

## "Hannah and Her Sisters" hits home

"Hannah and Her Sisters," a warm, wonderful slice of life from writer-director Woody Allen, stays on the viewer's mind long after the closing credits. It's one of those rare films in which the viewer experiences everything from humor to heartache, and comes out of the theater feeling he's seen something special.

In short, "Hannah and Her Sisters" is a masterpiece.

Allen, who with every film, cements his place among the world's great directors, has crafted a loving look at everyday life through the eyes of everyday people. It contains no heavy drama or broad comedy, just the simple observations of a man who wants to show us how special life is.

"Hannah and Her Sisters" covers two years in the lives of a

family of New York actors and the people whose lives they affect. At the family's emotional center stands Hannah (Mia Farrow), a successful stage actress. She seems to have her life together, while everyone around her appears to be falling apart.

One of her sisters, Lee (Barbara Hershey), is in the last stages of a relationship with a domineering artist, while the other, Holly (Dianne Wiest), is a failed actress who cannot help but envy Hannah's success.

Around these three women revolves the rest of the cast, including Hannah's husband Elliot (Michael Caine), who feels drawn to Lee against his better judgment, and Hannah's ex-husband Mickey (Allen), a comedy writer and hypochondriac who thinks he has a brain tumor.

Several funny situations arise from these in the film, but none is without a serious side as well. For example, Elliot's affair with Lee, funny as it is, never lets us

forget how devastated Hannah will be if she finds out. Allen's neurotic writer gets most of the movie's laughs when he undergoes a religious crisis, dabbling in Judaism, Catholicism, and even the Hari Krishnas.

At the film's conclusion, Allen says, "The heart is a very resilient little muscle," summing up, in one line, all that had happened before. It's a wonderful moment in a movie filled with them.

Eventually he becomes involved with Holly, who emerges as the film's only truly hopeless character. Their tender relationship shows a lot of heart and is one of the reasons

why the viewer leaves the theater smiling.

The cast under Allen's direction solidifies the film's success. Michael Caine shines as the indecisive Elliot. After such embarrassments as "Beyond the Limit" and "Blame It on Rio," this is finally a role for which he is perfectly suited.

The same can be said for the rest of the cast. Farrow, Hershey and Wiest create a believable trio of sisters, and Maureen O'Sullivan and Lloyd Nolan excel as their parents.

In essence, "Hannah and Her Sisters" is simply about life, its sorrow and its joys. It speaks from the heart with an all-too-rare sincerity and is over all too fast. To miss it, is to miss the most rewarding film experience in many a year.

## "Brazil" gives a glimpse at the future

Terry Gilliam's "Brazil," just now reaching the Bryan-College Station area, already has quite a checkered past.

Universal Pictures didn't release it for almost a year, demanding that director Gilliam (of Monty Python fame) make extensive cuts and a more upbeat ending for the picture.

When the Los Angeles Film Critics Association voted "Brazil" Best Picture of 1985, the studio did an about-face. The release didn't net Gilliam any Oscar nominations, but it did give the public a chance to see the wondrous vision he creates.

"Brazil" takes place not in South America, but in a near-future society reminiscent of George Orwell's "1984." The cornerstone of the society is the Ministry of Information, a mammoth organization that controls virtually every aspect of daily life.

In this world of technology run amuck, the pursuit of knowledge, has entrapped man, not freed him.

Sam Lowry (Jonathan Pryce) is an ordinary clerk in the ministry's records department who claims to want nothing more out of life than what he already has. Yet much of the time he lives in a fantasy world, where he's a winged warrior fighting to rescue a beautiful woman.

When Sam sees the woman of his dreams in real life, he arranges a program of "Information Retrieval" so he can learn more about the her.

What Sam learns about her, and about the people he works for, sends his worlds of fantasy and reality on a disastrous collision course.

"Brazil" is perhaps the most complete realization of a future world ever filmed. Every element, from the sets to the cos-

tumes, combines to form something completely new, creating a society full of bizarre machines, buildings and people.

The viewer quickly gets caught up in it. Unfortunately, so does the director.

Because he is so busy showing us his fascinating new world, Gilliam loses sight of his storyline. As a result, the plot unfolds at an excruciatingly slow pace.

In spite of this structural flaw, "Brazil" works. Its stunning visual effects and wildly inventive sense of humor never let the viewer's attention waver. Even when nothing's happening, something's going on.

And "Brazil" doesn't let you leave your brain at the door, as so many other movies do. Gilliam's satiric view of the modern world gives the viewer something to think about, challenging the intellect and forcing the viewer to pay attention.

The scenery tends to overwhelm the actors but they all turn in fine performances nonetheless. The cast includes Michael Palin as Sam's not-so-trusty friend, Katherine Helmond as Sam's mother, Kim Greist as the woman of his dreams, and Robert DeNiro as a renegade plumber and suspected terrorist.

The controversial ending, which Universal left as Gilliam wanted it, seems downright optimistic given the grim nature of the world it takes place in. To make it any more upbeat would have been a cheat.

"Brazil" is a movie jam-packed with diverse elements and wild contradictions. It is at once funny and sad, depressing and hopeful. While it may lack cohesion, "Brazil" succeeds in entralling the viewer from start to finish.

by Matt Diedrich  
movie reviewer