

Pickers...

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Mike went on to say, "After a month or two we started to play amateur nights at Earl's. Back then we were fairly unstable, it was fun to play with other amateurs because nobody was very critical."

That summer the Pickers entered the band competition at the Brownsville Bluegrass Festival. They didn't win or come in second, but it helped them find paying jobs, Avey said.

"A few months after Brownsville Zierke left the band and we got our first fiddle player Tim Murphy," John said.

"Murphy kept us pretty traditional," Avey said. "When he was in the band we played mostly Bill Monroe tunes, Stanley Brothers tunes, and traditional fiddle tunes."

"HOWEVER," AVEY SAID, that Tim got the band booked in Omaha and "Once we were playing in Omaha we started to get booked regularly."

"It was a real nice place when we first started to play

there," Heironymus said. "But, after a while the bikers took over the place. It got so bad that the owner required that you check your knife at the door and pick it up on your way out. Then one night this guy threw a knife at someone. It missed its intended victim and flew right by my head and stuck in the wall behind me. Needless to say that was the last time we played there."

In the summer of 1975 the Sandy Creek Pickers had better luck at the bluegrass festivals. In August, they won the band competition at the Rocky Mountain Bluegrass Festival and a week later they won the same honors as well as "Best Overall Show" award at the Brownsville Bluegrass Festival, Mike said.

"Winning at the Rocky Mountain Festival was quite a thrill. Bill Monroe, who is the father of bluegrass music, presented the award to us. We were then joined by the winning fiddler. While we played 'Sally Goodin,' Monroe did the Kentucky Back-Step on stage," he said.

SHORTLY THEREAFTER, the Pickers put out their

first and only album on their own "Sod-Buster" label. Titled "The Sandy Creek Pickers," it contains several traditional bluegrass tunes.

In 1977, Murphy left the band to try his luck in Nashville, John explained. "We played four man for a while. But a few months later, Gary Howe, formerly of the Bluegrass Crusade and The Midwest Ramblers, started to play fiddle with us."

"As soon as Murphy left we broke away from doing only traditional tunes," Heironymus added.

Last spring Howe left the band to join a swing band in Oklahoma. Since then the Pickers have played four man, Avey said.

"We're happy with the sound," he said. "I doubt we'll get another fiddler player, unless we find someone we all like."

John added, "What we do now can't really be called true bluegrass. We do a Stones tune, we do a tune by The Grateful Dead. We do some swing, some newgrass and some bluegrass, all in a bluegrass style."

He added, "You might call it a mixed bag of grass."

'Starting Over'...

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Before the movie takes a turn for the worse, he gives the most-sensitive performance of his career. It is easy for almost anyone to identify with him as he looks sardonically into the faces of his brother and sister-in-law, who tell him with all pop-psychology certainty that ending his marriage and looking for a new job and another place to live can be "a very exciting learning experience."

Phil's relatives, like his ex-wife, brilliantly represent the increasing number of people who are becoming mere products of the "learn to cope with a new life" syndrome.

While listening to Bergen's three songs (which were written for her role by Marvin Hamlisch), one cannot help but feel embarrassed for the people who were mindlessly drawn into the wasteland of inane pseudo-feminism, which, in reality, has nothing to do with the goals set forth by dedicated feminists.

But halfway through the story, the movie starts to disintegrate as the director and writer abandon sharp social commentary for popular romance.

AFTER THE DIVORCE is finalized, Phil meets a nursery school teacher named Marilyn. Jill Clayburgh plays the part with all the inane neurosis that became the trademark for Lucille Ball's television

audience is expected to laugh at Marilyn when she is hostile to Phil (before she knows him) when he abruptly approaches her on the street at night on their way to a blind dinner date.

After she gets to know Phil and has sex

Marilyn is also characterized as childish with him the first time, she is made to look silly as she reproaches him for leaving her in the middle of the night.

for not wanting pictures taken of her while showering and for being angry when Phil refers to her while on the phone with his ex-wife as "just a friend."

When Marilyn breaks off with Phil, she is won back and convinced to move in with him after he submerges her three times in a pool of water in a dunking booth at the school carnival that she had invited him to before they broke up.

THINGS GO well for the couple until Jessie decides she wants Phil back. Although she does not fetch him back right away with her see-through blouse and new song "Better Than Ever," Phil eventually decides to dump Marilyn for his earlier love.

Following a symmetrically executed roll-in-the-hay that is accompanied by another of Jessie's songs, and a trip to the grocery store where Phil responds indignantly to buying a certain brand of coffee, the briefly reconciled twosome decides that Marilyn is really the right one for Phil.

But when he goes back to her, he finds that she's going out with a basketball player. She tells him never to see her again. But he gets her in the end anyway and, unfortunately, that seems to be what the movie was really concerned about.

THE FILM IS definitely not up to par with Pakula's other works, such as *Klute*, *The Sterile Cuckoo*, *All The President's Men*, and *Comes a Horseman*. Those works had a better blending of tones, which this movie lacks, given its promising theme

that disintegrates into sit-com romance, the stark cinematography of Ingmar Bergman's frequent collaborator Sven Nykvist and the bubblegum score throughout the picture.

But if there is one quality this latest film shares with the others, it is the director's ambivalent attitude towards strong female characters whose initial display of independence ends in submission to the male lead's wishes. Thus, we saw Liza Minnelli's boyfriend walking her to the bus to go home upon his advice in *The Sterile Cuckoo*. In *Klute*, Jane Fonda's Bree ends

up finding security in cohabitation with the hero detective who saves her life. And in Fonda's other movie for Pakula, she again pays the price of her individualism in order to live with a man who seems to offer more happiness than living alone would.

By now, I know that my comments about sexism in movies seem redundant, but that is because the film industry consistently offers audiences a view of men and women that is redundant, and sadly, *Starting Over*, is not an exception.

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