

about SYBIL (1976 USA 3hr. 18min.) PG13

The 1976 Emmy-winning television movie, starring Sally Field and Joanne Woodward, will be shown in its riveting complete form. It will be presented in our theatre by the acclaimed screenwriter Stewart Stern (**Rachel Rachel, Rebel Without A Cause, The Ugly American**)

When we traveled to Toronto's Rendezvous With Madness Film Festival in mid-November Bruce Wallace and I saw **Sybil** presented in its entirety with a panel discussion with screenwriter Stewart Stern and Dr. Patrick Suraci who knew Flora Schreiber, author of the book **Sybil**, and who met the subject of the story five years ago, developed a friendship and is currently publishing a biography of her. Completing the panel were Gail Fisher-Taylor, a psychotherapist and specialist in abuse, trauma and dissociation, who made a CBC Ideas radio documentary with Sybil's doctor in 1989, and psychiatrist and author Dr. Jack Birnbaum, another specialist in dissociation.

The presentation was absolutely absorbing, holding the audience from 7:30 till after midnight. With the movie it was a textbook layman's introduction to the much-misunderstood condition, then called "multiple personality disorder", or recently more helpfully named "dissociative personality disorder". Sybil had trouble finding help in her day (during and after the 2nd World War) and it is still difficult to find understanding and effective treatment. It is apparently a condition brought on by childhood trauma and not a biologically based illness that responds to medication which modern mental illness treatment methods favour.

Sybil died recently but her legacy lives on through this story captured in the book and, (as with the genesis of **One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest** from book to film), in another completely different and more accessible telling, in Stewart Stern's screenplay.

Stewart lives near Seattle, Wash., and as we were driving to the airport to return to our respective homes, he agreed to come to Movie Monday's theatre to do a similar presentation for only his traveling expenses. How could I not include **Sybil** in my premier fest?

Part of Stewart's motivation in presenting Sybil is to honour the process of psychotherapy which has been helpful in his own life.

A Brush With Life, one of our afternoon docs, has an intriguingly similar theme.