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REVIVALS IN FOCUS

A CRITICAL GUIDE BY ANDREW SARRIS & TOM ALLEN

WEDNESDAY

Douglas Sirk's **THE TARNISHED ANGELS** (1957), from a screenplay by George Zuckerman, based on William Faulkner's novel *Pylon*, with Rock Hudson (Burke Devlin), Dorothy Malone (LaVerne Shumann), Robert Stack (Captain Roger Shumann), and Jack Carson (Jiggs), is marvelously kinetic from its first image to its last. This black-and-white treasure, with a lot of help from rapturous lateral tracks, is one of the

few '50s films to master the wide-screen aesthetic and turn it into something both dynamic and ambiguous. The look of the film is almost contrapuntal to the stark tale of a few tragic days at a 1920s New Orleans airshow in the midst of Mardi Gras revels. The fading glories and mortal shames of a tight-knit family of barnstorming airplane racers are exposed through the aching naïveté of heart-on-the-sleeve melodrama. The people don't talk in this movie. They communicate

only through studied, revelatory dialogue and heavy doses of purple prose. Malone, as a mid-western earth mother, is noteworthy on vertiginously high heels as she strides provocatively across the screen in body-molded white dresses. The ingenuous Hudson may not have fit the bill as Faulkner's idea of a hard-drinking newshound, but it falls to him to deliver the passionately romantic, word-delirious eulogy on the love, honor, and heroism that the author has

perceived beneath the sordid veneer of a tacky air circus. **Public Theater: daily through Tuesday, except on Monday evening: 8:30, 10:10**