

Arts & Entertainment

'Teachers' makes gold star effort

United Artists describes "Teachers" as an irreverent but sensitive comedy. The two concepts are difficult to imagine together, but "Teachers" does make a gold star effort and earns the proverbial apple for a moderate success.

For the hordes of teen-agers flocking to a high-school film, there are enough semi-crude jokes, pranks and laughs on the authority figures to make the movie at least as entertaining as "Welcome Back Kotter's" best.

For adults who will flock to anything with Nick Nolte and the television viewers who want to see more of Judd Hirsch, there's enough of Nolte's he-man charisma and Hirsch's always-sensitive acting to please the most critical bunch.

Movie Review

On that front, "Teachers" is at its best. Nolte is the central figure, a good but slowly burning out teacher who wants to do what's right. He wants to teach his class about life, even if it has a tendency to stray away from his social studies textbooks.

Hirsch is Nolte's friend and the vice principal of John F. Kennedy High School. The two clash when a former student, now a lawyer (JoBeth Williams), presses the school for background on why a former student graduated without learning to read. That student is using the school and the school system.

Hirsch and the rest of the public-school brass want to suppress the depositions of the student's teachers, while Nolte battles with the decision to tell all and risk the job or tell nothing and risk his dignity.

Between the case, Nolte and Williams struggle through a relationship spawned by her old crush on him, and Nolte struggles to get through to a school-bad-luck story played by Ralph Macchio from "The Karate Kid."

"Teachers" has most of the elements that could stand alone in many films —



Photos Courtesy of United Artists



"Teachers:" Irreverent and sensitive?

love, a troubled but good kid, a betrayal, not to mention the various kinks of the JFK teaching staff — one of whom sits in the back of class and nods off to sleep behind the daily paper, and another who specializes in impregnating the junior class.

It also has an annoying tendency to depend on pseudo-soliloquies to get its points across. Each of the main characters has his or her own spotlight at least once to deliver some message of pure intent. But that keeps the film from becoming a cinematic "Kotter" as the words speak of real, common problems.

Still, the messages come off so much better when two people are talking to each other.

It's that message that should keep "Teachers" high on the box-office lists for a few weeks. As was its intent, the film shows the troubles everyday people face in big city public schools and the various pitfalls in almost every option available to them. Thankfully, it doesn't say there is no hope. But then, just as thankfully, it also doesn't scream that a few good men and women can change the whole scene.

It does encourage its audience, and maybe a few teachers somewhere, that, since the crux of the problem is really out of the individual's hands, a success can equal a hundred failures...and those are pretty good odds in the big city.

Producer Aaron Russo said the film's goal was to be funny and real.

"We didn't want to do an exploitation film," he said. "We wanted to make a film that gets into the educational system as it really is and deals with it in an intelligent matter."

The effect of the intelligence and sensitivity is kind of like a high school educational film. The kind that they really should show when they ask, "What's life like in good old JFK?"

That would have gotten boring and annoying on its own, but laughs here and there from soap alumni Richard Mulligan (who plays a semi-insane man who masquerades as a substitute history teacher) and Allen Garfield (an easily intimidated teacher who is bitten and robbed by one of the less-desireable students), as well as Nolte's Eddie Murphy inspired wit when the serious message becomes easier to swallow.

"Teachers" is by far the best film of Russo's short career, which includes "The Rose" and "Trading Places." That's because the distinguished cast reminds you that this is not to be taken lightly. After Hirsch and Nolte, Macchio and Williams ensure themselves of more roles, if not critical acclaim, with strong adaptable performances.

Macchio, 23, will have the distinction of becoming a teen-age heart throb as a wimp in one film and a heavy in the other. He's still not the nightmarish teen-age hoodlum you might expect, but there's enough bitterness in the role to make it stand far away from "The Karate Kid." Williams, who has appeared in two television series — "The Day After" and "Adam" — since "Poltergeist," also may get overlooked in her second multi-name film. The last was "The Big Chill."

Academy Award winner Lee Grant, Mulligan, Royal Dano and Garfield are impressive in small roles. The bland commercial-metal soundtrack with .38 Special, ZZ Top, Night Ranger, Bob Seger and Freddie Mercury of Queen is rarely forced upon the audience. Strange they couldn't find better music, but even Queen can't tarnish this excellent film. "Teachers" opens tonight at the Douglas Three Theatre.

Movie provides glimpse of '30s romance, racism

Review by Roger Quiring
Daily Nebraskan Staff Writer

The setting is Waxahachie, Texas, circa 1935. The movie is "Places In The Heart." The movie reviewed at Sheldon last Saturday night for those lucky enough to have received passes from UPC. For those not so fortunate, the movie opens tonight at the Plaza Theater. See it.

The movie is well done. The themes of death, romance, racism and hard work center around the Spaulding family. Less than five minutes into the flick, Sheriff Spaulding, acted by Ray Baker, is casually, though

accidentally, shot. The loss of the head of the Spaulding household provides the impetus for the development of Edna Spaulding, played by Sally Field.

Field's acting is flawless as she transforms from wife to widow to a fiercely independent individual. Her struggles to fulfill the role of parent and to keep the bank from foreclosing on the family farm are starkly realistic. The struggle entails adding John Malkovitch as Mr. Will to her household. Malkovitch portrays a bitter, totally blind World War I veteran. His acting is great.

The movie also is about racism. The portrayal hurts. It provides an accurate picture of the effects of prejudice. Danny Glover is Moze, a black-transient field worker

who becomes part of the Spaulding household. His human decency sharply contrasts with the social context of the times.

A theme of romance and love is presented in the person of Ed Harris. Wayne Loma acts the role of Ed Harris. He commits adultery with his best friend's wife, somewhat of a poor choice in a small town. The rewinning of his own wife provides a touching view of the powers of love and forgiveness. The love found within the extended Spaulding household also presents a powerful view of the family.

The movie is worth the money. Last weekend's audience loved it. Take a friend and see if you will.

Service-oriented society thrives on annoying breakdowns

"Everything put together falls apart."
— Howard Cooper, 1974.

Fixing things. Always easier said than done. Lately it seems my life is filled with

Billy Shaffer

the act of repair. The curtains that fell down last night, a friend's muffler needed a coat hanger, a bicycle flat, a broken relationship. A little glue, a fresh coat of

paint, maybe a shoulder to lean on.

Planned obsolescence will probably be the downfall of Western civilization. No one needs to tell us that things don't last as long as they used to, whether it's an oil filter, a book binding or a marriage. Everything is wearing out at a rapid rate. Entropy.

Undoubtedly, the trend in the United States toward a service-oriented society nurtures the progression of breakdowns and breakups. People's lives are preoccupied with getting things patched up. Lawyers, mechanics and computer repair-

men are our most indispensable commodity.

"Honey, I think the microwave is on the fritz again."

"We're sorry but our computer is down today."

"Elevator temporarily out of service. Use the stairs. Have a nice day."

The sound of things falling apart is becoming an increasing din. The American economic spirit of competition is supposed to insure that the best product is rewarded with public demand. It takes only a quick glance at a Popeil Pocket fisherman to know that smart marketing

creates its own audience.

Andy Warhol is a smart guy. He's taken the idea of commercialism, turned it into "art," recommercialized it, and through repackaging, came out with a product that's new and palatable.

Since I was a kid, I've used a Campbell's soup can to hold my pens and pencils. Thanks to Andy's genius of commerce, it is now a "pop art" container.

This is an instant, microwaved, freeze dried, satellite, computerized world we live in. Love it or leave it — or call someone to get it fixed.