actor Harry Dean Stanton as an embittered, aging outlaw and John McLiam as the rancher who crumbles as his life turns against him.

Kathleen Lloyd makes her screen debut as Jane Braxton, the pert and saucy rancher's daughter who falls in love with and boldly pursues Nicholson.

Not to be overlooked are the technical qualities of *The Missouri Breaks*. From

the opening pastoral scenes with John Williams' music to the grueling deaths of the horse thieves, the film's production staff spared little detail to carry the viewer through the film's varying moods.

Michael Butler directed camera-work which heightened the interplay between characters. The close-up views of Logan's changing facial expressions—slit-eyed hatred for Clayton contrasted with aw-shucks glances when he encounters Jane—support the film's contrasting moods.

Muted shots as seen through Clayton's binoculars lend an ethereal quality to several scenes. The twilight, lamplight and sunburst lighting closely resemble natural light.

*The Missouri Breaks* is not without flaws. Although Penn has dealt with violence-western themes before (*Little Big Man*, *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Left Handed Gun*, a 1958 film starring Paul Newman), the western—like the musical—as a film genre, belongs to a past era.

Perhaps the film tries to incorporate too many moods, burdening it with inconsistencies and confusing transitions. The screenplay for the film's 1880s setting contains occasional anachronisms and clichés which are disturbing. At times the conversations between the characters appear too sophisticated to be acceptable. Light hearted moments are inconsistent with inevitable and gory violence.

*The Missouri Breaks* is not a gentle movie, nor is it a simple shoot-em-up western. Brando and Nicholson are actors of too high a caliber to let it pass as that.

## Sheldon Theater will offer three summer film series

*Summer Stars*, a 12-part film series, began June 3 with Charlie Chaplin's film, *The Gold Rush*, at the Sheldon Film Theater, 12th and R streets.

The film series features mysteries and comedies of the 1930s and 40s, including *My Man Godfrey*, *Top Hat*, *Of Human Bondage*, *Philadelphia Story* and *Double Indemnity*.

An independently produced feature film will be shown with most of the films in the series, said Dan Ladely, director of Sheldon Film Theater. A feature film gives viewers an opportunity to see works other than Hollywood productions, he said.

Seven of the originally scheduled films have been changed.

Two other film series will be shown during the summer. *Adventures in Reality*, a partial set of British television documentaries, will be shown Sundays.

The third series is a repeat feature. *Pioneers of Modern Painting*, produced by art critic Sir Kenneth Clark, explores six early impressionist painters including Cezanne, Monet and Rousseau. The films

are owned by the gallery and are a gift of patron Mary Reipma Ross.

During the second summer session, five films will be screened for film study. Although the films are shown for a class, admission will not be restricted to students, Ladely said.

The summer season ends the third week in August. The theater needs volunteers to sell tickets and distribute posters for the *Summer Stars* series, Ladely said. Volunteers will be given free passes to films.

The screening schedule includes:

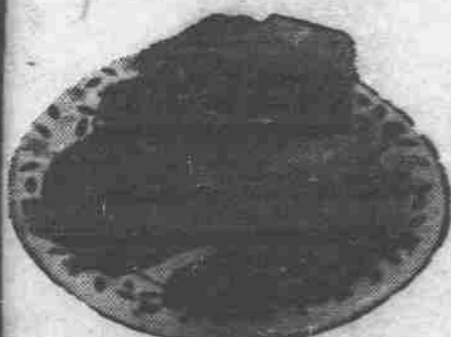
—*Adventures in Reality*: 3 p.m. Sundays, admission free.

—*Pioneers of Modern Painting*: 7 p.m. Tuesdays, admission free.

—*Film Study Class*: 10:30 a.m. Wednesdays and 1:30 p.m. Thursdays, admission free.

—*Summer Stars*: 7 and 9 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays, admission \$1.50.

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