

Days of Heaven...

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NAMES OF SOME of the characters are mentioned once or twice if at all. More interesting is the strong physical resemblance of her brother Bill to "the farmer," which makes it hard for the viewers to distinguish these two men.

Not only does this underscore the personal qualities that they are endowed with and destroyed by, but it also stresses how important the men were in Linda's life.

One of the most striking achievements of the photographer was his decision to blend the earthy tones of the harvesters' clothing with the colors of the fields, while both Bill and the farmer stand out wearing white overcoats. This signifies the alienation of the two from their surroundings.

In this case the cinematography enhanced characterization.

Some critics have said that it was hard to care about the people in the movie given the sparse dialogue and the presentation of beautiful scenery. But these elements were to the film's credit since Malick wanted the audience to pay more attention to historical dilemmas rather than individual problems.

The plot is left simple and develops slowly so that the audience can decipher the meanings of the various artistic images on screen.

One image is the farmer's obtrusive house standing alone in the vast fields, suggesting the spiritual isolation of the food-grower turned capitalist.

Also, the series of pictures at the start of the movie juxtaposes the beauty and hope that once was present in the country

and the impoverished conditions of the city.

THE CLIMAX OF the movie occurs in the image of the lovely wheatfields going up in flames, showing us the last days of America's industrialization heaven turning into a nightmarish inferno.

Because the performers have to convey more metaphor than personality, they keep their profiles low while emanating the necessary tension.

Richard Gere as Bill, Sam Shepard as the farmer, and Brooke Adams as the woman who is the battle line for the two men, all do an excellent job of making sure their presence does not interfere with the symbolic functions of their roles.

Also enhancing the caliber of this movie is the editing of Billy Weber. His slicing and arrangement of the footage caught the organic and mechanical rhythms of the agrarian territory.

Praise should also be given to the group of musicians who contributed to the score, which combined epic scoring with American folk-country music.

This film will be remembered as Almendros' and Malick's triumph.

Hopefully we will be seeing more from Malick whose first movie *Badlands* (1973), like its follower was a critical success but a box-office disappointment.

Like Altman, Terrence Malick has captured the process of life and selected certain things from it which seem unimportant. But when these events are articulated through the seemingly crass character of Linda, *Days of Heaven* emerges as a narrative of great historical significance.



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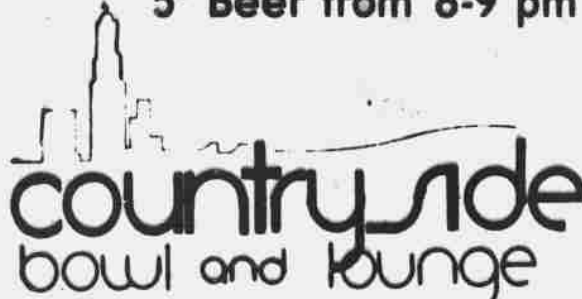
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