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**\*\*\*GLORIA** is the incredible Gena Rowlands, who seems almost the soul of Manhattan in an extraordinary performance. A tough lady (in both senses of the word), she's an ex-show girl, ex-gang moll, who's found tranquillity with her apartment, her money (prudently in a safe deposit box), her cat, her goldfish, and her friends after a hard life in New York. But she's still got a heart, and she's a survivor. She dislikes kids, but she's stuck with an uppity, macho six-year-old boy — whose parents have been wiped out in a bloody gangland killing. "We are not murderers," Rowland's ex-lover tells her. "It's for a lesson." The kid's father, the mob's accountant, has turned stooly. They want to make it absolute: kill the kid too, and regain his father's book, full of incriminating evidence. But streetwise (and subway- and taxi-wise) Gena fights for the kid with all her knowledge and a short-barreled silver gun which she knows how to use. You can smell the New York in this picture, which is one continuous chase, sometimes funny, often shocking, sometimes poignant. Is the happy ending real or a fantasy? Gena's husband, John Cassavetes, wrote and directed, and it could stand a bit of cutting; the chase seems interminable. But it's good, and "Gloria" is certainly the most gutsy woman of the year.