



Nastassja Kinski in 'Paris, Texas.'



#### PARIS, TEXAS

*Director: Wim Wenders*  
The ill-fated Hammett was neither a very happy nor auspicious American debut for German director Wim Wenders. *Paris Texas*, free from the period and genre limitations of the earlier film, gives Wenders the scope to create a brilliant parable for our times, a movie which has justifiably been awarded the Golden Palm Award at last year's Cannes festival.

*Paris, Texas* takes as its subject the very contemporary issue of the commitment and meaning of relationships within a world that seemingly does so much to threaten such ties. The film's title gives little away and Sam Shepard's spare script has just the right degree of laconic understatement.

Harry Dean Stanton is outstanding as the craggy, beaten-up hero who finds himself drifting back to former ties from a life of isolation in a Texas desert. Having reclaimed his son in Los Angeles, he searches out his wife in Houston and, having reunited mother and the boy, he drifts off into the isolation of a Texas night.

While aspects of *Paris, Texas* catch the very essence of Americana, such as Ry Cooder's taut soundtrack with its discreet

touches of Tex-Mex stylings, Wenders brings a very European sensibility to his subject. It would be difficult to think of a contemporary American director who could carry off the long confrontation scene between Nastassja Kinski and Stanton with such harrowing intensity or obtain such a beautifully gauged performance from Hunter Carson as Stanton's son — light years away in sensitivity from the cute and cloying performances that we get from most Hollywood juveniles.

#### PLACES IN THE HEART

*Director: Robert Benton*

Robert Benton's new film, with its meticulously observed portrait of life in Texas during the Depression, has already won a couple of Academy Awards — one for Benton's script and a predictable Best Actress Award for Sally Field. While not questioning the essential sincerity of Benton's work (the film is based, to some degree, on the director's own childhood memories), *Places in the Heart* leaves one with a curious feeling of dissatisfaction.

Perhaps it is simply that I do not like to be so overtly and obviously manipulated, however worthy may be the social aspirations of the movie. Here is a film that strains for significance and relies far too much on contrivance to make its point.

There is something uncomfortably pat about John Malkovich's blind boarder who undergoes a transformation from "bitter and twisted war veteran" to "caring human being" and this is equally so with Denny Glover's black

sharecropper who turns from a life of petty crime and scrounging to become Sally Field's right hand man. While these stock characters are understandable within the context of what might be termed a latter-day Stanley Kramer movie, the final scene with all the characters, living and dead, assembled together in church, is as puzzling as it is trite.

Like Field's earlier success, *Norma Rae*, *Places in the Heart* does present a "woman's point of view," but whereas Martin Ritt's film was gutsy and hard-hitting, Benton opts for sentimentality and lyrical nostalgia. *Places in the Heart* tends to register as a star vehicle for its leading lady, but, in the final count, what I remember most are the luminescent images of Nestor Almendros.

#### 2010

*Director: Peter Hyams*

*2010* opened in the States at the end of last year, but for well over 12 months, American audiences have been prepared for the film by an enigmatic trailer which simply spelt out the four numerals of the title to the strains of Richard Strauss's *Zarathustra*. Nothing was being given away, and one suspected that the studio realised this film would have a difficult act to top with Kubrick's original *2001*.

The key to the failure of the sequel can be seen reflected in the success of the first film: *2001* made its initial impact partly through its very elusiveness and mystery, which managed to take on a profound poetic and philosophical significance and partly through its deft reflection of the ethos of the late 60s (the film was released in 1968).

Whereas Kubrick dealt in the realms of mystery and imagination, Hyam almost explains his film out of existence. The earlier *2001* obtained more eloquence from the unexpected use of a Johann Strauss waltz or an avant-garde choral work by Ligeti, than its sequel does within its pages and pages of dialogue.

*2010's* plea for Soviet-American co-operation is a commendable stance, although Kubrick's film tackled questions of a more universal and timeless nature. *2010* is, alas, a film that aimed at the stars but otherwise remains doggedly earthbound.

William Dart



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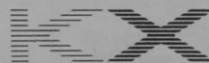
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