Absence of Malice, opening soon at Sack Heaters is in and around Boston.

In Columbia Pictures' new film, *Absence of Malice*, the director, Sidney Pollack, and the writer, Kurt Euelelde, set out to examine the press' abuse of its ability to print virtually anything about anyone, however untrue, as long as there is absence of malicious intent. The result is a well-written, well-acted film, but a flawed analysis of the problems associated with the journalistic guideline of "absence of malice."

**The reason the analysis is flawed is that the media cover the story centering around Megan Carter (Nally Field), is not very competent, and so her story does not quite generalize to all journalists. She is, for instance, the type of reporter who gets caught sexually tapping an interview. Her journalistic specialty is printing untrue, and unconfirmed stories. For the first half of the movie, the victim of her stories is one Michael Gallagher (Paul Newman).

In one particularly disturbing scene, Carter huggers Gallagher's emotionally unstable girlfriend, who eventually gives Carter some very embarrassing information, while insisting that her name be kept out of the story. Thoughtlessly and pointlessly, Carter uses her name, and the girlfriend commits suicide the next day when the story is published. This time, Carter not only neglects to confirm the story, but she also fails to get any background for it, which would have revealed that the girlfriend was seeing a psychiatrist.

In each instance, Carter publishes false or damaging information but is safe from libel because she is not doing so maliciously. So, Pollack and Eudlelde would have us believe -- are the dangers of "absence of malice."

Unfortunately, the only reason Carter could not be accused of malice in this movie is that she is clearly not clever enough to act maliciously, and the low point of the movie occurs when her editor tells her that she is a good reporter.

In fact, because she is a relatively gullible and stupid reporter, Carter believes and prints almost everything anyone tells her. Throughout the movie she publishes virtually nothing but unconfirmed and unconfirmed hearsay, which is the province of *Her Name Engineer*, not the Miami Standard, her supposedly legitimate newspaper.

The only really true story she prints causes someone's suicide.

The only reason Gallagher continues to talk to this dangerous reporter is to set up his solution's revenge, which is certainly the movie's high point. In a brilliantly written scene of a scene, he suddenly gives all the antagonists enough rope, and they hang themselves in one of the most satisfactory movie reveals in recent memory.

The enjoyment of watching the antagonists slowly come to realize just how they have damaged or destroyed their own careers is strongly enhanced by the fine performance of William Monn, who plays the Justice Department investigator who is called in at the end to pick up the pieces.

Paul Newman gives a very convincing and restrained performance as the gristy Gallagher that makes the victim of his suicide, Sally Field plays one of the most unlikable characters in her career. It is either a tribute to her acting ability, or a sad sign of the times which include Janet Cooke and the printing of gossip by the Washington Post, that her portrait of a stupid and gullible reporter is also entirely convincing.

**Joseph Roman**

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**Absence of Malice.**

**Competence.**

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**On The Town drama**

The MIT Community Players announce the production of a futuristic version of *Prometheus Bound*. Based on the original ancient Greek play by Aeschylus, the production has evolved through eight weeks of work and improvisation, this futuristic version is a post-apocalyptic version of the New York World Trade Center. Performances are 8pm on the 11th, 12th, and 13th. Admission is free. Room 491 of the MIT Student Center.

This Thursday and Friday, the M.I.T Dramatic, which will present *Small Works*. The workshops, which will feature informal performances by students of the MIT Dram Workshop, directed by Beth Soff, and the Acting 1 class, directed by Ron Jenkins. The production will be held in the Krescendo Theater and admission is free. C.

253-2877 for information.

The Boston Ballet presents its 18th annual production *The Nutcracker* at the Metropolitan Center December through January 3. As a special adds this year, there will be a matinee performance on Christmas Eve at 2:30pm. Tickets information call 542-3945.

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**music**

The MIT Noon-Hour Chapel Concert featuring the Ensemble Chantelle will perform early Italian Baroque vocal music this Thursday at the MIT Chapel. It all starts at noon and admission is free.

**The Zambie Chorale of Boston**

The Zambie Chorale of Boston, conducted by Joshua Jacobson, will perform* Hallelujah!* on Sunday, December 13 at 3:30pm MIT's Krescendo Theater. Tickets are $5.50 and available at the door or by calling 566-1812.