CINEMA PARADISO
Written & directed by Giuseppe Tornatore. Starring Philippe Noiret, Salvatore Cascio, and Marco Leonardi.
At the Nickerson

By MARIE E. V. COPPOLA and JIGNA DESAI

IT'S EASY TO SEE WHY DIRECTOR GIUSEPPE TORNATORE'S second full-length feature film, Cinema Paradiso, won the Special Jury prize at the Cannes Film Festival, as well as nominations for Best Foreign Film in this year's Academy Awards. The film distinguishes itself with its superb acting and fluid direction.

Cinema Paradiso, set in a rustic, close-knit Italian village in the 1940s and 50s, opens with Salvatore's mother trying to contact him with news of the death of Alfredo (Philippe Noiret), Salvatore's childhood, father-like friend. Upon hearing of his friend's death, Salvatore's mind flies to his youth in the village and his relationship with Alfredo, a projectionist, and the movies they showed together.

Toto, as the young Salvatore is nicknamed, is played with mischievous naivete by eight-year-old Salvatore Cascio. While the entering monkey-like antics and energy of the impish Toto frustrate Alfredo, he cannot help but befriend the fatherless boy. Their relationship is based on a mutual love and fascination with films. Together at the Cinema Paradiso, they bring the villagers under one roof to view and experience images of faraway John Wayne westerns, as well as local and familiar ones of a fascist Italy. As the only regular entertainment in the village, the cinema draws the inhabitants together as a community.

The knowledge that Toto gains during his informal apprenticeship is utilized unexpectedly when a tragic fire blinds Alfredo before he can be rescued by his young 'friend. At the age of 10, Toto becomes the 'official projectionist of the village. At the age of 10, Toto becomes the 'official projectionist of the village. At the age of 10, Toto becomes the 'official projectionist of the village. Toto boardings the train for Rome and Alfredo commands his hands, and gains from them the wisdom that urges him to command Toto to leave his birthplace.

Also noteworthy is the camerawork and the cleverly designed transitions between different time periods and characters. For instance, the transition between the young Toto and the adolescent Salvatore occurs as the blinded Alfredo caresses the child's face. As he moves away, the face of the young adult is revealed. The camera captures the essence of the villagers' lives through vignette-like clips. A particularly memorable one is of a couple who begin their romance with a glance from the balcony to the floor seating in the Cinema Paradiso — we later see them cooly seated together during their courtship, and later again with their squalling child in the theater. At the end they reappear as an elderly couple and silently acknowledge the role that Salvatore played in bringing them together.

Although a touch sentimental, the film captures a deep and passionate friendship, while exploring the effect that movies have on our lives. Cinema Paradiso deserves the acclaim it has received.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1990 The Tech PAGE 7

CINEMA PARADISO distinguished by superb acting

Alfredo (Philippe Noiret) and Toto (Salvatore Cascio) in Cinema Paradiso

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