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FILM REVIEWS BY JNO.

# Chayefsky's World

## THE BACHELOR PARTY

(Norma Productions-United Artists)

R: 16 and over only

AT the risk of burning bridges over which I might, on second thoughts, be tempted to retreat, I am at this moment ready to assert that no one currently writing for the screen has shown a more assured sense of locality, has more deftly orchestrated the song of his native city, or has examined with more humanity and insight the small vicissitudes and triumphs of its inhabitants than New York's Paddy Chayefsky.

*The Bachelor Party*—in spite of its title and its treatment it's really a tale of husbands and wives, though the wives are (with one exception) there only by implication—is a little better than *Wedding Breakfast*, a little (but only a little) less successful than *Marty* and, to the extent that it copes simultaneously with rather more characters, a little more ambitious than either. It seemed to me, too, more obviously than its predecessors a scriptwriter's *tour de force*, though I'd be ready to admit that that impression may have derived from my own rapt preoccupation with the dialogue which, whether for solo voice or as a kind of complex three-dimensional wedge of rowdy argument, is masterly in its construction and in its illumination of character. There are few screen writers who can pack more meaning into half a sentence—and still leave it at half a sentence—than Chayefsky, and I don't know one who has more effectively communicated his own acute observation of the city-bound American.

The element of environment is important, for Chayefsky is what you might term an ecological chronicler—for him the organism and the environment are dramatically complementary. His New Yorkers—bachelors, taxi-drivers or, as in this case, basic grade office workers—gain or lose stature as they succeed or fail to maintain their dignity as human beings in surroundings, and in the face of pressures, which make that difficult. Most of them gain, for what Chayefsky believes in and celebrates with a searching compassion is the persistence of decency, and I've no doubt the actuaries would support him. Just as most ships come home and most voyages end safely, so most husbands are faithful and most human beings achieve some balance of honourable contentment.

But while Chayefsky is the prime mover and presiding intelligence of *The Bachelor Party* (he is also associate producer), there are other talents engaged. Delbert Mann and Joseph La Shelle (who, respectively, directed and photographed *Marty*) return here to these assignments. Mann, who worked with Chayefsky in TV, and learned there to make the most of slim resources and a small field of view, keeps his players close to the audience, and the camera

## BAROMETER

FINE: "The Bachelor Party."  
 FAIR: "No Down Payment."  
 MAINLY FAIR: "Saddle the Wind."

records with a deceptive artlessness office and apartment, subway and sidewalk, bar and nightclub.

The players, all well cast and all impressive, are as subtly diversified as they are persuasive. As a young husband and prospective father who escapes from his frustrations in a night out with the boys, Don Murray is the nominal star and a more than competent one, but I wouldn't like to single out any member of the party above another. Honours are shared evenly enough by Murray, E. G. Marshall and Jack Warden (who were seen most recently in *Twelve Angry Men*). Larry Blvden, and



DON MURRAY, JACK WARDEN

Philip Abbott (as the nervous bridegroom in whose honour the party is held). In a sense more significant than an R certificate implies, *The Bachelor Party* is adult entertainment. I found it most impressive and commend it to you.

## NO DOWN PAYMENT

(20th Century Fox-CinemaScope)

R: 16 and over only

**L**IKE *The Bachelor Party*, this Jerry Wald production (directed by Martin Ritt) finds its drama in the sub-surface tensions of American urban life. Socially, the stratum is one or two layers higher than that of the Chayefsky piece; the milieu is the pretentious (all-Caucasian) garden suburb of a small town; the protagonists young marrieds who have made some headway in the rat race and hope to make more.

Tony Randall, taking time off from comedy, gives a chilling performance as a salesman who dreams of a big killing on the second-hand car-market and tries to keep the dream alive with closely-spaced shots of alcohol; Pat Hingle, established, decent, not too conforming, is the relatively still centre about which events turn; Cameron Mitchell (each household is inspected in turn in a sort of homogenised *Milk*

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