

# arts and entertainment

## Cadavers provide suspense, chills in 'Coma' thriller

By J. Marc Mushkin

*Coma* is Michael Crichton's movie about hospitals, doctors and power over life and death. Crichton himself is a doctor, and his familiarity with the subject gives *Coma* its authenticity. While this casualness takes something away from the potential of the terror, the viewer is struck with Crichton's expertise in recreating the aura of a modern hospital.

### movie review

*Coma* is a thriller in the traditional sense—it depends on mystery and suspense in the plot rather than *Exorcist*-like shock effects. In developing this plot, Crichton generally is successful in weaving his star, Genevieve Bujold, in and out of the increasingly dangerous situations she finds herself in.

Bujold plays Dr. Wheeler, whose best friend enters the hospital for a therapeutic abortion but never comes out of anaesthesia. This sends Bujold on a risky search into the hospital's politics for an explanation.

Bujold is quite an actress. Her vast expressive range draws you into her deepening paranoia and fear. Playing opposite her, as her career-conscious lover, is Michael Douglas.

Douglas took the very unusual step of returning to acting after having produced *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* in 1975. It was a good move, because he complements Bujold beautifully. His con-

cerned, but frustrated and confused lover is a carefully restrained performance that keeps the spotlight on Bujold.

Richard Widmark and Elizabeth Ashley also help Bujold keep the screen mainly because of the lifeless characters Crichton has written for them.

Perhaps the real stars of the picture, though, are the technicians who assembled the elaborate surgery scenes and the impressive Jefferson Center sets where coma victims are suspended by wires from the ceiling. Actors and actresses actually had to support themselves on those wires during the shooting. Crichton was only able to suspend them for a maximum of six minutes at a time because of the severe strain on their backs.

The operation scenes are visually exciting and fascinating because they are so stunningly authentic. The verbal action also is interesting; most of the extras are doctors and their ease with the medical vocabulary avoids the hokiness a less professional treatment might have produced.

My principal criticism of the film concerns Crichton's actual handling of the operating and other blood and guts scenes. Doctors abounded in the cast and production of the movie. The almost casual attitude toward corpses and cutting these professionals have, comes across on the screen as a regrettable waste of a great thriller device.

So much could have been done with these scenes! The one scene that is an effective exception to this is Bujold's final confrontation with the hit man assigned to kill her (Lance LeGault).

While trapped in a cadaver storage cooler she literally buries him under racks of falling bodies.

