

Films

Well-done 'Star' lost in shuffle of gossip, publicity

By Will Huffman

A Star Is Born (currently at Cinema 1) has been the subject of so many rumors and so much gossip and publicity, both pro and con, that the film itself has gotten lost somewhere in the shuffle.

Most of the controversy surrounds the film's star and executive producer, Barbara Streisand. Some influential critics have charged that Streisand used the movie for a kind of private ego trip, a view that was given support by the film's director, Frank Pierson, in an article he wrote for *New York* magazine.

According to Pierson, Streisand took over the film editing to insert more close-ups and make sure she was the center of attention.

Some of the film reviews were almost hysterically abusive, especially toward Streisand herself. John Simon of *New York* magazine spent a paragraph describing the proportions of Streisand's nose and other critics accused Streisand of becoming a megalomaniac.

All of the above only served to obscure the film itself by focusing all of the attention on Streisand instead of the movie.

Actually, *A Star Is Born* is honest, sincere and well-done—the sort of high-class soap opera at which Hollywood used to excel. The movie is full-blooded entertainment that seeks only to please its audience.

Kris Kristofferson plays John Norman Howard, a successful but self-destructive rock star, who comes upon an unknown singer in a small club and becomes fascinated by her talent.

Streisand, of course, plays the singer and you can

easily guess the rest. The two fall in love and get married and as her star begins to rise, his begins to fall.

Streisand and Kristofferson make a great team, with his powerfully understated performance providing the perfect compliment to her aggressive flamboyance.

Streisand may have re-edited the film to emphasize her role, but there's no doubt she's got the talent and force to get away with it.

The concert sequences are impressively staged, with the huge crowds and first-rate soundtrack combining to capture the look and feel of the high-powered music world. The editing in these scenes is sharp. Robert Surtees' cinematography provides the right touches at the right moments with the garish lighting at the concerts contrasted against the rugged desert landscape where Streisand and Kristofferson build their adobe dream house.

Eleven new songs were written especially for the film by a number of different composers, including Paul Williams and Streisand herself. The music may not all be memorable, but it does provide the backdrop needed for the story.

The story itself is predictable at best, but what elevates *A Star Is Born* is its energy and conviction. Overblown and schmaltzy at times, the film overcomes its limitations by pure effort and force.

Also showing in Lincoln is *The Enforcer*, (at Cinema 2), the latest entry in the Clint Eastwood-Dirty Harry series. Unfortunately it lacks the punch and pace of the first two Harry films, *Dirty Harry* and *Magnum Force*.

This time Harry's up against a band of terrorists who have succeeded in kidnapping the mayor of San

Francisco. As usual, the lines are clearly drawn, with Harry battling both the criminals and the mushy-headed liberals within the police department.

There are the obligatory shoot-em-ups and chases, but the thing giving *The Enforcer* distinction is a fine performance by Tyne Daly as a woman detective assigned as Harry's partner.

Professor's comedies to be published

By Carla Engstrom

Playwrights can have dry spells when it comes to publishing plays, or a boom, like gold mining towns of the Old West. Such is the case of playwright Joseph Baldwin, who will have three plays published in 1977.

Baldwin, UNL theatre arts professor, submitted his one-act comedy *A Golden Opportunity for a Loveable Loafer* to Performance Publishing Co., Elgin, Ill., and the company accepted it, he said.

"I never can tell why they (plays) sell and why they don't," Baldwin said, adding, "I go for months and nothing happens. I like to see some action" or results on the work.

After the first play was accepted, Baldwin said, he sent in two more, a one-act comedy, *Can the Frog Princess Find Happiness?* and a three-act comedy, *Snow for the Lovers*. Both were accepted by Performance Publishing Co.

A Golden Opportunity for a Loveable Loafer concerns a genteel lady of advanced years who, having come into a considerable inheritance, advertises in the want-ads for a husband, Baldwin said.

Can the Frog Princess Find Happiness? won first prize in a national one-act playwriting contest sponsored by

Jacksonville (Fla.) University in 1971 and was produced there.

The play is nonsensical. It's an exaggerated fantasy about what a girl does to pass the time while her boyfriend talks on about himself, he said.

Baldwin's play *Snow for the Lovers* is a nostalgic play about college life in the 1940s.

It won a national contest for "best original play for high schools" sponsored by Case High School, Racine, Wis. and was produced there in 1974.

The playwright also has a two-act play, *The Gift of a Doll*, which will be produced March 17 at the Changing Scene Theatre in Denver.

The Gift of a Doll is described by Baldwin as a "verbal dance. It tells its story by strange, nightmarish scenes which project the inner struggles of the main character, his memories, hopes and fears."

The playwright also has a one-act play, *Engine 4960*, which will be filmed this summer by the Nebraska Educational Television Network.

The play will be retitled *Engine 8444* since Engine 4960 is in a park. Engine 8444, a steam locomotive, is housed by the Union Pacific Railroad at Cheyenne. It runs into Omaha once a year for repairs, Baldwin said, and runs several steam excursions a year.

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