

A Mark of Excellence

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SIX DANCE LESSONS IN SIX WEEKS

Cheryl

The basic story of this play is friendship, and how strangely it can sometimes form. Rue McClanahan stars as a Lily Harrison, a 68 year old retiree in Florida; and Mark as Michael Minetti, a dance instructor from a company that sends people to you, rather than going in to a studio. Lily is Michael's first pupil, and from there, it gets quite interesting...

"Bei mir, bist du Schoen, please let me explain..." - the First Lesson

The first scene opens with Lily answering the door to the irascible Michael, a character of great wit, bad jokes and a worse temper. The two take to each other like oil to water, and before you know it, he screams at her, calling her a "tight-

assed old bitty!" Oops! He apologizes and convinces her not to get him fired with a wild yarn about a sick wife working at the "Seminole Cat Dog Bird and Snake hospital." You can't make that up! Things calm down, and the lesson begins. Ahh, the beloved swing, fabulously described and fabulously danced.

It DEFINITELY Takes Two to Tango - the Second Lesson

Seminole Cat Dog Bird and Snake Hospital? Okay, maybe you can make it up! Lily has done a bit of sleuthing and finds Michael lied



about having a wife to save his job. The war of words continues, round two! Eventually things calm down, they have a heart to heart conversation where he admits he is gay, and the tango lesson begins. Michael tells the story of the tango with all the zeal and passion of the dance, using a seductive Latin voice, and then just - stops - quite hilarious! Poor Lily! She gets

a lot of wonderful zingers in - from calling his outfit "Zorro" to mouthing off at the nosy neighbor that lives downstairs. But by the end of the lesson, everything is fine and they end on a positive note.

Waltzing In and Out of Their Lives - the Third Lesson

The doorbell rings, and Lily answers in a beautiful gown, chosen specially for today's lesson: the Waltz. Michael has also, showing up in a tuxedo. They begin their lesson, but like any match made in Hell, the dance becomes a dance of insults. It turns out that Lily, like Michael, has an imaginary spouse! Uh-oh! The arguing begins anew, but somehow, they come together and start to become friends, while dancing the Waltz. From here, the play evolves musically, spanning from older music to more the more freestyle Beach Boys. The two evolve as well, making it through their strong personalities to become great friends, and it's really quite beautiful.

The story makes you look at

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Notes From the Editor

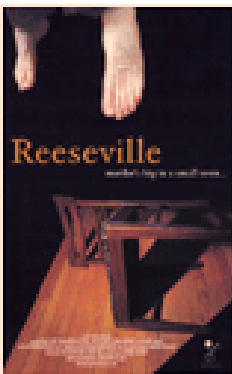
'And now, for something completely different'. There is a set of websites I would like to draw your attention to: GreaterGood.com ->left sidebar under 'good works'

Simply by clicking on the appropriate buttons, you can help fund free mammograms, feed

the hungry, provide health-care for children, help save the rainforest, or provide food for an animal in a shelter or sanctuary. The one stipulation is you may only click each button once a day. There's nothing to buy, though if you are in a shopping mood, there is an online store, Gear that Gives.

A portion of the money spent there goes toward helping these causes. When you shop at certain stores through GreaterGood.com, up to 15% of every purchase automatically goes to the cause you have selected, with no extra cost to you.

Future Watch



In addition to the world premiere screening at the Cinquest Film Festival, 27 Feb-7 March, 'Welcome to

Reeseville' has had another distributor screening on Tuesday, 11 March 2003, at Lantana in Santa Monica

CA. From the programme guide for the festival: 'Enter Zeek (played to perfection by Mark Hamill), the town coroner and amateur sleuth, who notices something amiss: several clues leading to the suspicion that this seemingly obvious suicide could very well be murder.' Check out the website, welcomeutoreeseville.com, watch the trailers, and vote for your favourite! Will it be one

that Mark's character is in, or one where you just hear his voice?



Latest update on 'The Wrong Coast' is that it is now scheduled to air in October.

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how people can come together, and truly be there for each other, and how wonderful that can be. Both Lily and Mark are completely three dimensional: funny and smart without being smarmy; touching without being sappy. The insults and the way they went back and forth were extremely well-written and well delivered, and most of the audience had to be sore from laughter when they left! And the end of the play was so beautiful that shares in the Kleenex company had to have soared after I saw it five

times! It's just a wonderful play. How they keep the energy up for the one and one-half hours they're onstage is just amazing -- I don't see how they're able to be so great twice a day! But they are. And they do. Maybe I'm a bit jaded as being a fan of Mark Hamill's, but this is perhaps the finest thing I've seen him in.

