

Suzanne Vale (Meryl Streep) introduces her mother (Shirley MacLaine) to her date (Dennis Quaid.)



Fisher writes quality comedy in **POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE**



Suzanne listens impatiently as Doris lectures her.

By LISA ANN ROBERTSON

Postcards From the Edge marks the journey of an actress' recovery from drug abuse. Thanks to a brilliant cast and a screenplay by Carrie Fisher, these postcards were eagerly awaited by the movie's audience in a sneak preview sponsored by Aggie Cinema.

Based upon Fisher's novel by the same name, Postcards chronicles Suzanne Vale's, (played by multi-talented Meryl Streep), attempts to reinjoin the Hollywood scene after a drug overdose.

This isn't just a movie about staying away from drugs, though. It's also an inside look into a stereotypical Hollywood as Suzanne tries to rebuild her career in a movie-within-the-movie.

With movie insurance costs rising because of actors with drug problems, Suzanne can get a part in a low-budget film only if she agrees to stay with a "responsible party" while the film is being shot.

The responsible party turns out to be her mother Doris Mann. Shirley MacLaine hams it up deliciously as Doris, a product of the musical comedies of the 50s and 60s. She is a Hollywood creation who wants her daughter to be successful, but not, as Suzanne puts it, "as successful as you."

Doris' jealousy and Suzanne's resentment of Doris' alcoholism strain their relationship almost irreconcilably. But they argue through their problems as they try to understand each other.

Director Michael Nichols takes on the formidable task of making a movie with two strong-willed women in the title roles. He ends up not with a cat fight, but with a film that highlights the differences in Streep and MacLaine as Suzanne and Doris. Streep and MacLaine keep the film perched on the edge of being depressing, but their comedy always pulls you back.

The success of the movie lies, I think, in Fisher's dialogue.

"My language had this weird kind of specificity in its rhythm," she says in a press release, "like its own psychic iambic pentameter, and it reflects the way people talk. There's a lot of overlapping dialogue, because people don't wait for each other to finish sentences."

There are scenes when every character on the screen is talking at the same time, and it is a tribute to Sam O'Steen's editing ability that every voice can be heard.

What you hear are the arguments between a mother and daughter, the pick up line and denial between a producer and an actress, and the attempt of a director to get everyone "quiet on the set."

Taking advantage of the realistic dialogue is a cast of fine Broadway and Hollywood actors. Dennis Quaid is the sleazy producer who tries to seduce Suzanne.

Gene Hackman is the compassionate director who gives her a real chance at a comeback, and Richard Dreyfuss is the doctor who pumps her stomach as the film begins and later asks her to dinner.

Also in supporting roles are Rob Reiner, Mary Wickes and Conrad Bain, who played the father on the TV sitcom *Different Strokes*. They are all caricatures of Hollywood.

Completing the caricature, production designer Patrizia Von Brandenstein creates sets that illustrate the difficulty of finding reality in Hollywood's fantasy land.

Backdrops constantly give way to reality as the movie-within-the-movie changes. These scenery changes show the audience that not everything is how it seems in Hollywood. Suzanne isn't the only one who has trouble distinguishing reality from the script.

One reality that is easy to hear is Carly Simon's musical score. Perhaps it's not another Academy award winner, like her score for *Working Girl*, but she continues to produce quality work.

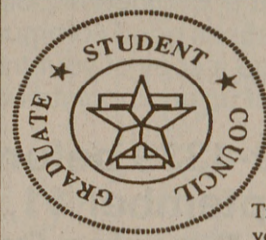
Quality work from everyone involved stamps *Postcards From the Edge* as a movie not to be missed when it comes to B-CS theaters.

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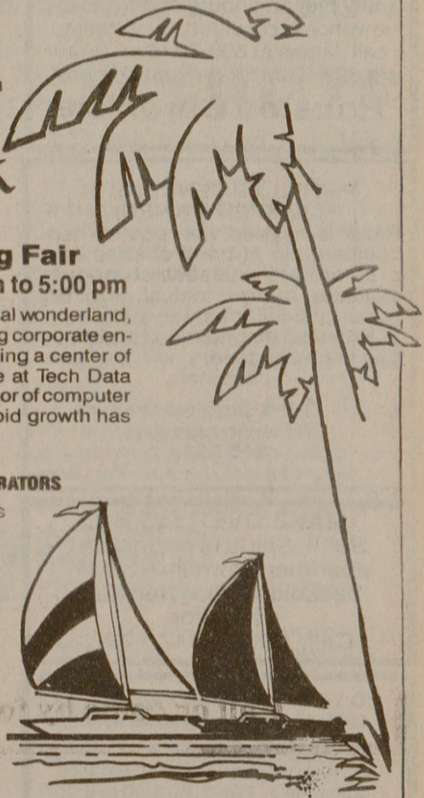
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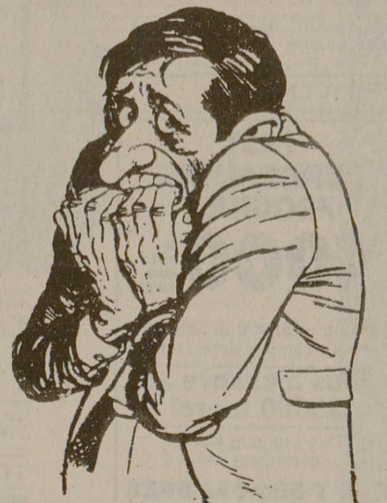
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