

reel reviews

Crossroads★★★ *Center*

A legend as old as the blues tells how Robert Johnson, the king of the Delta-blues, sold his soul to the devil in exchange for mastery of his craft. The fact that he lived dangerously and died under mysterious circumstances has not hurt the story in its telling one whit.

Another story, not quite as old as the blues, builds upon that legend when recounting the tale of Blind Dog and Lightning Boy. Blind Dog was a contemporary of Johnson who also sold his soul in exchange for greatness. Now an old man, he lives in fear of what is going to happen when he dies.

Lightning Boy is a classically trained guitarist from the Juillard School of Music who is enamored with the blues. He rescues Blind Dog from a retirement home and together they go on the road; Blind Dog to try and change his fate and Lightning Boy to try and



learn the blues from a master.

As everyone knows, you don't learn the blues, you live them. "The blues ain't nuthin' but a good man feeling bad over the woman that left him," says Blind Dog. So, *Crossroads* is a typical road movie, complete with run-ins with the law and a tough-talking runaway (Jami Gertz), that gives Lightning Boy the expe-

riences he needs to be able to play the blues from the heart, instead of with mere technical proficiency.

Since the entire film leads up to it, it won't be giving anything away to tell that Lightning Boy must use every bit of "magic" that Blind Dog gave him in an attempt to save the old man's soul.

by Michael Giltz