

Director Altman hits jackpot with 'Fortune'

BY SAM MCKEWIN
Senior editor

There is nobody in the film business better at taking his time than Robert Altman. He's 74 years old, and he's going to take his time. He always has, and, until he keels over, he always will. Even his death will probably be lengthy.

Understand that, in his new film "Cookie's Fortune," there are few events that transpire. For most directors, this film would have included the ridiculous, cliched scenes because the events themselves wouldn't have lasted for more than 30 minutes. It's easy to see one, even a quality director, saying: "Is that all that happens? Better put in a court scene."

I say court scene because "Cookie's Fortune" involves a murder. A suicide, actually. A suicide that's made up to be a murder for reasons only one character (the one who made it up) could possibly explain, which she never really does, which we really don't care about because she's nuts anyway. That, in a nutshell, is the plot of "Cookie's Fortune." The rest is just genteel Southern scenery.

And oh, what a scenery Holly Springs, Miss., turns out to be. Altman weaves a colorful tale of catfish, Scrabble games, church plays and true love together like only he can, probably because he's the only one who would want to do a film such as this.

"Cookie's Fortune" is the story of an old Southern lady Cookie (Patricia Neal), the one who, for the most amiable of reasons, decides to end her life. She says goodbye to her best friend Willis (Charles S. Dutton), who also tends her house, and shoots herself with the gun her dead husband owned when he leaves.

Cookie has two nieces, Camille

(Glenn Close) and Cora (Julianne Moore), who happen upon her body first. It's the super-pretentious Camille who covers up the suicide and eats — yes, eats — the suicide note, thereby convincing her sister, who's the dimmest of the dim, that it was murder.

Willis, played honorably by Dutton, is fingered for the murder. We know he's going to be let go eventually; hell, the cops know it, too. They don't even lock the cell door. One cop (Ned Beatty) is positive of Willis' innocence. His reasoning: "I've fished with him."

So goes this meandering wonder, which includes the ever-fetching Liv Tyler as Cora's daughter, Emma, and Chris O'Donnell, a young cop smitten with her. On the periphery are humorous turns by Lyle Lovett as a catfish shack owner and Courtney B. Vance as a state investigator for the crime.

The joy isn't what happens next but what happens within the scene. The Southern charm oozes out time and again in the conversation about catfish enchiladas to the right way to take coffee (two shots of Wild Turkey preferred) to a hidden philosophy about life itself.

It's funny how Altman sneaks that in there without you knowing it. But it's there in the way Camille domineers over Cora and how she pays for it at the end; how loyalty counts, and how what really matters is what person is, not some of the things they do.

Altman's always done it that way. His movies are always a little funny, and it's always a little surprising how easy he sucks you in to a relatively innocuous yarn. He's an easy-going director — he lingers on departing cars, he keeps the camera set in one place instead of following characters into a room.

But he knows when to shoot a close-up and utilize his actors. Close

Film Review

The Facts

Title: "Cookie's Fortune"
Stars: Glenn Close, Charles S. Dutton, Julianne Moore, Liv Tyler, Chris O'Donnell
Director: Robert Altman
Rating: PG-13 (violence)
Grade: A
Five Words: "Cookie's Fortune" pleasure to watch

is so good here she's unrecognizable. Tyler's perfect as the cute but defiant Emma. Moore nails the dim-bulb role. Only O'Donnell is average.

"Cookie's Fortune" isn't pulse-pounding entertainment, but it is a good time and one of Altman's best films. Pleasure is in the little things in life and God is in the details — one part of film making Altman has mastered to perfection. Taking one's time has its rewards.

Lied Center to showcase Ellington retrospective

DUKE from page 12

Baker said Ellington understood that there was a fluidity in music and life, and a piece should not be brought to closure.

"The recorded version is only one version of a piece."

In addition to the music, pre-performance talks begin in the Lied's Steinhart Room at 55 and 30 minutes before showtime. Baker said the talks will consist of a 15-minute overview of Ellington's career, followed by audience questions.

"I don't presuppose any particular range of knowledge on the part of the audience," he said. "Sometimes a single audience question will open up a whole new avenue of thought."

The performance itself is nearly

two hours of compositions culled from Ellington's entire career. Baker said whittling a man's entire career down to a two-hour show takes "forever."

The show will include "Drop Me Off in Harlem," one of his first hits, selections from his score for the film "Anatomy of a Murder" and selections from his "Queen Suite," a personal gift to Queen Elizabeth II that wasn't released until two years after his death.

