

2C THE WICHITA EAGLE Tuesday, October 17, 1995

ENTERTAINMENT
Bunuel's once-erotic 'Belle de jour' is dated and stodgy

'Belle de Jour' (R) **, at Cinemas East

By Bob Curtright
The Wichita Eagle

The trouble with classics is that they are sometimes such a product of their time that they don't hold up. To be sure, they are still important for the milestones they reached or the trends they inspired but they, themselves, are sadly dated.
That's the case with Luis Bunuel's 1967 story of an unsatisfied young bride who moonlights — or, rather, daylights — as a prostitute in a classy Parisian brothel while her handsome but boring doctor-husband is at work.
It's a sophisticated story of strange desires and brutal fantasies competing with hypocritical propriety behind the eyes of an elegant, privileged woman who would seem to have everything. It is set in a cinema-masochist dance where women are lured by men who adore them and turned up by men who abuse them.
But it has lost its power to shock or enlighten — or even merely titillate. It's frumpy, almost matronly these days. It's strangely non-erotic despite the topic.
And it's seriously misrated as an R. PG-13 would be more appropriate because there's nothing graphic, only

REVIEW

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implied adult themes.
The gorgeous Catherine Deneuve plays the wandering newwyed, whose curiosity about herself and her dark side drives her to find extramarital answers outside her marriage. She is lusty but naive, she knows she isn't fulfilled but she doesn't know what she wants.
She has, for example, disturbing dreams about her husband (Michel Piccoli) taking her into the country, tying her up, setting her for some imagined slight and then letting the two coaches have their way with her while he haughtily watches.
She smiles at the wicked thoughts but in actuality, her gentle husband is polite to the point of distant, they even sleep in twin beds.
At the brothel, where she takes Belle as a professional name to protect her privacy, she tries to learn from the supposed masters of sensu-

ality, the veterans who cater to high-power clients. These women aren't street whores, they are gracious courtesans.
Still, the newwyed, despite her curiosity, has surprising trouble giving in to the games that are required. She is amazed, even aloof. Not until she finds herself falling for a preening, foppish, dangerous hit man (Jean Sorel) does she find that she is caught irrevocably.
She can no longer just walk away and back into her marriage. She is now a full-fledged player in an exceedingly dangerous game.
Bunuel's film seems to find wry comfort in feminist retribution. Even though the bride is willing and during, she ultimately becomes a pawn in a male-dominated game. She makes her bed, so to speak, and must lie in it.

Deneuve, who was one of the world's most beautiful women of the 1960s, is enigmatic to the point of Garboesque blank a number of times in this film. She stares in disbelief and bemusement at what she sees but no hint of emotion crosses the rest of her flawless face. She is such an unflagging ice princess that you sometimes wonder if she's lapsed into a coma.

Note: Nothing graphic; only adult themes and implied sensuality.



Catherine Deneuve is a newwyed who takes a day job in a Parisian brothel because her husband can't satisfy her in Luis Bunuel's 1967 classic.

Bigelow's 'Strange Days' gripping futuristic thriller

'Strange Days' (R) **+, at Cinemas East and Towne West

By Bob Curtright
The Wichita Eagle

Director Kathryn Bigelow certainly knows how to play with the big boys like Ridley Scott ('Blade Runner') and James Cameron ('The Terminator') when she crafts a high-tech rush.

Bigelow, a former painter who cut her directorial teeth on 'Blue Steel' and

'Point Blank' is a gutsy filmmaker who takes a highly visual approach to her work rather than seeking up on as with the softer elements of sympathy, such as character development and emotional motivation.

She plunges right in from the very opening moment to give us lots of slam-bang action, grabbing us by the eyeballs and forcing us to participate in a deadly armed robbery and police chase — as seen up-close-and-personal through the eyes of one of the killers.

She forces us to move beyond voyeurism and to become one with the perpetrator. It's thrilling and unsettling at the same time and it has an unexpected kick of an ending (not to mention an effective sound track you can feel as well as hear, like an earthquake rumbling through your brain).

And that's only the foreplay for a stunning, breathtaking, provocative futuristic tale about black market trafficking in such stolen experiences.

