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Health

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"What are we going to do about Robert Altman?" asks Vincent Canby in *The New York Times*. "It's difficult to talk about him without making him sound like some sort of household problem, like waxy build-up or clogged drains. He's an essential part of the American film scene that requires constant care. Left unattended, he goes wrong. Carried away by his own enthusiasm, he spends too much money on the sort of movie that can't possibly recoup its investment, or too much time on small details while losing sight of the overall project." Altman feels that the mis-distribution (or non-distribution) of *Health* were the changes in management at 20th Century Fox. But, as Canby observes, "*Health* deserves to be seen by anyone interested in the career of this most eccentric and unpredictable of contemporary American directors." The subject of the film is the health food fad; a fine bunch of eccentrics gather in Florida to celebrate their fitness cause at the National Health Convention: senile, but well preserved 80-year-old Lauren Bacall, front-running candidate for organization president, claims she owes her fitness to virginity; Glenda Jackson, her main opponent, is a campaigner who sounds suspiciously like Adlai Stevenson; Paul Dooley is the abrasive "Indi" candidate and vitamin salesman who demands equal time; and Carol Burnett is the White House Aide (deeply committed to remaining politically uncommitted) who gets sexy when she's nervous—which is almost all the time. James Garner and Dick Cavett round out the cast of zanies in this funny, outrageous, and irreverent salute to the politics of health and the health of politics. Directed by Robert Altman, 1980, USA, color, 96 mins.