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A Wedding

(COLOR)

Variety 9-6-78

Robert Altman films a wedding with 48 forgettable characters. Even Altman fans will be disappointed.

A 20th Century-Fox release of a Lion's Gate Films Production, produced and directed by Robert Altman; executive producer, Tommy Thompson. Screenplay, John Considine, Patricia Resnick, Allan Nicholls, Altman from a story by Altman and Considine; camera (DeLuxe color), Charles Rosher,; editor, Tony Lombardo; sound, Jim Webb, Chris McLaughlin, Jim Bourgeois, Jim Stuebe; re-recording, Richard Portman; associate producers, Robert Eggenweiler, Scott Bushell; assistant director, Tommy Thompson; music supervisor, Tom Walls. Reviewed at the Directors Guild of America Theatre, Hollywood, Aug. 29, '78. (MPAA rating: PG.) Running time: 125 MINS.

Tulip Brenner Carol Burnett
Snooks Brenner Paul Dooley
Muffin Brenner Amy Stryker
Buzzy Brenner Mia Farrow
Hughie Brenner Dennis Christopher
Rev. David Ruteledge Gerald Busby
Candice Ruteledge Peggy Ann Garner
Nettie Sloan Lillian Gish
Regina Corelli Nina Van Pallandt
Luigi Corelli Vittorio Gassman
Dino Corelli Desi Arnaz, Jr.
Antoinette Goddard Dina Merrill
Mackenzie Goodard Pat McCormick
Dr. Jules Meecham Howard Duff
Bishop Martin John Cromwell
Rita Billingsley Geraldine Chaplin
Jeff Kuykendall John Considine
Florence Farmer Lauren Hutton
Ingrid Hellstrom Viveca Lindfors
Jim Habor Robert Fortier
William Williamson Bert Remsen
Gypsy Violinist Ellie Albers

If "Nashville" is ensemble Altman at its best — and it is — then "A Wedding" is the other extreme. Altman's loose, seemingly unstructured style backfires in this comedy-drama. Even the innovative director-producer's legion of fans will be disappointed. Those already not a member of his cult will find this work tedious.

The title is self-descriptive; the picture is a day in the life of a wedding between the daughter of a nouveau rich southern family and the son of old midwestern money. The setting is rife with conventions — marriage, religion, wealth. Altman along with John Considine, Patricia Resnick and Allan Nicholls who share script credit, prop up straw men targets as the butt of their satire and quickly knock them down.

Four dozen characters are part of the plot. Most are forgettable. Even Altman must have agreed that the plot was overpopulated because a number of the characters have been virtually edited out.

Unlike "Nashville," the film lacks a core. Nothing builds; the characters, except for Lillian Gish as the old money matriarch and Mia Farrow as the silent sister of the bride, are uninteresting and unsympathetic. They pop in and out of the film and when they pop out, who cares if they return?

Altman's idea of humor comes off as puerile and dated. John Cromwell plays a senile bishop who performs the wedding ceremony. He forgets how to conduct the service and is too near sighted to know that at one point he's talking to a corpse. That's hardly sharp edged satire.

The general level of the acting, including performances by Carol Burnett, Paul Dooley, Amy Stryker, Vittorio Gassman, Desi Arnaz, Jr., Howard Duff, Geraldine Chaplin, John Considine, Lauren Hutton and Bert Remsen, is acceptable, as are the technical credits.

But in the end, the idea was at best mediocre. —Hege.