It's more than virtual reality, according to Bigelow and screenwriter James Cameron and Jay Cocke. It's sights, sounds, smells, tastes and feelings recorded during real-life experiences and played back via miniaturized CD player and a headset — by others craving those experiences without the mess or fuss — or the realities of pain and death.

Forget movies, television, 3-D and holograms: this is the new, and apparently illegal, stimulus of Bigelow's brave new world.

That's the world inhabited by Lenny Nero (Kiefer Sutherland), a former cop turned street hustler who buys the sex and mind-blowing experiences of the desperate and poor and sells them to the rich, bored and jaded. It's a new form of prostitution and he is a message pump.

"Have you ever jacked in? Have you ever been wired?" he coos to new prospects. This is not like TV



Angela Bassett as Lacey tries to protect Ralph Fiennes as Lenny, an ex-cop who peddles black market virtual reality experiences, during the madness of the last day of the century.

only better. This is real life, a piece of somebody's life, pure and uncut. It's the forbidden fruit straight from the cerebral cortex. You say it, you even think it and you can have it. I am the Magic Man, the Santa Claus of the subconscious."

Naturally, people quickly find a way to use the technology for ill rather than good and Lenny finds himself — along with ex-priestess Juliette Lewis, best friend Angela Bassett and hoarse-voiced villain Michael Winslow — caught up in a web of murder during the madness of the ultimate New Year's Party on Dec. 31, 1999 in the century and mil-

lennium (and possibly civilization) rush toward an end on the mean streets of Los Angeles.
The only problem is that after such a starting, original and compelling set-up (plus riveting performances), Bigelow delivers only action rather than some greater message or truth.
The big mystery is less revealing or satisfying than the movie deserves.

Note: Rough swearwords, considerable brutal violence, glimpse of nudity, adult themes.

TO DO
Listen in on Octubafest

WHAT: Wichita State University's annual celebration of brass' lowest instruments, in three recitals.

WHEN: WSU Tuba/Euphonium Ensemble recital, 1:30 p.m. today. Faculty Artist Recital by Philip Black, 7:30 p.m. Sunday. WSU student soloists concert, 1:30 p.m. Oct. 26.

WHERE: Wiedemann Recital Hall, WSU campus.

HOW MUCH: Free; 689-3103.
WHAT YOU'LL HEAR: Today's recital will feature the premiere of 'Suite for Tubas,' a three-movement work composed by Kevin Miller, a WSU euphonium and composition major. Other works include Meyer Kupferman's 'Karkagard,' Lenne Niehaus' 'Grand Slam' and 'Timbuktu'; and works by Eugene Vascon, William Hill and John Stevens. On Sunday, Black will play works by Arthur Honegger, Antonio Vivaldi and Stevens, as well as the Sonata for tuba and piano by Paul Hindemith. The Oct. 26 recital will feature works of J.S. Bach, Ferdinand David, Vincent Persichetti and others, performed by WSU students Matthew Koehn, Jeremy McDonald, Kevin Miller and Roy Linkous.

SPECIAL WORK: Today's recital will feature John Stevens' "Power," a piece that was included on the program at the request of the late Meissaine Saudade. Saudade, a WSU junior who was to have played tuba on the recital and to have been featured on Oct. 26, took her own life two weeks ago. "It was a shock," said Black, assistant professor at WSU and principal tubist of the Wichita Symphony Orchestra. He described the 1978 work by Stevens, which has been a regular Octubafest closing number, as "fairly bright and optimistic."

WHY OCTUBAFEST: To try to get all of Black's young players on stage, early in the school year. And, "we're trying to present the community with music for tuba and euphonium to once again defeat the corn-pump stereotype," he said. "They should not think of an elephant or a hippo, but more like a bass singer. We try to have a more vocal approach in our playing."

WHAT'S MISSING: The festival's annual polka event. "There was just too many things happening all at once," Black said. But with a return next fall.

WHY YOU SHOULD COME: "We have serious pieces. We have jazzy-type pieces, and I think it's an eye-opening experience. The saxophony of a tuba and euphonium ensemble, with all the four low voices, is a very beautiful sound. If they've never heard it, now is the time."

— Rhonda Holman



Philip Black, who has played principal tuba with the Wichita Symphony for 10 years, is the driving force behind WSU's Octubafest.

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