Playmate Makes Good

They All Laughed, starring Dorothy Stratten, Ben Gazzara, Audrey Hepburn, and John Ritter. Directed by Peter Bogdanovich. A Tone-Life Films Presentation of a Moon Pictures Production. Now showing at the Sack Theatre in Boston.

Hey, does your mundane life need a little excitement injected into it? Well, here's something that'll definitely set your juices flowing: Dorothy Stratten, Playboy's Playmate of the Year, 1980, stars in "They All Laughed" — one movie that really makes me glad I'm alive and mule. What we have here is not one, nor two, nor three, but a total of four marvelous, unforgettable creatures your love-starved eyes have patiently waited for. Peter Bogdanovich directs and produces this romantic comedy and it is a true winner.

The film is a bit hard to decipher at first, but essentially it revolves around The Odyssey Detective Agency, "We Never Sleep" which specializes in following women suspected by their husbands of sleeping around. Ben Gazzara, John Ritter, and Blaine Novak are the private investigators hired to track down the likes of Audrey Hepburn, Patti Hansen, Linda McCartney, Colleen Camp, and of course, Dorothy, in a flowing cycle of predator and prey. "Laughed" is the story of a group of unremarkable people, led by ten extremely attractive people, set on the stage of New York City.

Ben Gazzara portrays an especially sensitive character in John Russo. A private eye usually seen in the company of younger women; Gazzara comments, "He's been attracting women of his own age for a while, but he doesn't have to be reminded that he's growing older. Then suddenly, much to his surprise, he falls in love with a woman who is in her contemporary, some people are deeply hurt. He's used to casual relationships, and along comes one that moves him profoundly."

I remember Gazzara in Otto Preminger's "The Anatomy of a Murder" in 1959, cast as the tough young Army sergeant on trial for killing the man who tried to rape his wife. The enormous polarity of that and his current role is further testament to the versatility of the man — kudos to Ben Gazzara.

John Ritter produces a similarly touching work as Charles Roolfge, the man with the enviable task of following Dorothy. Ritter gives his usual kooky routine a la Chevy Chase, but he also presents an uncommonly poignantly side of himself, as he falls in love with Miss Stratton and shows that he, too, has a greater repertoire than generally given credit to him. Audrey Hepburn, one of the movie industry's greatest beauties, displays sensitivity and subtlety in her role as the wife of an international tycoon who falls in love with her pursuer. The juxtaposition of her mature, motherly relationship with Gazzara to the zaniness of the Ritter/Stratten automobiles is a film joy.

On a more solemn note, I must now come to the essence of this matter. Dorothy Stratten, the beautiful ex-Playboy Bunny, was tragically murdered on August 14, 1980 by her estranged husband, who brutally shot a shotgun to her head at point-blank range. There was little secrecy that Stratten and Bogdanovich were due to be married soon after the film's production, and her divorce from her current husband. There were certain frightening plot allusions in "They All Laughed" that bear strong resemble to reality, though. In one telling scene, John Ritter pretends to read Dorothy's palm and predicts that her current marriage will come to a sudden, swift end, and Stratten wonders aloud if she has much time left — [we can only hope a gum as to how much of this dialogue was merely plot, or a chilling prophecy.]

"They All Laughed" is a light-hearted, delightful film, and if you look past the plot shortcomings, you'll have a grand time.

She left her mother, her younger sisters and brother, and many friends; no one who met Dorothy Stratten can find a bad word about her. During shooting John Ritter told Bogdanovich that he had no difficulty acting the part of a person falling in love: "I had to do, said, was to look at Dorothy."

Dale Brod

XTC succeeds better than the Clash in several ways. XTC is able to sustain their messages solely on their music — unlike the Clash, they don't meander off into long club versions or backup tape loops. English Settlement, for all its experimentation, is still a tight album where nearly every note counts. On the other hand, its a double record, and the import sound is always far superior anyway. Point-blank range. There was little secret..."

XTC album - to dislodge it.

In addition to this fine album, XTC continue their reign as "King of the B-Sides." The import 12-inch single of "Senses Working Overtime" contains two excellent songs not included on the album and a fairly decent instrumental. This single, plus the English import of English Settlement, will probably run you about twenty dollars, but it's money well spent — the American version of the album is slated to be only a single record, and the import sound is always far superior anyway.

It's too early to be discussing entries for the Top Ten Albums of 1982, but this much is certain: XTC will win a major minor miracle — perhaps an even better XTC album — to dislodge it.