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LONELY HEARTS

(R)

(SAMUEL GOLDWYN COMPANY)

Color/1.85

95 Mins.

Cast: Wendy Hughes, Norman Kaye, Jon Finlayson, Julia Blake, Jonathan Hardy.

Credits: Directed by Paul Cox. Screenplay by Paul Cox and John Clarke. Director of Photography: Yuril Sokol, A.C.S. Editor: Tim Lewis. Music: Norman Kaye. Art Director: Neil Angwin. Executive producer: Phillip Adams. Producer: John B. Murray.

This beautifully-observed, low-key romance à la *Marty* is slow-paced and boasts no names except Wendy Hughes, one of Australia's leading actresses. Yet positive word of mouth and critical nods make this a pick hit for specialized theatres. 83-148

Paul Cox, director of the Australian *Lonely Hearts*, is in no hurry to unfold his slim tale of two Melbourne misfits who meet through a dating service and grow steadily but fearfully closer. But Cox has so artfully conceived and executed this film, it could do excellent art circuit biz, though low-key approach and mature subject undermine significant cross-over potential.

The courtship story is simple enough. Norman Kaye plays the self-conscious, balding middle-aged piano tuner with a special fondness for his adorable dachshund and a hunger for female companionship and the joys of the flesh that go with it. Through professional matchmakers, he meets Wendy Hughes as the lonely, painfully shy and sexually inhibited woman who remains dominated by her loutish parents. The spine of *Lonely Hearts* is the development of mutual trust and kindness between these two simple people. But what distinguishes the film is the director's attention to detail and the ability of the leads to make us care. So real are the supporting characters, the situations and the middle class settings (the homes, restaurants, a bingo hall, an amateur theatre), that *Lonely Hearts* is almost like a documentary. Yet the film offers that crucial commercial element—in its own quiet way, it entertains.

Helped by beautiful cinematography, Cox is wonderfully inventive and mines the prosaic back-drop and content for all they're

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worth. A scene at the cemetery where Kaye visits his mother's grave, for instance, seems arbitrary until we realize that it reveals what *Lonely Hearts* is all about—the importance of caring human relationships. Because of its subtle revelations and the director's stunning artistry, the film deserves to find its audience—and it should be sizeable.

—Doris Toumarkine
