

## Document Citation

Title	<b>A summer place</b>
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Filmfacts</i>
Date	
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	263-265
No. of Pages	3
Subjects	
Film Subjects	A summer place, Daves, Delmer, 1959

## A SUMMER PLACE

A WARNER BROS. PRESENTATION. *Produced, Directed and Written by DELMER DAVES; Based on the Novel by SLOAN WILSON. Photography: HARRY STRADLING, SR. Editor: OWEN MARKS. Art Direction: LEO K. KUTER. Set Decoration: WILLIAM L. KUEHL. Sound: STANLEY JONES. Music: MAX STEINER; Orchestrations: MURRAY CUTTER. Makeup: GORDON BAU. Costumes: HOWARD SHOUP. Asst. Director: RUSSELL LLEWELLYN. Location Scenes Filmed in the Monterey Section of California. Technicolor. 130 Mins.*

Ken Jorgenson . . . . .	RICHARD EGAN
Sylvia Hunter . . . . .	DOROTHY McGUIRE
Molly Jorgenson . . . . .	SANDRA DEE
Bart Hunter . . . . .	ARTHUR KENNEDY
Johnny Hunter . . . . .	TROY DONAHUE
Helen Jorgenson . . . . .	CONSTANCE FORD
Mrs. Hamble . . . . .	BEULAH BONDI
Claude Andrews . . . . .	JACK RICHARDSON
Todd Hasper . . . . .	MARTIN ERIC

### Synopsis

After a twenty-year absence, self-made millionaire Ken Jorgenson returns to Pine Island, Maine, where he had once been a lifeguard. He brings with him his domineering wife, Helen, and his teenage daughter, Molly. They stay at a summer mansion owned by Bart Hunter, whose drunken squanderings have forced him to convert the estate into a summer resort. Bart's wife, Sylvia, and Ken had once been lovers and before long the two have resumed their romance. But the summer comes to a drastic end when Helen learns of the affair, creates a scandal, and gets a divorce. Caught up in the domestic tragedy are Bart's son, Johnny, and young Molly who, though in love, are forbidden to see each other. However, after Ken and Sylvia are married, they permit the youngsters to stay with them. Eventually Molly becomes pregnant. Afraid to tell their elders, the youngsters make several futile attempts to marry before finally confessing to Ken and Sylvia. All is forgiven and Molly and Johnny are permitted to marry and return to Pine Island to take over the summer place.



McGUIRE, DONAHUE, EGAN and DEE

### Critique

VARIETY. "An uneven, superficial film that has all the trappings of soap opera imposed on what essentially is an adult, serious theme...In his capacity as writer and director, Delmer Daves has missed the mark by a mile. His characters,

anguished most of the time, are unreal and totally devoid of depth. The film runs at least 20 minutes too long and has a tendency to use dialog to 'preach' what should be implied, to be harsh where it should be sensitive, and it makes the most of Hollywood's newly-discovered freedom to display the voluminous vocabulary of sex. There'd be nothing wrong with this had Daves coupled his frankness with taste and had he made his play for emotion less obvious. With the single exception of Dorothy McGuire, who comes through with a radiant performance and is lovely to look at, the cast does an average job. Richard Egan is wooden. Young Sandra Dee has a conventionally pretty face, but it's only in one scene (when she becomes hysterical) that the director gets her to emote. Troy Donahue is handsome, but little more. Arthur Kennedy is good, but he fights some pretty tough lines. Constance Ford really isn't given much more than a chance to look nasty... Film is attractively mounted, expertly photographed by Harry Stradling and the Technicolor hues aid, at least when it comes to the scenic shots. Max Steiner's music is lush, as befits this kind of popular fiction... While *A Summer Place* doesn't rate as a major achievement, it may well make up for that by turning into a major money-maker. It's a shame that it couldn't have been both." *'Hift'* (10/7/59).

FILMS IN REVIEW. "A *Summer Place*, like *Blue Denim*, is propaganda for teenage sexual intercourse. Once again the inadequacies of parents are put forward as justification for teenagers giving in to sexual desire... I can only hope *A Summer Place* will seem as unrealistic to teenagers as it did to me." *Ellen Fitzpatrick* (Nov. '59).