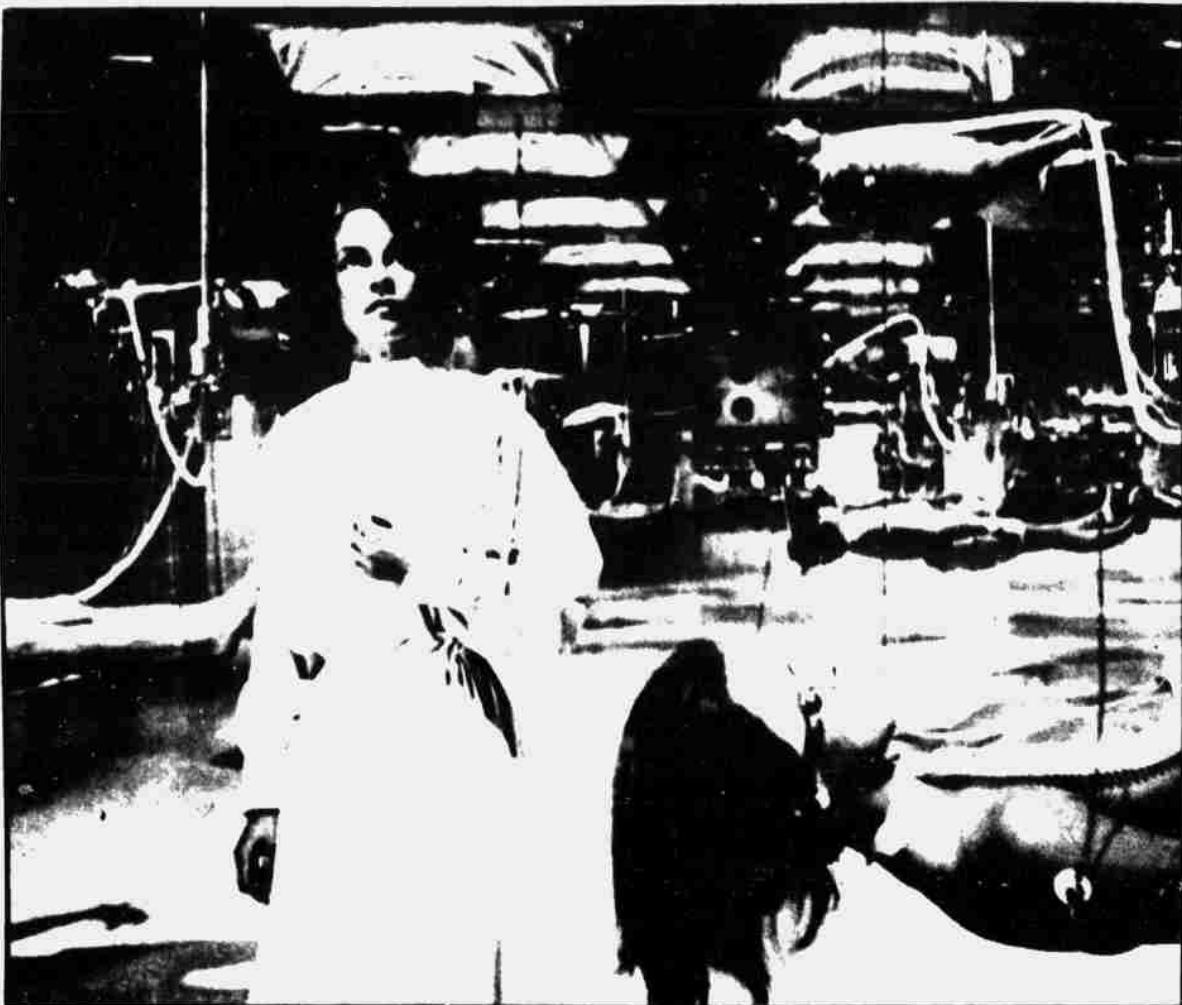
Here Crichton makes the most of the material a medical setting provides. The plastic encased bodies take on an eerie new life in their rolling—it is a gripping and horrifying scene.

The horror holds up the other less successful scenes. The fear that most viewers have of hospitals and surgery proves enough to support even a less-than-

perfect job of direction.

But Crichton is getting better as a doctor/director. His first effort, *Westworld*, was very successful but lacked the punch of *Coma*. This is a flawed, but carefully composed and executed, thriller that takes good advantage of the fear of hospitals Crichton is so familiar with.

*Coma* is showing at the Douglas 2.



Dr. Susan Wheeler (Genevieve Bujold) seeks clues to a conspiracy among coma patients at an experimental lab in *Coma*. Photo courtesy of MGM

## Upcoming Renoir masterpiece combines compassion, surprise

The Sheldon Film Theater is presenting Jean Renoir's 1931 masterpiece, *La Chienne* (The Bitch), as part of its Foreign Classics Series Sunday and Monday, March 12 and 13.

*La Chienne* is Renoir's contemplative and ironic story of Maurice (Michel Simon), a rather comic figure of a book-keeper, who meets a vulgar prostitute named Lulu (Janie Mareze). He falls in love with her and sets her up in an apartment where she lives with her pimp.

Vincent Canby of *The New York Times* wrote, "*La Chienne* is the tale of Maurice's degradation, his victimization and his ultimate liberation, first through love, followed by violence, then by that curious,

benign second sight that Renoir bestows upon characters who have the courage to survive."

This was Renoir's first full-length sound film. Many film critics and historians consider Renoir among the giants of cinema history.

