

Reviews

"Moon Over Parador"
Starring Richard Dreyfuss and Sonia Braga
Directed by Paul Mazursky
Rated PG-13
★★★★

"Moon Over Parador" tells the story of a man who goes from being an actor to a president (only in the movies, right?). Yet, with a storyline such as this, the film is not a heavy political satire. Rather, "Moon Over Parador" is a well-made comedy that reunites the duo of actor Richard Dreyfuss and producer/director Paul Mazursky, who collaborated on the smash hit, "Down and Out in Beverly Hills."

Dreyfuss plays an actor who is filming a movie in the South American nation of

Parador, which is ruled by the popular, charismatic dictator Alphonse Simms, whom Dreyfuss' character resembles. Early in the film, Simms dies from a heart attack.

Dreyfuss is then forced by the Paradorian secret police chief (played with ferocity by Raul Julia) to take on the role of his life: to impersonate Simms so as to avoid political turmoil in an already troubled nation.

The dynamic Sonia Braga, who plays Simms' sexy mistress, finds out about the masquerade. With Julia, she helps Dreyfuss become more like the late dictator.

In fact, "Moon Over Parador" seems a study of the acting process itself as well as the story of a man forced to

become someone else. Throughout the film we see Dreyfuss studying videotapes of Simms, trying to imitate the man's voice, mannerisms, and gestures, all under the coaching of Julia and Braga. The film is packed with various references to acting and performing.

Dreyfuss, Julia and Braga all give excellent performances in this film, but there are some hilarious cameos as well. Especially memorable is Mazursky himself in his appearance as Simms' mother.

The only weakness in "Moon Over Parador" is the ending, in which Dreyfuss uses a predictable trick to escape the country. Aside from that, this is an enjoyable film.

Review by Shane Hall



"Chameleon Days"
Yanni
Private Music
★★★½

Although its earliest recordings date back to the late 1960s and early '70s, the musical style known as new age was mostly unknown until the mid-1980s. Today, many record labels are recording and releasing new age albums.

The music itself is diverse, ranging from the solo piano recordings of George Winston to Mannheim Steamroller's self-described "18th century classical rock." New age contains elements of classical, jazz and pop music.

Several new age artists have found acceptance among fans of contemporary pop music. Greek composer/musician Yanni appears to have made the most inroads to this audience with his newest album, "Chameleon Days."

Songs such as "Walkabout" and "Chasing Shadows" are the best examples of Yanni's ability to compose music that will appeal to fans of today's dance music. Both tracks feature a throbbing, funk-oriented bass line combined with a prominent percussion beat and upbeat synthesizer flash.

Yanni's music is recorded almost entirely on the synthesizer, which he uses to create a wide range of sounds. On "Chameleon Days" he uses the electronic instrument to emulate acoustic piano, bass guitar, stringed instruments, and even the harmonica. Yanni re-creates the sounds of these instruments so well it is sometimes difficult to distinguish them from the real thing. Percussionist Charlie Adams, playing both acoustic and electronic percussion, joins Yanni on several tracks.

Despite the record's overall move toward a more pop-oriented sound, new age purists who might prefer the symphonic scope of some of Yanni's earlier recordings are not left out in the cold.

"Reflections of Passion" should find favor with this audience. The song has a rich texture with the synthesizers taking on the sounds of a full orchestra. For the conclusion, the sound falls back to a minimal lineup of acoustic piano, synth-harmonica and a solo electronic keyboard.

"Marching Season" is another highlight of the album. Opening with a soothing acoustic piano introduction, the piece soon builds up to an electronic string section that carries out the remainder of the track.

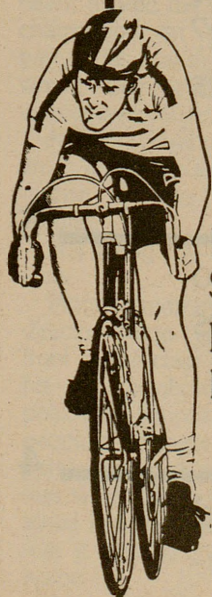
If any new age album released in recent months has the potential to appear on both the classical and pop music charts in Billboard magazine, "Chameleon Days" is the one.

Review by Shane Hall

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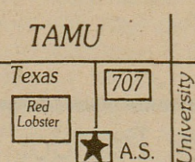


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