THE N.Y. TIMES. "One of the most laboriously and garishly sex-scented movies in years. With a tedious bluntness of speech and imagery that few people should accept as adult realism, this raucously sensual drama spells out the clashes and intertwinings of two clans on a New England island. It tells — trumpets, is better — how two nice adolescents are almost crushed by four persons best described as delinquent parents. The whole thing leaves a rancid taste... It also happens to be as handsome to watch as the content is ugly. With a stunning irony never implied by the picture itself, the beautiful coastal setting lays bare the film's preoccupation with sex... The blistering, head-on dialogue and the relentless monotone of the text demand at least something in the way of real substance or compelling characterizations. Or an ounce of subtlety. But the picture has been pounded into shape, pretty obviously, as a 'civilized' shocker. And Max Steiner's music, hammering away at each sexual nuance like a pile driver, is typical. Miss McGuire and Mr. Egan manage some restraint, professionally at least, without being exactly appealing. The same applies to Mr. Kennedy. Little Miss Dee is completely convincing; Mr. Donahue remains earnest. Is the picture? It proves one thing: parents should be obeyed but never in this world emulated." *Howard Thompson* (10/23/59).

TIME. "Having demonstrated the various advantages of adultery, the film goes on to make it

clear to the movie audience that sexual dalliance between unmarried adolescents is really quite all right, provided they are in love and are willing to confess all to their parents and stand up in church when the girl gets pregnant. The picture has been expertly written, directed and produced by an old Hollywood smoothie named Delmer (*Destination Tokyo, Kings Go Forth*) Daves, but unfortunately Daves' taste is not equal to his technique. Up to a point the story argues for a healthy relativity in morals. But the relativity of *A Summer Place* is anchored to no absolutes. The film treats adultery as casually as if there were nothing at all holy about matrimony. And along with moral sensitivity, the film lacks social responsibility. The adolescent love scenes are an inflammation to imitation." (11/9/59).

THE N.Y. HERALD TRIBUNE. "The basic message of *A Summer Place* seems to be that marriage without love is worse than no marriage at all, but no matter how incessantly the dialogue puts this proposition in the mouths of the actors, the facts of the narrative continually argue that even more important than love is economic security... As in the recent *Blue Denim* this film spends a good deal of time on the supposed clash between sense and sensibility in young lovers. If it does not ultimately do so with any particular conviction it is because it blurs the issues before it can butt any conviction of reality into the matter, and finally insists on such a burnished and easy social level for its principal protagonists that it is hard to take the lovers' problems seriously. The picture has a production lushness, some hard dialogue, and Delmer Daves seems to have followed the novel with reasonable faithfulness... Egan does well and Miss McGuire is good... But it is Constance Ford and Kennedy who give the film most of its excitement." *Paul V. Beckley* (10/23/59).

SATURDAY REVIEW. "Can divorce bring happiness? Should a woman leave her alcoholic husband of twenty years for a former lover who is now married, rich, and the father of a pretty teenage daughter? Should teen-age lovers marry if their romance blooms into pregnancy? Can children forgive adulterous parents? Is sex which is not blessed by the bonds of matrimony beautiful or sinful? These questions are explored, but not very deeply, in *A Summer Place*... Mr. Daves has put on a brilliant display of triple-threat energy, and has come up with a visually pretty picture that runs better than two hours, and it is rather a shame that the picture-postcard world presented to us is blighted by that damnable sexual instinct... The questions the movie raises are answered in the following manner: Yes, divorce can bring happiness, but only for the guilty... Yes, a woman should definitely leave her alcoholic husband for her former lover. The facts that the husband is sick, a failure, broke, and the father of her son should not sway her... Yes, teen-age lovers, faced with the problem of the girl's pregnancy, should marry, if they can collect their dispersed parents and win their understanding and respect... Yes, teenagers can forgive their wayward parents, especially if they first manage to get into trouble themselves... The last question is the puzzler...

One may gather from the dialogue and the reactions of the principal players that sex is good, but that it can be bad, that young and old should not altogether restrain their physical feelings, but that they must watch out for consequences. Perhaps the answer is that sex is good-bad. And, as Ken Jorgenson expresses it at the end, there's not much that can't be helped by love and a sense of humor. Some of the latter might certainly have helped the movie, in which Constance Ford and Arthur Kennedy are the best of a distraught group of actors. One other complaint: Sandra Dee, it seemed to me, wore too much lipstick." *Hollis Alpert (11/7/59).*