

Wine

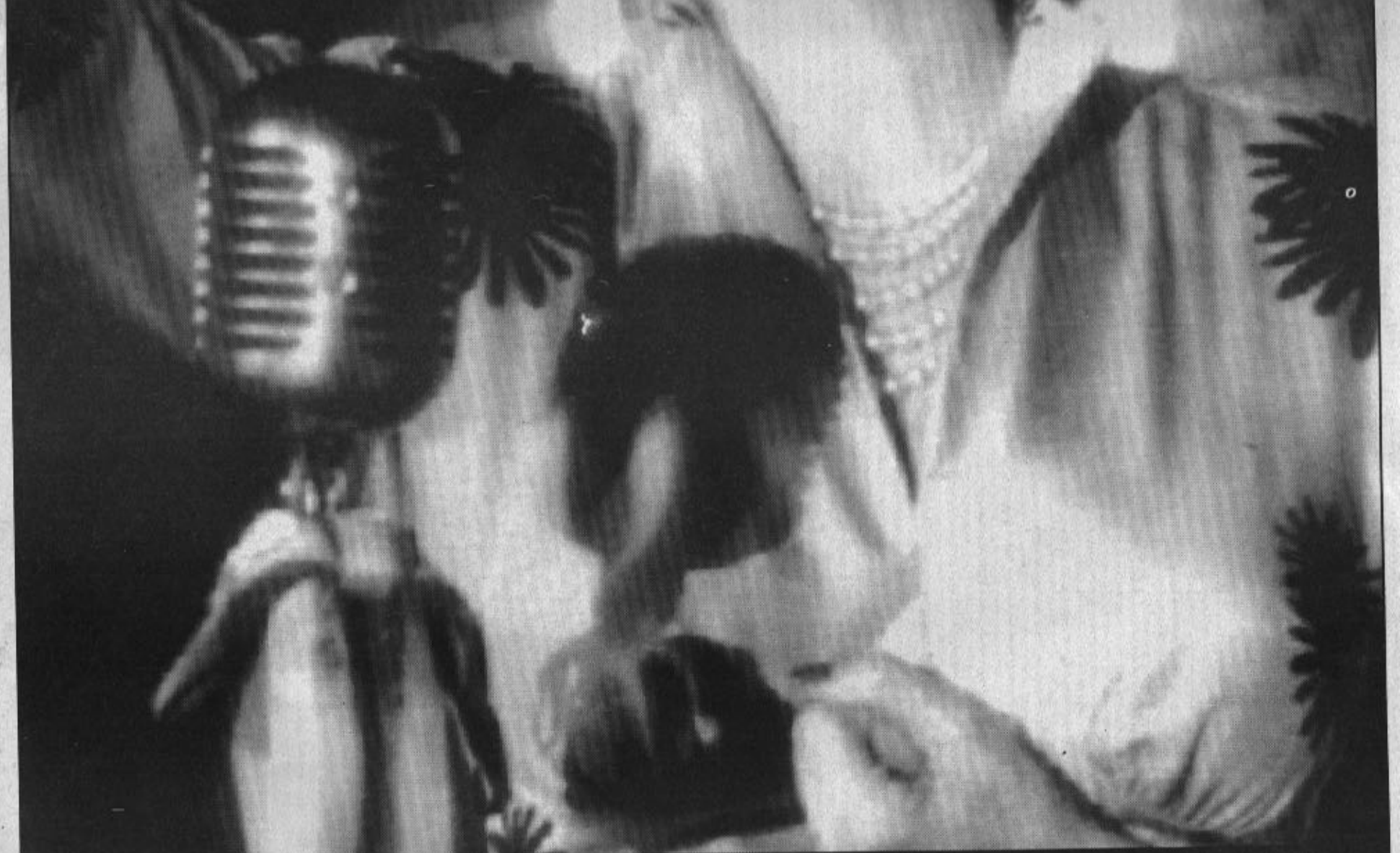
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AT NIGHT

JANUARY 2, 1997 • NO. 1

**MORNINGSTAR
RAVES OVER
“EVITA”**





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EVITA

Blond is good...

Starring: Madonna, Antonio Banderas, Jonathan Pryce

Directed by Alan Parker

Screenplay by Alan Parker and Oliver Stone

Running time: LONG, (over 2 and a half hours)

Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, **Lyrics by** Tim Rice

by Melanie Morningstar

Eyes, hair, lips, makeup

They have to adore me,

So come on, Dior me

or

Don't Cry for me Argentina

For I am ordinary, unimportant

And undeserving

Of such attention

Unless we all are -

I think we all are

So share my glory

So share my coffin



But I digress. Let's talk about the FILM...Let's talk about Madonna. First of all, a tango between Che and Evita is the metaphor for the entire movie. I've always seen it danced with the man and woman rigid, flashing and obvious. Banderas's Tango was hot, sensual, passionate and gentle, effortless and gentle. Strong and sincere, he's understated and steamy. This is exactly how he plays Che and this is why he is the surprise star and carries the film.

