

# Alterative cinema alive in Las Vegas

by Daniel W. Duffy

They don't make 'em like they used to—James Dean on the big screen in *Rebel Without A Cause*, the teen angst films to end all. Even though the baby boomers are too concerned with their bonding and sharing to remember what this movie is all about and our identity-less Generation X is content with virtual anonymity, rage and rebellion is alive and well in Midnight Movies, the bastard child of Hollywood.

UNLV film professor Francisco Menendez said, "In the '70s and '80s, Midnight Movies were a right of passage of being a teenager."

"I'd shoot myself if weren't for b-movies," said LaMont

Biscuits, *Tempest* writer.

The Roger Cormans, the Russ Meyers, the Nicholas Rays and the John Waters of this film underground all made or produced films on the fringe of counter-culture and can now be seen each and every weekend in Las Vegas at the Torrey Pines Cinema playing opposite the granddaddy of them all, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

"We're trying to get an alternative cinema going in Las Vegas," said Jerry Blackwell, manager of the Torrey Pines. "All the first run theaters are only bringing in standard Hollywood fare."

"Midnight Movies are cult movies," said Hollywood Rob, film critic for *Tempest*. "They

are the cultural icons of our society. They're almost a chance to relive something, I'm not sure exactly what, but something."

"We just think they're fun," Blackwell said.

Menendez said, "It's a subculture worth visiting and maybe worth studying." An El Salvador native, Menendez' first came in contact with Midnight Movies in San Jose, Calif. while attending a showing of the *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

"People were yelling 'virgin! virgin!' and somebody knocked me in the head with a rock," he said. Seemingly unphased by this freak incident, Menendez is still a strong supporter. "I think Midnight

Movies verge on performance art. It's a unique opportunity to participate with the actors on screen," he said.

A *Clockwork Orange*, *Heavy Metal* and *Pink Floyd: The Wall* are all films that have played the monthly midnight rotation at the Pines.

John Waters' first film *Pink Flamingos* which features America's favorite deceased cross-dresser Divine indulging in a scatological fetish is currently playing, and the original *Night of the Living Dead* and *Flesh Gordon* are forthcoming features. "*Flesh Gordon* is a hoot," said Blackwell. "It's the worst Howard Stern take-off on the old *Flash Gordon*."

"The Torrey Pines not only

offers *Rocky Horror*, but also an alternative Midnight features," said Hollywood Rob. "They need a faster turnover though, like once every two weeks. Play *Casablanca* two weekends, then play *Dr. Strangelove* or *This is Spinal Tap*."

With limited advertising power, Blackwell said the films are playing for one-month periods to allow word-of-mouth to spread around the valley like a subversive plague. "It takes a while to get the word out," Blackwell said.

The price is right for college kids at the Torrey Pines with admission to midnight shows \$3 and \$5 for *Rocky Horror*.

# Lorenzo's Oil massages the heart

by Hollywood Rob

True-to-life stories like that of *Lorenzo's Oil* can be absolutely dreadful. It could have easily been envisioned as a movie of the week featuring the disease of choice, but somehow it transcends that mentality to become one of the most lovingly crafted, technically perfect movies to come along in a long time.

The first thing that really struck me was Nick Nolte. His hair has been dyed black for this movie altering his appearance slightly. This will make the viewer think "Hey, maybe this time he'll be different," but think again because he's up to his same old tricks.

It's time for Nicko to go over the top and beyond overacting his little heart out. He has joined the big league now standing with stilted, overemoting champions like William Shatner. Nolte sports a supposedly Italian (only because they say so) accent for the film. His range of emotions extends from anger to every different variation of the emotion.

The second, and most amazing aspect of this movie is it manages to overcome Nolte's, and to a lesser extent Susan Sarandon's, miscasting in their roles to go on to be a truly remarkable film.

*Lorenzo's Oil* is probably not for the weak stomached.

Anyone who thought the cannibalism scenes in *Alive* were too much should stay away from this film. The sequences depicting the debilitating disease Lorenzo contracts are horrifying.

The story details the lives of the Odone family and their struggle to keep their son Lorenzo alive, despite a rare genetic disease that affects only males. It is a four-year struggle (1983 to 1987) for the family. The disease comes suddenly and usually kills the afflicted in two years or less.

Lorenzo is portrayed by Zack O' Malley Greenburg. In the scenes before the development of adrenoleukodystrophy (ADL) takes hold of him, Lorenzo is a vibrant child—full of vim and vigor. He is the typical character moviegoers can empathize with while he is experiencing his rapid decline.

Greenburg must take direction well as his performance is worth special mention. The makeup that alters his appearance never distracts from his performance in the first third of the film. After that, however, he hasn't much to do as he is mostly immobile and can no longer express himself.

Peter Ustinov plays the main doctor in the film. His reluctance to try treatments other than traditional and ineffective ones is astonishing.



In fact, many of the established treatments just help the disease along.

The development of the characters is played out in a very perfunctory manner. Some scenes flash by so fast it'll make your head spin. Only when Lorenzo becomes afflicted by ADL do they slow down, but don't expect a breather or any other kind of relief.

*Lorenzo's Oil* is relentless, which is owed to a great extent to it's Australian writer-director George Miller. Miller is the man responsible for the *Mad Max* trilogy. He allows this material to be lifted above the feel-good depths to which it could have easily sunk. Like most true stories that make good films, the ending is not what you would call triumphant. Warning: *Lorenzo's Oil* is sad in nature and execution. This is not a date movie.

The cinematography works in conjunction with the editing to make a visually stunning film. The cinematographer John Seale and ed-

iting team could easily take home deserved Academy Awards while other aspects of the film such as music and screenplay could garner nominations in their respective categories.

This film borders on being overloaded with medical realities, probably due to director Miller's former career as a physician, but if you can wade through it there are fine characters and emotions brimming to the surface, despite it's inhibition to be cold and clinical for effect.

The purpose for the existence of *Lorenzo's Oil* and it's importance lies in it's deflation of the medical community. The true story of this family serves to show how doctors can drag their feet, and even more angering, not share information when lives are at stake. Progress is only made in this case by force of the Odones who have to cram it down the doctors' throats before they respond.

*Lorenzo's Oil* carries an impact more far-reaching than most films of it's sort opting not to pander to the audiences' emotions for the happy ending. It's pre-disposition toward a dark tone is carried throughout and that's where it derives it's triumph in storytelling from. There is no spoonful of sugar to help Lorenzo's Oil go down.

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Ratings Scale

8

•The Goods•  
Smooth and Satisfying  
like a 40 of 8 Ball



•Solid Flick•  
Cherry, like  
a '76 Econoline



•Tame•  
Have a Day



•Chessy•  
Like Fromage



Monsieur Le  
Potté say  
"the film, she  
ees stinky,  
like that of  
merde on the  
sole of my  
boot"