

# reel reviews

## ★ ★ *The Bedroom Window* *Oaks West Four*

The ads for *The Bedroom Window* audaciously proclaim it to be "in the tradition of the master of suspense," (i.e. Alfred Hitchcock.) Not surprisingly, this movie turns out to be in the tradition of movies that *want* to be in the tradition of the master of suspense.

But, certainly not for lack of trying. This thriller contains an innocent hero wrongly accused, a psychopathic killer with sexual hangups, his domineering and abusive mother, an aloof, exotic woman and even a chase scene in a public place — this time the ballet — all of which are trademarks of Hitchcock.

What *The Bedroom Window* lacks are complex, interesting characters, surprise twists, hidden motives and a strong performance by its leading man, Steve Guttenberg.

He plays Terry Lambert, a young executive having a tawdry affair with Sylvia (Isabelle Huppert), his boss' wife. After a brief rendezvous in his apartment, Terry slips tiredly into the bathroom. Sylvia, hearing a disturbance outside, looks out the bedroom window.

That's when she witnesses a violent struggle between a young woman, Denise (Elizabeth McGovern), and her would-be assailant. The attacker senses that someone is watching him, looks up at Sylvia and runs off in fright. The two lovers are shaken, but the young woman is all right and they shrug off the incident.

However, the next day's headlines trumpet the story of another woman being brutally raped and murdered a few blocks from Terry's apartment.

Certain that it is the same assailant, Terry tries to convince Sylvia to go to the police. She refuses, fearing her husband might find out about their affair.

But Terry becomes determined to do the right thing. So, armed with Sylvia's very detailed description, he goes to the police

and tells them *he* witnessed the attack.

Of course, complications ensue. The police ask him to identify the killer in a lineup, they want him to testify in court, etc., etc. And when they realize Terry is lying to them, the police naturally begin to suspect he is the killer and they follow Terry around, question his neighbors and tap his phone.

Furthermore, Terry's boss seems to be aware of the on-going affair. That, coupled with Sylvia's overly accurate description, lead us to believe Terry's been duped. We wait breathlessly for him to be trapped in a web of deceit. But no such luck. Writer/director Curtis Hanson isn't that clever.

So the biggest surprise of *The Bedroom Window* is that there are no surprises. We know the identity of the killer from the very beginning. We also know the motives of the major character and those motives never change: Terry feels compelled to do "the right thing," Sylvia doesn't want her husband to find out about her extramarital activities and Denise won't rest until she sees the man that tried to rape her put behind bars.

Huppert looks uncomfortable on screen, while Steve Guttenberg keeps the same goofy, wide-eyed expression on his face throughout the entire film. To be fair, Hanson does put him in some ludicrous situations, most notably an absurd courtroom trial.

In that scene, Terry fidgets uncomfortably in the witness stand and keeps glancing nervously at Sylvia. She makes such a commotion trying to stage-whisper answers that Denise and even the killer on trial turn around and stare at her!

*The Bedroom Window* does contain a fine, no-nonsense performance by McGovern, as well as a hilarious cameo by Wallace Shawn as a wily defense attorney. In fact, you could probably sit through this mildly suspenseful thriller without complaining. But you shouldn't.

By Michael Giltz