

## Document Citation

Title	<b>The end of the good old days</b>
Author(s)	David Stratton
Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1989 Sep 13
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Konec starych casu (The end of the good old days), Menzel, Jirí, 1989

# Konec Starych Casu (The End Of The Good Old Days) (CZECH)

Montreal Barrandov Film Studios, Czechoslovak Film, production. Directed by Jiri Menzel. Screenplay, Menzel, Jiri Blazek, based on a novel by Ladislav Vancura; camera (color), Jaromir Sofr; editor, Jiri Brozek; music, Jiri Sust; sound, Karel Jaros; production design, Zbynek Hloch; assistant director, Jan Prokop. Reviewed at Montreal World Film Festival (competing), Sept. 1, 1989. Running time: 97 MIN.

Duke Alexei ..... Josef Abrham  
Stoklasa ..... Marian Labuda  
Spera ..... Jaromir Hanzlik  
Jakub Lhota ..... Rudolf Hrusinsky  
Michaela ..... Barbara Leichnerova  
Suzanne ..... Chantal Poullain-Polivkova  
Pustina ..... Jan Hartl  
Jan Lhota ..... Jan Hrusinsky  
Kotera ..... Jiri Adamira  
Ellen ..... Alice Dvorakova

■ **Jiri Menzel is back in typically winning form with this lightweight but quite disarming comedy of class, sex and capitalism in post-World War I Czechoslovakia.**

Handsome production design and a gentle, typically Czech sense of humor should help this charmer find audiences in many parts of the world.

The setting is a country estate currently being rented by a plump nouveau riche businessman, Stoklasa (another fine performance from Marian Labuda, remembered as the fat guy in Menzel's last film, "My Sweet Little Village"). Stoklasa wants to keep the chateau permanently, but some of his neighbors are after it as well.

Enter Duke Alexei, a cheerful, bearded nobleman who arrives unexpectedly, moves in for a long stay, and proceeds to delight the children and seduce the women. Josef Abrham, in this role, bears an uncanny resemblance to David Puttnam.

What follows is told from the perspective of Spera (Jaromir Hanzlik), a typical Menzel hero who is always yearning for something (usually a pretty girl) but is quite unable to get it. He has his eye on a couple of women in the household, including French tutor Suzanne and housekeeper Cornelia, but in both cases the ebullient Duke pips him to the post.

Meanwhile, Stoklasa's pretty daughter Michaela is being courted by Jan, son of a neighbor; but all their efforts to find somewhere private to consummate their passion are frustrated.

The film is structured around a series of running gags, pratfalls, embarrassments, misunderstandings and gaucheries. It's low-key humor, the kind at which you chuckle rather than laugh outright,

but then so was "My Sweet Little Village," and that got an Oscar nomination.

Among the joys here are the throwaway moments: the pompous butler constantly correcting his un-aristocratic boss; the mysterious nocturnal wanderings of Ellen, a woman described as of "uncertain age and uncertain sex;" the arrival into this peaceful world of a large motorcar, and so on.

Menzel's timing for comedy always has been on the button, and so it is here, though his basic material is, as is often the case, very slight. Fans of the work of this amiable filmmaker will be as enchanted as ever, and also will be looking forward to the imminent release of his long-banned, 20-year-old "Larks On A String."

—Strat.