

Malick film is a visual feast

'Days of Heaven,' earthly delight

By Jim Wright

Movie Critic

After a summer movie season dominated by sharks, cars, and rock 'n' roll, Terrence Malick's "Days of Heaven" arrives on gossamer wings — a film so delicately crafted, so exquisite that it should be shown at the Museum of Modern Art.

The film, about a trio of young migrant farm workers in the Texas Panhandle just before World War I, is cinema of the first order. Malick's screenplay is based in part on his own experiences working a wheat harvest from Texas to Canada in the early 1960's. Although it is slow-paced by most standards, it has been filmed so beautifully by

Malick and cinematographer Nestor Almendros that the story line becomes secondary to the film's visual impact.

A close-up of a grasshopper, a sweeping view of wheat fields worthy of a Wyeth painting, a shot of a kite sweeping across an autumn sky — the photography is so stunning that one could single out at least 60 individual frames from the movie that stand out as exceptional still photographs.

Multilevel excellence

But the visual appeal is just one aspect of a film that excels in so many ways, from the amplified natural sound effects (done with a Dolby audio system) and the haunting musical score by Ennio Morricone to well-conceived performances

by Richard Gere, Brooke Adams, Linda Manz, and Sam Shepard.

Lovers' triangle

"Days of Heaven" should be viewed as a companion piece to Malick's only other feature film,

A FILM REVIEW

"Badlands," which presented Sissy Spacek and Martin Sheen as star-crossed lovers who go on a murder spree in the 1950's — a story no doubt patterned after the career of mass murderer Charles Starkweather.

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Brooke Adams and Richard Gere in a scene from Terrence Malick's "Days of Heaven," about a trio of young migrant farm workers in Texas.