

Citizen Ruth

directed by Alexander Payne

A CAUSTIC YET VERY funny movie about abortion rights? You bet. Hapless, glue-sniffing, pregnant drifter Ruth



(Laura Dern) finds herself pushed and pulled by pro- and anti-choice forces when a judge offers to

reduce her jail time for shoplifting if she terminates her pregnancy. In opposite corners are Swoosie Kurtz, playing an

undercover lesbian pro-choice activist (pictured, page 72, with Dern), and Mary Kay Place, as a sweet but implacable pro-life housewife. Though the movie takes shots at both sides, it really gives it to the religious Right—especially during an outrageous cameo by Burt Reynolds as a holier-than-thou pro-life leader. Still, you'll root for the none-too-bright Ruth—who can never think further than her next chance to abuse a substance—to outwit them all. Dern deserves another Oscar nomination for her hilarious, edgy performance, and the clever screenplay by director Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor builds wonderfully. Comparisons to Preston Sturges are not out of order. (Miramax)—MICHAEL GILTZ