

Rambling Reporter

Robert Osborne

Assassins, assassins, everywhere: Right on the heels of Stephen Sondheim's newest musical "Assassins" opening off-Broadway this Sunday, that so-called "Oliver Stone Project for 1991," which is actually a big-screener about the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963, is being geared for an April 15 start in Dallas. It'll film there for six weeks before moving on to New Orleans. And, to show the size of the project, no less than seven casting agents are working between the two coasts to find the right faces for the various roles... Last weekend, director David Galligan's "A Lovely Way to Spend an Evening" kicked off at the Coast Playhouse; this weekend, the Galligan-directed Southland Theater Artists Goodwill Event benefit salute to Rodgers, Hart and Hammerstein (with proceeds going to help AIDS victims) unfolds for two nights only at the Embassy Theater in Los Angeles. ("I must be crazy," admits Galligan.) But, crazy or just crazed, Galligan and his musical director Rob Abel have quite an eye for and earful lined up, with a cast including Roger Rees and Jane Carr doing a duet (now both bonafide TV stars, both once tread the boards here in the Royal Shakespeare Company production of "Nicholas Nickleby"); also Lucie Arnaz, who belts with the best of them; Carole Cook (putting some of her unique zing into "Zip"); Marilyn Lovell, Frank Langella, Gogi Grant, Donna McKechnie, Pamela Myers, Penny Fuller and other names, equally talented. You'll do yourself a favor when you check out one of these evenings. Only one problem: It can be sobering, and slightly depressing, when you see all that sensational musical talent sashaying across the stage, much of it sending chills up the spine, then you realize there's so few outlets for that kind of talent today. Virtually no one writes musicals anymore, and there's no market for Real Singers. Damn depressing, because these are people who should be allowed, and hired, to do this sort of thing day in, day out, not just once or twice a year at a benefit.

Take a bow, academy. That new/old building that now houses the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' library and archives on La Cienega Boulevard is a stunner, a boon, a treasure, a Godsend. And it was quite a who's who of Oscarites who turned out Wednesday night to have a preview first-look at the facilities, too (officially it's the Center for Motion Picture Study) before the doors open to one and all Monday... There were all sorts of former Academy presidents there (Walter Mirisch, Gregory Peck, Dan Taradash, Robert Wise, Howard Koch, Fay Kanin, Richard Kahn, Gene Allen) as well as current president Karl Malden also Oscar winners such as Charlton Heston, Eva Marie Saint, Shelley Winters, Michael Douglas and Louise Fletcher, the latter two with "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" in common... Inside the former water-treatment plant, and at the adjacent tent where a post-tour party was held, catered by Along Came Mary, the word was definitely positive, and the faces were familiar: Diane Ladd, Sam Goldwyn Jr., Arthur Hiller, Henry Winkler, Lainie Kazan, Ed Asner, Carroll O'Connor, Frances Lederer, Mario Puzo, Gil Cates and a myriad of others. If you want to be proud of Hollywood, and the movers and shakers with a respect for its history, check out that new center.

Film reviews

'City of Hope'

By DUANE BYRGE

PARK CITY, Utah — For corruption, crudity, graft, kick-backs, pay-offs and organized thuggery — you can't beat the East Coast. On the eve of this Super Sunday, it's hard not to get lumpily sentimental that one of the two competing New York teams has got Jimmy Hoffa sliced and compressed under the corner of their east end zone. Those who savor this aspect of Americana will love John Sayles' "City of Hope," which is a real bonfire of a movie, not just some dandy's distanced perspective of the melting-pot fires in today's big-city America. "City of Hope" is a nasty, Scorsese-like smear of the diseased innards of a dying city.

Next to swilling coffee all night in a Hoboken diner and downing a month's issues of the Jersey Journal, you couldn't get a better insight into today's municipal government sewer systems than in Sayles' searing story. A front page-like pastiche of big-city, East Coast news, "Hope" cross-

CITY OF HOPE
Esperanza Inc.
Producers Sarah Green, Maggie Renzi
Screenwriter-director-editor John Sayles
Director of photography Robert Richardson
Music Mason Daring
Production designer Dan Bishop, Dianna Freas
Editor John Sayles

Color/Stereo

Cast:

Nick Vincent Spano
Joe Tony Lo Bianco
Wynn Joe Morton
Rizzo Anthony John Denison
Zip Todd Graff
Reesha Angela Bassett
Angela Barbara Williams
Mayor Louis Zorich

Running time — 129 minutes

weaves a multitude of personal story lines, hopping back and forth between neighborhoods, chronicling the nasty underbelly of civic corruption. It's Sayles' best and most mature work — he has the confidence not to show his themes, a la "Eight Men Out" or "Matewan" — and it holds you by the throat and, according to your sex, something else.

A crazy-quilt of cross-purposed individual stories, "City of Hope," centers on Nicky's (Vincent Spano) downward-spiraled life. Bored out of his skull and coked to combustion, Nicky's so screwed up that he quits

— continued on page 28

'Heaven and Earth'

By KIRK HONEYCUTT

In "Heaven and Earth," a historical epic of feudal Japan, filmmaker Haruki Kadokawa can't decide whether he's a director or a general.

Kadokawa composes every battle scene with loving care. Each chess move by opposing samurai warlords is painstakingly analyzed.

Yet Kadokawa, like those warlords, observes the hostilities from a distant mountain top. He displays little interest in climbing down into the grit of story or character.

The result is less a movie than Japanese calendar art.

While pleasing to the eye, "Heaven and Earth" is unlikely to move either at the boxoffice — at least in this country. Other than Japanese history buffs, few are likely to embrace so coolly cerebral a film.

Nothing exemplifies Kadokawa's

HEAVEN AND EARTH
Triton Pictures
Director Haruki Kadokawa
Producer Yutaka Okada
Writers Toshio Kamata, Isao Yoshihara,
Haruki Kadokawa
Based on a novel by Chogoro Kaijōji
Director of photography Yonezo Maeda
Production designer Hiroshi Tokuda
Music Tetsuya Komuro
Editor Akira Suzuki, Robert C. Jones
Costume designer Yoko Tashiro
Color/Stereo

Cast:

Kagetora Takanuki Enoki
Takeda Masahiko Tsugawa
Nami Atsuko Asano
Usami Tsunehiko Watase
Yae Naomi Zaizen
Kakizaki Binpachi Ito
Kansuke Isao Natsuyagi
Narrator Stuart Whitman

Running time — 106 minutes

MPAA Rating: PG-13

failure as a film dramatist better than the virtual absence of a hero.

The film recounts events leading

— continued on page 28

Cable TV review

'Women on the Inside'

By RICK SHERWOOD

With a name like "Prison Stories: Women on the Inside," the HBO program sounds like it would be another one of those titillating looks at the seedy side of life behind bars. Instead, it's an intelligent, well-written and well-acted trilogy of dramas that are nothing short of captivating.

The three segments, made under the auspices of three top women directors, all focus on female prisoners and children — having them, loving them, keeping them, losing them. All

share a texture and tone of gritty realities of prison life, too, but somehow they're all played with individuality.

"Esperanza," directed by Donna Deitch, is the most emotional of the three. It tells the story of a woman so bent on finding the man she loves — who literally left her holding the bag (drugs) — that she inadvertently drives her young son to follow her felonious lead when he senses his secondary importance to her. Rachel

— continued on page 52