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Robert Altman's **A WEDDING** (1978), from a screenplay by John Considine, Patricia Resnick, Allan Nichols, and Altman, with Carol Burnett, Lillian Gish, and Paul Dooley, projects a disturbingly eccentric vision of America. With a kind of brutal bravado, death, disgrace, incivility, and infidelity stalk the joyless occasion of a high-church wedding and the midwestern rituals of a guest reception, a gift exchanging, and a ceremonial banquet in a groom's mansion. Altman's best moments, with faint asides to Stroheim

Renoir, and Buñuel, tend to be his most morbidly resigned when he suspends his four-dozen speaking characters between the grim and the grotesque. But basically he succeeds quite literally in transforming *A Wedding* into a wake. There is power here, but also a self-destructive nihilism in the downslide of a career when a major filmmaker seemed to be relinquishing the mainstream of satiric commentary to petty contempt for life in these United States. **Sunday, 9 p.m., The Movie Channel**
-Andrew Sarris & Tom Allen

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