Baker said the show, which starts at 8 p.m., will combine the familiar with the obscure.

"I try to play music that's as comfortable as old bedroom slippers, then play something people have overlooked."

With Ellington's prolific output, there should be a wealth of material in both categories.

Get stuffed at

Old Chicago's

All You Can Eat
BUFFET!
only

\$5.29

11:30 am to 1:30pm
Monday - Friday

Includes
Pizza, Pasta, Soda, Coffee & Tea

OLD CHICAGO

826 P Street
477-2277

LSAT

Kaplan students get into Law School. Case closed.

9 out of 10 Kaplan LSAT students go to one of their top 3 school choices.

—1997 Bruskin-Golding Research Study of students at the top 50 law schools

Sign up now for May 1 class start.

Call today to enroll!

KAPLAN

1-800-KAP-TEST

www.kaplan.com = AOL keyword: kaplan

*LSAT is a registered trademark of the Law School Admission Council.

1999 Woodmen Accident and Life Company

FAULKNER

Free and open to the public

Lecture

Co-sponsored by the UNL College of Business Administration



Richard Kovacevich

President and CEO of Wells Fargo & Company

Thursday April 22, 1999
10:30am
Nebraska Student Union Auditorium
14th & R Streets
Lincoln, NE

"Banking is Dead"
Long Live Financial Services™

Congratulations Chad M. Spohn

Chad M. Spohn is a graduating senior in Agricultural Sciences and has chosen a career at Archer Daniels Midland Company in commodities trading.

ADM is one of the largest grain and food processing companies in the world. Based in Decatur, IL, ADM is continually expanding throughout the United States as well as in China, Europe, Mexico and South America.

Chad found out about ADM's career opportunities from career services on campus and scheduled an interview with ADM After completing a two-stage interview process, Chad was offered a position as a commodities trader. In May, he will begin a 4-6 month hands-on training program that will expose him to all aspects of ADM and commodities trading.

ADM is looking forward to having Chad join our team.



402-472-2588
402-472-1761 (FAX)
dn@unl.edu
34 Nebraska Union
P.O. Box 880448
Lincoln, NE 68588-0448

CLASSIFIEDS

\$5.00/15 words
\$3.50/15 words (students)
\$0.15 each additional word
\$0.75 billing charge
\$0.75/line headline
Deadline: 3 p.m. weekday prior

200s For sale

205 Bicycles For Sale

Full suspension demo bikes on sale! Specialized ground control, 19 inch, \$1000. Klein Mantra Com med, \$1500. Cycle Works, 475-2453. 27th and Vine.

216 Computers For Sale

Micron Laptop with accessories, 1 year old. Graduating don't need. \$1200 OBO, evenings local call 786-5582.

230 Jewelry For Sale

Engagement and wedding ring set. Pear cut, large 1/3 Ct, six round brilliant diamond off-set. Appraised at \$1850 asking \$900 OBO. 475-2186, leave message.

Ladies diamond ring, 1.02 karats/gold, round in shape, near colorless, 1 year old. Call 466-0134.

240 Misc. For Sale

Cap and gown for Doctor of Philosophy for sale. In perfect condition. Call 488-7130.

265 Stereos/TVs For Sale

Turntables, 2 Gemini XL DD50 IV, Stanton needles; Numark DM1000X mixer; Odyssey case fitted for equipment, \$650, like new. Valued at \$900. 476-0806.

290 Vehicles For Sale

'94 Ford Mustang GT. Black w/black leather interior, cassette, CD. \$12,000/OBO, 475-7924.

'97 FORD Escort, 23k mi, \$8,000; '95 GEO Metro, 32k mi; \$4,500. Must sell! 436-7276.

'92 Mercury Topaz, white with tinted windows, 5-speed, Pioneer tuner/CD player, amplifier, and subwoofer, excellent condition, \$3,000. 438-3292.

1994 Honda Civic EX. 2 door, 5 speed, low mileage, loaded \$9700 or best offer. Call 488-6029.

Read the Daily Nebraskan at
dailyneb.com

290 Vehicles For Sale

Classic '71 VW Van

In good condition; single owner since '72; rebuilt engine. 476-8841.

300s Services

300 Adoption

Adoption

Happy, secure couple awaits newborn to show them the marvel of life. In return we will provide loads of love, laughter, and opportunity. Expenses paid. Greg and Diane, 1-800-466-3864.

Classified Advertising

402-472-2588
402-472-1761 (FAX)
dn@unl.edu

Daily Nebraskan
34 Nebraska Union
Lincoln, NE 68588-0448