Don't believe what I say? Listen to the audience: "I danced in my seat and laughed all the way through!" -- some chick after the play.

"She's really good" - overheard from one man. "So is he" -- his friend.

"Yeah, I come here every Thursday night and this play is better than most that I've seen." -- some lady. --- and lots of others that I can't remember!



Blast From the Past

Nadia Markalova

Fall of the Eagles

(War drama, 1989)

I find it impossible to review this film without a word about the director. Jesus Franco was a Spanish Ed Wood. He had a few dozen pseudonyms and several professions like writer, cinematographer, actor, composer, editor, producer and more. He made over 180 movies, mostly monster horror or erotic, or even both! For instance, what would you expect from a movie called "*Virgin Among the Living Dead*", "*White Cannibal Queen*", "*Kiss Me Killer*", "*Erotic Kill*", "*The Erotic Rites of Frankenstein*", or "*Lesbian Vampires*"? You get the idea.

Well, "*Fall of the Eagles*" is neither horror, nor erotic. It's quite a well done World War Two drama.



The story begins in Berlin just before the war. We see the house of a rich German banker (Christopher Lee) and his wonderful daughter Lillian (Alexandra Ehrlich). And it seems that everyone is in love with her, including Peter Froehlich (Mark Hamill). But she falls for a young composer Karl (Ramon Estevez). The problem is... they both go to the war to get killed, one after another. Lillian starts singing for the wounded soldiers at hospitals and ends up singing in a night club for the officers. Then she even becomes a soldier too, and goes to the war. But when she returns home,



she finds it ruined and her brilliant, one time rich, father walking around the streets, begging for food. But Lillian finds strength to go on and even work at a night club singing exactly the same songs for American soldiers. Her father, her stubborn father, refuses to recognize his daughter, which he used to be so proud of, in that barely dressed lady on a stage, singing English for the Americans. He doesn't realize she is doing it for him, to get him fed.

Anyway, that's the story and this is the critic. First of all I found that lady pretty strange. She loves Karl, but when he is gone to the war, she goes to bed with Peter, just the same. She is ready to sleep with anyone out of patriotism (well, here is the logic: *he is going to the war, maybe he'll die, so why not to comfort him for the last time?* Why she isn't sleeping with every German soldier then, I wonder). Yes, about her singing which everyone is amazed at in the movie... Well, it's rather dull. I don't know, maybe Mr. Franco knew about the culture of pre-war Germany better of course, but I wouldn't stay to the end of any song, which is sung with this lack of enthusiasm. I almost fell asleep every time she started singing. What kind of a cabaret is

that! Despite all that she is brave to rebel against her powerful father and go through the war. I have to say that almost every character in this film is quite controversial. Karl understands the nature of the war and is afraid to fight, but gets drafted and killed; the girl's father, played by Christopher Lee, has a Jewish friend and so on. The only straight forward character is the one played by Mark. He is just in love with the girl. She even fulfils one of his dreams and becomes his wife (out of mercy, of course). Next second he dies.



Well, I'm a Mark Hamill fan since the Iron Curtain fell and we finally, finally were able to see Star Wars for the first time (on pirate videos, mind you, in some half-legal screening room with a TV set and a video). And last year I was very much surprised to find this title listed in his filmography on IMDB. I thought I knew every title he made an appearance in. I never heard him talking about this movie in any interview that I read or watched. So, I thought that maybe this was something he couldn't be particularly proud of, especially after I found all that information about the director. I'm happy I was wrong. This is a well done film with brilliant cast (except Miss Ehrlich) and some nice scenes. It's worth watching, really.



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The Last Word...

A Mark of Excellence is the quarterly newsletter of the **International Mark Hamill Fan Club**. Yearly dues are \$15 US, and include 4 consecutive issues of the newsletter, a membership card, access to the fan club area on the website, and special mailings as appropriate.

Submissions, including photos or original artwork, are welcomed; final editing is the discretion of the editor. If you wish your photo or artwork returned please enclose a sase, and attach your name/address on the back of your submission.

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