

'Mona Lisa' action without glamour



Courtesy of Island Pictures

Cathy Tyson and Bob Hoskins in "Mona Lisa."

Review by Stew Magnuson
Staff Reporter

"Mona Lisa"

"The British could never make a 'Miami Vice,' " an English TV-movie critic once said. British filmmakers are obsessed with realism. The more popu-

seven years after taking the rap for his buddy Mortwell, played by Britain's other "everyman" actor, Michael Caine. Mortwell, in the past seven years, had become London's head pimp and porn-broker. To help George out, he gets him a job driving around Simone, the tall, black and beautiful prostitute who services rich customers in posh hotels.

Movie Review

lar soap opera in England is "Coronation Street" where all the characters are plain and work in factories or cafes. No, Joan Collins could never find the glamorous role of Alexis in her native country. The British public would much rather see themselves on TV than what they would like to be.

This obsession for realism accounts for the popularity of British actor Bob Hoskins. He's short, dumpy and just plain ugly. He's the perfect "everyman" actor, and by American standards he's the worst possible romantic lead. But in "Mona Lisa" he's just that. The "everyman" lover.

"Mona Lisa" is the story of George, the ex-con, coming out of prison after

The interplay between Simone (Cathy Tyson) and George is often humorous, but starts to get serious when Simone asks him to track down a friend of hers from the streets, a 15-year-old prostitute named Cathy. While Simone plies her trade with her wealthy customers, George searches London's seedy peep shows and warehouses for Cathy. George is shocked by what he sees. Although he's an ex-con and driver for a prostitute, he still has a daughter the age of the young girls he sees kept in slavery by the pimps. George slowly discovers just how deeply his friend Mortwell is involved in London's prostitution rings. Meanwhile, his love and devotion for Simone grows, although it is never consummated.

In one scene, Simone and George are riding in an elevator, when Simone's former pimp attacks them to scare

Simone away from her search for Cathy. He comes at them with a knife and slashes George. As the elevator slowly descends, the angry pimp threatens them every foot down the shaft waving the flashy knife. This is definitely one of the most terrifying scenes in recent film history and brings back memories of Hitchcock with its quick editing.

Director and co-writer Neil Jordan was an established writer before turning to film. His keen sense of characterization, story and dialogue is what makes this film powerful and keeps the viewer wrapped up in the story.

Eventually Simone and George find Cathy. Her rescue takes up the rest of the movie. Whether "Mona Lisa" has the typical American happy ending is up to the individual viewer. But remember, the Britisher's obsession with realism.

"Mona Lisa" is a great film and worth seeing.

"Mona Lisa" shows at the Sheldon Film Theatre at 7 and 9:15 p.m. Thursday through Saturday nights with a Saturday matinee at 3 p.m. Sunday screenings are 3, 5:15, 7:30 and 9:45 p.m.

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Black theater company to be at Kimball

"Ceremonies in Dark Old Men" will be performed by the Negro Ensemble Company in Kimball Hall at 8 p.m. next Tuesday, as part of the UNL Performance Series.

The play, by Lonne Elder III, is a gripping family drama set in Harlem during World War II. It tells the story of former vaudeville dancer Russell Parker, who, after the death of his wife, idly sits by and watches his children drift into a life of crime and spiral of tragedy.

When the play was first staged in 1969, its unique blend of humor and pathos was compared to works by the great Irish dramatist Sean O'Casey.

"Ceremonies in Dark Old Men" has enjoyed several revivals since its opening in 1969, and was recreated for broadcast in 1974 on ABC television.

The Negro Ensemble Company has produced more than 200 new plays in its 20-year history, appearing both on and off Broadway and at international festivals throughout the world. Among plays produced by the Company have been "Home," "The River Niger" and "A Soldier's Play," which became the Academy Award-nominated film "A Soldier's Story."

An informal pre-performance talk will be hosted by Kit Voorhees at 7:15 p.m. Tuesday in Westbrook Music Building 119. Members of the Negro Ensemble Company may be present for part of the talk.

A few tickets remain for the presentation. Tickets are \$13 and \$9 for the general public and half-price for UNL students.