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Hannah And Her Sisters

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Smashing comedy-drama by Woody Allen.

An Orion Pictures release of a Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe production. Produced by Robert Greenhut. Executive producers, Rollins, Joffe. Written and directed by Woody Allen. Features entire cast. Camera (Technicolor processing, Deluxe prints), Carlo Di Palma; editor, Susan E. Morse; production design, Stuart Wurtzel; set decoration, Carol Joffe; costume design, Jeffrey Kurland; sound, Les Lazarowitz; associate producer, Gail Sicilia; assistant director, Thomas Reilly; casting, Juliet Taylor; additional photography, Jamie Jacobsen. Reviewed at the Orion Screening Room, L.A., Jan. 13, 1986. (MPAA Rating: PG-13.) Running time: **106 MINS.**

Mickey Woody Allen
 Elliot Michael Caine
 Hannah Mia Farrow
 April Carrie Fisher
 Lee Barbara Hershey
 Hannah's Father Lloyd Nolan
 Hannah's Mother Maureen O'Sullivan
 Dusty Daniel Stern
 Frederick Max Von Sydow
 Holly Dianne Wiest

Hollywood — "Hannah And Her Sisters" is one of Woody Allen's great films, the answer to the prayers of Allen fans who have found his work since "Annie Hall" and "Manhattan" a bit slight. In fashioning this picture about the many different stages of romantic love, the writer-director has set his sights high and realized all his aims. This should settle in for long runs in traditional Allen territory and score more decisively at the b.o. over the long haul than his last several pictures.

One gets the feeling in the early going, as Allen swiftly introduces his large cast of characters, that this is going to be a major achievement. Indeed, he makes nary a misstep from beginning to end in charting the amorous affiliations of three sisters and their men over a two-year period.

In its structure and successful mixture of outright comedy, rueful meditation and sexual complications, "Hannah" most closely resembles "Manhattan" among the director's previous films. As before, most of the characters are relatively successful and creative New Yorkers with more than their share of angst and neuroses. Where "Manhattan" focused on single people or childless couples, however, the new film is loaded with family ties, children and parents, and has an essentially positive, rather than melancholy, thrust.

All of this makes for an exceedingly rich set of relationships and plot possibilities. Pic begins at a Thanksgiving dinner, and ends at one two years later, with most of the characters going through mate changes in the interim.

Hannah, played by Mia Farrow, was formerly married to tv producer Woody Allen but is now happily wed to agent Michael Caine, who, in turn, secretly lusts for his wife's sexy sister, Barbara Hershey, the live-in mate of tormented painter Max Von Sydow.

The third sister, Dianne Wiest, is by far the most neurotic of the bunch and, while waiting for her acting, singing or writing career to take off, runs a catering business with Carrie Fisher. She is no more successful with men than she is in her professions, and her disastrous date with Allen, her former brother-in-law, is one of the comic high points of the picture.

Everyone here endures some romantic anguish and trying times during the course of the two years. Allen suffers a mid-life crisis that is both uproarious and painful. A hypochondriac, he puts himself through endless medical tests for fear that he has a brain tumor and, after much soul-searching, con-

siders converting from Judaism to Catholicism, only to find, as Joel McCrea did in "Sullivan's Travels," salvation in comedy.

Structure and ever-changing relationships allow Allen to present the many different colors in the romantic rainbow: Caine's intense infatuation with Hershey, Von Sydow's fury at her breakup with him, Wiest's depression when Fisher beats her out for the attentions of an eligible man, Farrow's confusion and fear at Caine's growing remoteness, Maureen O'Sullivan and the late Lloyd Nolan's fondness for each other in old age.

Unsurprisingly, all the actors are seen in top form under Allen's astute direction, but it must be said that, under impossible odds, Dianne Wiest steals the show. She exhibits brashness and vulnerability in equal measure, and beautifully captures that sort of contemporary woman who is always busy but has nothing to show for it.

Hershey has just as much screen time and is also a revelation; never before has she seemed so natural and humanly appealing in a film. Farrow is depicted as an absolute angel, the only blameless individual in the picture, and looks even younger here than she did last year and the year before that. An emotional scene among the three sisters in a restaurant is an all-time classic of writing, acting and direction.

For the first time in a decade, Allen has not had Gordon Willis behind the camera, but Italian lenser Carlo Di Palma has done an exemplary job in his stead. Like all of the director's films, it looks and, with a soundtrack loaded with old show tunes, sounds great.

Putting in uncredited appearances here are Tony Roberts, in the usual best-friend role, and Sam Waterston, as Wiest and Fisher's dreamboat.—*Cart.*