Madonna, on the other hand, (don't get me wrong, she is spectacular) seems to be, if not struggling, at least *working* at playing Evita. She seems to be really working at it, and while this works in general, it is glaringly obvious when sharing the screen with Antonio, who is effortless.

Kind of the way Eva Peron seemed, hmmm, funny about that...

Alan Parker has definitely captured the spirit, sights, sounds and smells of Argentina. Scene after glorious scene depict the best of Argentine life, the Gauchos on horseback riding through the Pampas following Evita as she hands out money from a speeding train... (I've been trying to find out if she actually did that). In fact Alan Parker said recently, "Evita's an old passion of mine. Eva Peron was an extraordinarily complex, fascinating and charismatic woman and to tell the truth about her, in a balanced, contemporary cinematic way, entirely as an opera, is a great challenge to any filmmaker."

Thereby hangs the tale of Evita. This musical is balanced? Well, so much about Eva Peron has passed into myth, that the woman Madonna (through Parker) has made of her here will only add to that mystique.

Now, let's dish...There are some scenes when Madonna was so pregnant that her tits seemed to have a life of their own. My friend and I played spot the shooting sequence based on her shape. Not that I'm quibbling of course, but there is one scene where she and Juan (what can be said of Jonathan Pryce other than brilliant as always, and, somewhat lost in the stellar shuffle) sweep up a magnificent staircase, she decked out in a magnificent beaded gown, and I wondered, as the camera shot from above them whether a new camera lens had been invented. Such were the size of her breasts. However, I guess it's not nice to talk about a pregnant woman's breasts in public, so this is the end of that discussion.

Will this movie become the trendsetter fashion pundits are expecting? The costumes



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If either of these stanzas does it for you, you'll love EVITA. Yes, this is Madonna. Yes, she is splendid. Antonio Banderas is extraordinary as Che. Jonathan Pryce is magnificent, as always, as Juan Peron, and yes, this is a movie musical. No amount of glitz, hype or glamour will get away from that fact. If you've never been able to cope with the concept of a musical, movie or otherwise, EVITA IS NOT THE MOVIE FOR YOU. You'll walk away bored, disillusioned with Madonna, cranky and pissed off with Antonio Banderas. That's it for the disclaimers...

If, however, the genre of the musical is up your alley, you are in for one hell of a treat.

The most surprising aspect of this oh-so-splendid production is Antonio Banderas's ability to carry the whole film. He is definitely the star of the movie, and moves tirelessly from one scene to the next. He is in just about every scene, and the movie-makers expect you to know that his character is Che Guevara (the famous Argentine revolutionary who was a great pal of Fidel's during the coupe d'etat on that little old cigar-smoking isle to our south). They also expect you to know that Che was Argentine (something you'd probably not know unless you'd been to Argentina or studied 20th century revolutionaries or some such.)

In fact, the producers of EVITA presume you know quite a bit about the musical, Latin American history, Argentine life in general, the tango and Peron's dictatorship, as well. More to the point, they just don't care if you know anything about this stuff at all. Unless you know that Argentina is famous for beef, for example (something the average Madonna fan, or American may not know), you might find the idea of a passionate Tango between slabs of hanging dead cow more than a little comical.

are authentically recreated; the director and designers having poured through thousands of hours of documentary footage to get it just right. Evita has 85 costume changes in Buenos Aires alone, including 39 hats, 45 pairs of shoes and 56 pairs of earrings. Let's not forget the 42 different hair designs created by Martin Samuel. All are fairly replicable in one form or another, and God knows, I've been up to my eyeballs in bobbypins since I saw the first frame.

The biggest winner may well be Julio Iglesias. At a recent gathering at his home, I got into a conversation with one of his back-up musicians and Randy Singer (who plays with Maryel Epps). They were talking about how brave it was of Julio to record "Tango", saying that focusing on one genre was risky. All I could think was if climbing on the coat-tails of Madonna's publicity machine is risky, then I guess it could be seen that way. "Tango" is pretty good, by the way, and a fine cross-section of songs to get any tango collection started.

Is EVITA for everyone? I think not. The MTV generation, with its collective attention span of a pea will have trouble beyond the first five minutes. But hang in there. This is a big screen movie. The sweeping crowd scenes, magnificently captured shots of country life, and sultry tango bars will never play on small-screen video rental. If you intend to see EVITA in this lifetime, go to the cinema. Should everyone go and see it? Absolutely. Just remember, it is long, and there may be a quiz.

—*Melanie Morningstar* is *Movie Critic* for *WIRE*, and has lived in Argentina and traveled extensively there.

Visit EVITA's very-own website <http://www.EVITA-TheMovie.com>