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'Love Streams' — harrowing, cold view

LOVE STREAMS. Screenplay by Ted Allan & John Cassavetes, based on the play by Ted Allan; directed by John Cassavetes. Cast: Gena Rowlands, John Cassavetes, Diahnne Abbott, Seymour Cassel. Cannon Films. At local theaters.

BERKELEY

A CELEBRATION of insanity is the excuse for John Cassavetes' "Love Streams," a cold, harrowing piece, another "A Woman Under the Influence" but without a heart and set among the rich.

Through the imaginative Cassavetes technique, particularly the odd-angled

camera shots and the closeups that seem to reveal the actors' inner thoughts, through fine acting, through dialogue that only occasionally clanks, through controlled direction and editing, Cassavetes keeps the viewer in a claustrophobic trance.

Robert and Sarah are brother and sister who throw their money all over the place and at odd moments try to parent each other. A drunken scene in a car shows Robert waving his battered checkbook in the air and writing up half torn checks to pay off the prostitutes with whom he has spent the night. Sarah is seen splurging at an animal farm and going home with two

miniature horses, a goat, ducks, and a dog—all for Robert since her own child has repudiated her.

Every move the protagonists make brings destruction. Any time a resolution seems imminent, the story line self-destructs.

What "Love Streams" calls vividly to mind is poet Meridel LeSueur's admonition to artists not to waste time delineating the corpse of a dying society. Here is the corpse, laid out for burial along with the pathetic corpses of children who have gotten in the way of the rush to oblivion.

—PAT HICKERSON