

arts / entertainment

Sally Field shows depth in realistic 'Norma Rae'

By Peg Sheldrick

In a year when the emphasis seems to be on epic thrills and topical chills, *Norma Rae* is the kind of down-to-earth, authentic character study that can get lost in the shuffle.

The movie is set in an impoverished southern mill town in the sweltering heat of last summer and focuses on the effort to unionize the local textile workers. The film setting could hardly be more mundane compared to other recent releases.

review

But *Norma Rae* is far from dull, thanks to a good director, an intelligent script and an absorbing performance by Sally Field in the title role.

Martin Ritt, who directed last year's underrated *Casey's Shadow*, makes excellent use of a strong cast and authentic locations to create Norma Rae's world, a sleepy village whose awakening to a sense of self-worth parallels Norma Rae's own development.

Realistic setting

Ritt captures the ambiance of the textile factory in all its noisy, dehumanizing oppressiveness. Ritt chose to film on location in Opelika, Ala. The result is a portrait more convincing than any studio could manufacture, a gritty, steamy world of peeling paint and unkempt beauty.

The script is laced with natural humor and believable characters. Harriet Frank, Jr. and Irving Ravetch based their screen play on the story of a real southern woman, and the story rings true throughout. Norma Rae is the best developed character, but even among the lesser roles there are very few stereotypes.

Opting for more than sudsy sentimentality or easy clichés, Ravetch and Frank tell their tale with integrity and authenticity as they create Norma Rae, one of the most interesting female characters in quite awhile.

Unique character

Norma Rae Webster is a feisty, independent young widow, the kind of "working mother" you'll never see on the deter-

gent commercials. Like nearly everyone else in town, she works at the textile mill, but unlike everyone else, she occasionally speaks out against the inhumanity of the management. Outside work, her only escapes are TV, drinking and sex, and all of them are too full of reruns.

But Norma Rae's life changes when Reuben, a New York raised labor organizer, comes onto the scene. Through Reuben and the union, Norma Rae finds the way to channel her anger and energy and ultimately accomplishes what Reuben never could have.

She becomes a cross between Moses and Joan of Arc, fighting her battles with courage and resourcefulness which is seldom allowed a screen heroine. Sally Field plays the role with ferocious credibility.

First rate performance

The role seems a natural for someone like Jane Fonda, but is hardly what one would expect from a former flying nun. Field, however, gives a first rate performance as the unschooled, toughened heroine whose quick wits and uncompromising will are her only hope for triumph over the stifling, numbing grind of factory life. Field proves she's capable of much more than looking cute and hugging Burt Reynolds.

Ron Leibman plays Reuben with skill, although his character is so overwhelmingly sincere and noble he borders on a paragon. Beau Bridges is good as Norma's husband who loves her enough to accept her activities, eventually without feeling threatened. The supporting cast is very believable.

The film's only problem is that it's about fifteen minutes too long. It builds to one peak quite well, but fails when trying for another. Even so, *Norma Rae* is a fine, full study of a fascinating woman.

Norma Rae is playing at the Douglas Three.

