

It is waged through the endless corridors, the dungeons and the battlements of the Institute. There isn't a shot without a laugh and, of course, the rights of small boys to play hookey from piano practice are vindicated in the end.

The 5000 Fingers of Dr. T. is directed with obvious gusto by Roy Rowland, impressively mounted (goodness knows what the sets cost), and beautifully photographed in Technicolor by a master cameraman, Frank Planer. Hans Conried makes Dr. T. a truly comic creation, Peter Lind Hayes is the nicest plumber you ever met, and Mary Healy as romantic a young mother as a small boy could wish for. The picture is, in short, the kind of happy, wholesome one which most parents wish their children could see more often. Perhaps, with the holidays coming up fast, someone will be found with sufficient faith in the good taste of ordinary people to give it a fair trial.

THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING

(Stanley Kramer-Columbia)

BECAUSE I grade this a shade lower than the film I have discussed above, I would not have you conclude that this second Stanley Kramer production is less worthy of consideration. The two come from different worlds. The first reflects the extroverted exuberance of a small boy's imagination, *The Member of the Wedding* (director, Fred Zinnemann) explores with delicacy and tenderness the agonies and anguish of a pre-adolescent girl, Frankie Addams (Julie Harris) is a gangling twelve-year-old imprisoned for one long sleepy Southern summer in the wasteland between infancy and youth. She is too young to share the excitements of adolescence—the neighbourhood girls won't make her a member of their club—and too old to find any pleasure in the nursery make-believe of her little cousin John Henry (Brandon de Wilde). She is wildly imaginative, indrawn and morbidly sensitive ("I feel just exactly like somebody has peeled all the skin off me"). And she has no mother. Beyond her own incessant daydreams (her soldier brother is coming home to be married, and Frankie's decision to be "a member of the wedding" touches off the film's emotional climax), the child's only source of comfort is Berenice the Negro cook, a character of great innate dignity and all-embracing compassion.



Julie Harris

The film has certain flaws: the tempo at times matches too closely the sluggish rhythm of the South, the continuity is twice broken sharply, and the script is a little too wordy. But the acting of Julie Harris and Ethel Waters is almost faultless, and the film has an inner integrity which offsets its technical shortcomings. Especially recommended for parents.

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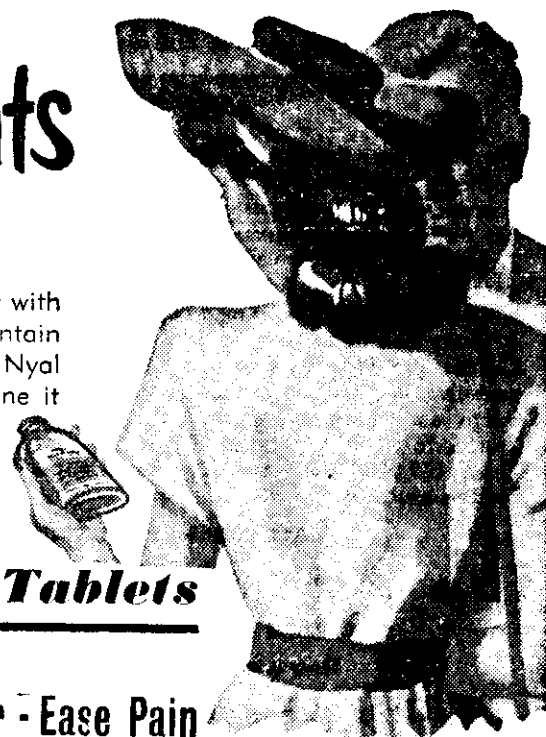
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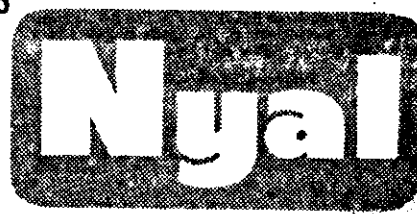
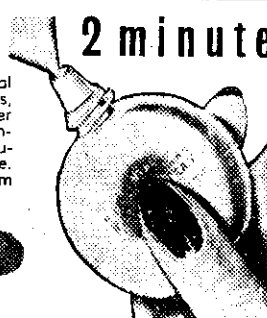
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