Canby also wrote, "Maybe it's not an absolutely real-life Paris. The city we see is familiar in all its physical characteristics, but it is lighted by the unique combination of compassion, wit, amusement, and surprise that this greatest of all French directors has brought to virtually every film he's ever made."

*La Chienne* will be shown at 7 and 9 p.m. Admission is \$2.00.



Maurice (Michel Simon) sneaks a peek at streetwalker Lulu's (Janie Mareze) gams in Jean Renoir's 1931 classic "La Chienne." Photo courtesy of Sheldon Film Theater

### Movie schedule

Cinema 1: *The Boys in Company C*; 7:30, 9:45 p.m.; R

Cinema 2: *The Other Side of the Mountain Part 2*; 7:15, 9:10 p.m.; PG

Cinema X: Call 474-9810 for titles; 24 hours; X

Cooper/Lincoln: *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*; 7:15, 9:15 p.m.; PG

Douglas 1: *The Goodbye Girl*; 5:10, 7:15, 9:20 p.m.; PG

Douglas 2: *Coma*; 5:35, 7:40, 9:45 p.m.; PG

Douglas 3: *The One and Only*; 5:30, 7:30, 9:30 p.m.; PG

Embassy: Call 435-6042 for titles; Continuous from 11 a.m.; X

Joyo: *Oh God!*; 7:20 p.m.; PG

Plaza 1: *The Turning Point*; 5:30, 7:45, 10 p.m.; PG

Plaza 2: *The Betsy*; 5:15, 7:30, 9:45 p.m.; R

Plaza 3: *Late Great Planet Earth*; 5:30, 7:30, 9:30 p.m.; PG

Plaza 4: *Saturday Night Fever*; 5:15, 7:30, 9:45 p.m.; R

Roxy: *The Maltese Falcon*; 5:30, 7:30, 9:30 p.m.; G

*Spinout*; 12 a.m.; G

State: *Candlehoe*; 7:15, 9:10 p.m.; G

Stuart: *High Anxiety*; 5:30, 7:30, 9:30 p.m.; PG

## The Dancers ballet company appears next week at Kimball

With the help of actress Joanne Woodward, a new dance company was born. The company adopted an austere name, Dancers, to match its demanding art form, ballet.

The Dancers company will appear next week in Kimball Recital Hall. The two performances (on Monday and Wednesday at 8 p.m.) will feature the talents of 14 dancers under the direction of the company's founder, Dennis Wayne.

Wayne and other lead dancers broke away from the American Ballet Theater to form Dancers. The idea behind the creation was to form a company where the dancer's needs are placed first so that dance can be

a personal experience. With financial and moral support from Woodward the company survived.

In addition to the Kimball appearances, Dancers will present a free lecture-demonstration at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday. The workshop is open to the public and will be in Kimball Hall. The dancers will perform parts of the evening concerts with background and explanation about the works.

Tickets for the concerts are \$3 for UNL students and \$5 general admission. Reservations and information are available at the Kimball box office, 113 Westbrook Music Building, 472-3375.

## Chamber orchestra visits Sheldon

Chamber music will grace the Sheldon Art Gallery auditorium during a performance Saturday by the Nebraska Chamber Orchestra Players. The concert, sponsored by the Lincoln Friends of Chamber Music, will start at 8 p.m.

Raymond Hagg, director of the UNL School of Music, said the program includes three works: *The History of a Soldier* by Igor Stravinsky, *Quintet in B flat* by Franz Danzi and *Concertino* by Leos Janacek.

The president of the Lincoln Friends of Chamber Music, Nelson Potter, said the

Stravinsky composition tells the story of a soldier. Different instruments mark the events in his life. The soldier is characterized by a solo violin, he said.

Series and individual tickets will be available at the auditorium prior to the concert, according to Potter. Prices are \$3 regular and \$2 student for the one performance or \$14 for the three remaining concerts. The other events will be the Beaux Arts Trio (April 15) and The Cleveland Quartet (canceled from a January 21 performance due to the weather and rescheduled for May 20th).