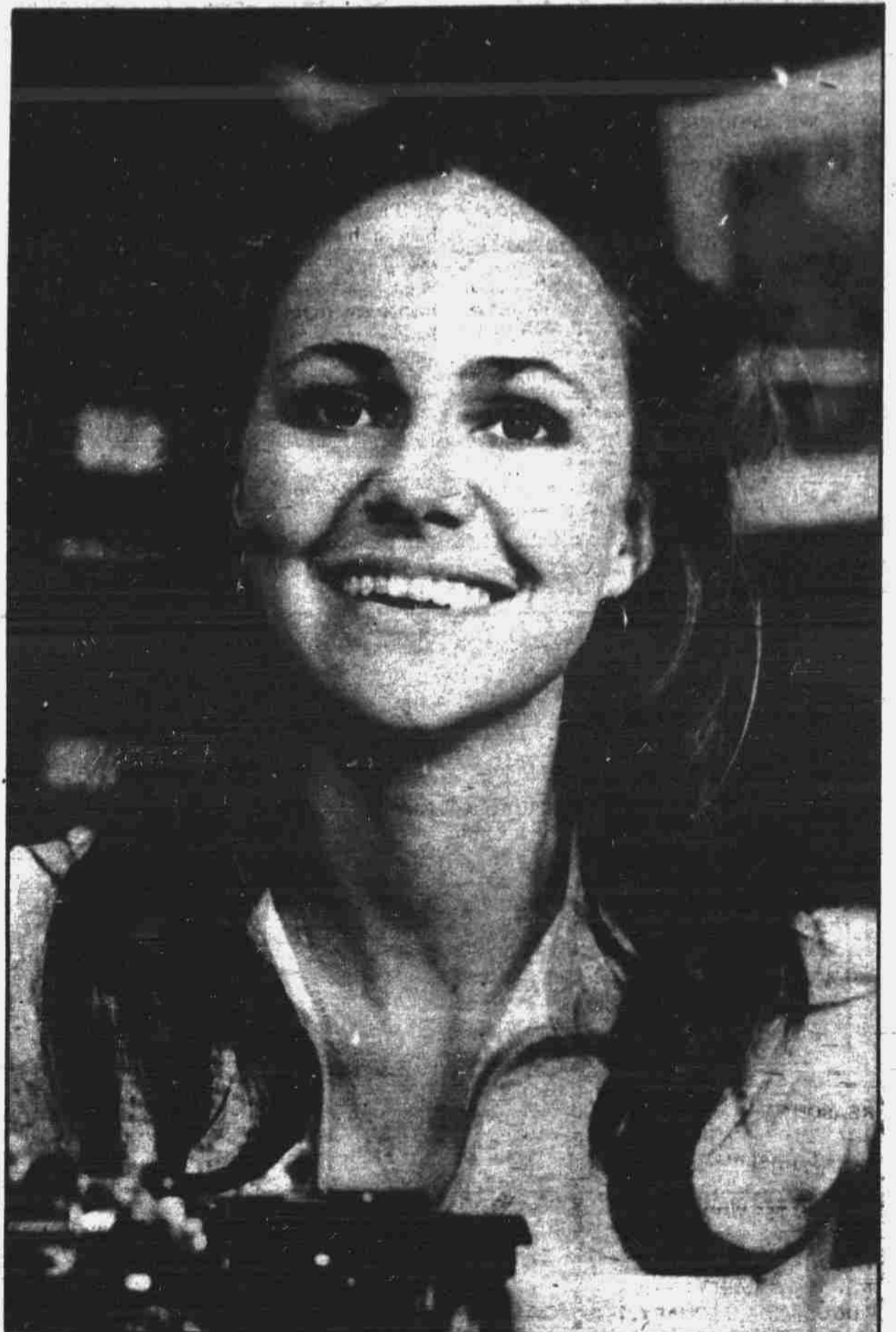


Photo courtesy 20th Century Fox

Sally Field as labor organizer Norma Rae

Festival of Arts to be celebrated indoors

Local artists will have a chance to display their works during the Festival of Arts at Pershing Auditorium, April 7 and 8.

Jackie Hall, executive director of Lincoln Community Arts Council, said that the festival this year will include 172 booths with artists from the local area and nine other states.

"The Festival of Arts is part of a celebration of the Week of Art," Hall said. "It is to encourage artists in the area."

Last year the festival was held on 15th and N streets extending two blocks, but due to bad weather it was moved into Pershing, Hall said. Many of the artists were

pleased with this arrangement, she said, because they didn't have to tear down their booths at night and they didn't have worry about the rain ruining their crafts.

The type of crafts displayed will vary a great deal. According to Hall, one of the most unusual this year is a taxidermist. There will be 15 informative booths on the different arts, such as the dance companies in Lincoln.

Entertainment from a variety of bands will be part of the celebration. The German Americans from Russia will have an ethnic food stand outside the auditorium selling runzas, coffee and homemade rye bread.

Along with clowns, the Theatre Arts For Youth will provide a booth for young children to stay at and listen to stories. Hall said this will be a sort of babysitting service for parents who wish to wander among the booths.

"Many of the local artists are well known to the public as well as those from the surrounding states," he said. "Everything is original and handmade, nothing is imported. And some of the artists will be selling their crafts."

In addition, there will be an art raffle sponsored by the Lincoln Community Arts Council. Tickets will be one dollar and eight items done by local artists will be raffled off. Hall said that the items range from oil paintings to a scratchboard.

Admission is free to the festival on April 7, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and April 8, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Drawings for the raffle will be April 8 at 4:30 p.m. and winners do not need to be present.

Rush's 'heavy metal' bored less dedicated

By Casey McCabe

The sounds produced by Rush and Kickin' in their Thursday night performance at Pershing Auditorium were unmistakably loud and heavy metal.

While that sort of fare has always been popular with local concert goers, the uninspired and repetitive nature of the night's music dimmed the initial enthusiasm of the 4,500 in attendance.

music review

Opening act for Rush was the Omaha based band, Kickin'. The group seemed to be enjoying themselves more than the audience was, as they performed their material while going through the motions expected of a heavy metal outfit, i.e. hurling guitars and microphones in the air, falling to their knees, rubbing guitar strings against the wall to produce feedback, etc.

Some of the band's original material showed promise, but as things began to bog down, they fell back on a 10-minute drum solo that finally caught the audience's energy. The novelty soon wore off, but a blitzing finale of guitar mania was almost enough to earn the group an encore... almost.

Headlining the evening was Rush, a three-piece Canadian outfit. Though the veterans of some eight albums (their latest being *Hemispheres*), Rush's song selection saw little variance, and the band members themselves seemed less than enthused. Selections included "Passage To Bangkok," "Farewell to Kings," "Closer To The Heart" and material from their best known work *2112* as well as *Hemispheres*.

Some impressive leads from Alex Lifson, a dry ice fog, and an occasional fire bomb on stage returned the band to their rightful setting and got some fists in the air from the audience, which seemed anxious for some blaze of glory from the band. The identifying highlight of Rush is the high, soaring vocals of Geddy Lee. They provided the most electricity of the evening,

though on such songs as "Closer to The Heart" he noticeably shyed away from the high end of his range.

At some points in the show, the group's sound became almost a drone, and a few bored fans began to leave early. But for the dedicated fans, Rush lengthy set gave them all they came for.

Area concert goers will have a bonanza the next few months:

Lincoln
Jethro Tull, April 21, Bob Devaney Sports Complex.

Omaha
Herbie Hancock, April 3, Music Box.
Aerosmith, April 3, Civic Auditorium.
Atlanta Rhythm Section, April 14, Civic Auditorium.

Roxy Music, April 15, Music Box.
George Carlin, April 20, Music Hall.
Yes, April 24, Civic Auditorium.

Doobie Brothers, April 26, Civic Auditorium.

Diana Ross, May 2, Civic Auditorium.

McGuinn/Clark/Hillman, May 11, Music Hall.

Moody Blues, May 12, Civic Auditorium.
Rod Stewart, June 12, Civic Auditorium.
Eric Clapton, June 18, Civic Auditorium.