bizarre murder mystery—with no more bizarre aspect than the five deaths detailed therein, the most grotesque of them being James Coburn’s smothered in his head in a plastic bag—with Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn doing no more than playing themselves and doing it marvelously. Grant ages beautifully and this performance is a paradox: It is the first time his age—he in his mid-50s—really shows, and he isn’t slowed down a bit by it. Age achieved gracefully, without senility, is delightful to watch; this is Grant’s best acting job in years, or, at least, since his last Hitchcock, North by Northwest, of which Chaparde is reminiscent in more ways than Grant: in its chase format; in its slender but nonantiseptic heroine; in its subtle comic relief and smooth-as-silk lead villain, here one and the same as impersonated, now hilarious, now beautifully despicable, by Walter Matthau, a superb character actor with no delusions of grandeur. Henry Mancini’s score fits in; in fact, that is the film’s secret, never mind the inadequacy of description: everything “fits,” everything is “right.” Everything, with one minor exception—Coburn’s performance, the most obnoxious this year or last. All else is all right. Just entertainment, to be sure, but splendidly executed. I hope Hitchcock sees it.

—DANIEL BATES

4 For Texas. Having encroached on the reputations of Lewis Milestone (Ocean’s 11) and John Sturges (Sergeants 3), the Sinatra clan now drags Robert Aldrich through the dirt and only his hardest fans can emerge unscathed. Basically a return to the Errol Flynn days of Warner Bros. yore, the film suffers from vacillation of intent revealing Aldrich’s futile effort to salvage his first script from Clannish in-jokes. The opening scene, a stagecoach holdup, is Aldrich at his visually grandest, utilizing four top photographers (Ernest Laszlo, Joseph Biroc, Carl Guthrie, Burnett Guffey) and a top second-unit director (Oscar Rudolph). Charles Bronson is a splendid villain and, for a while at least, Dean Martin seems on the road back to his best characterization, the good badie in Hawks’ Rio Bravo. Then indecision sets in. Aldrich stalwarts—Marjorie Bennett, Wesley Addy, Dave Willock, Paul Langton—make token appearances. Arthur Godfrey “guest stars” and the Three Stooges have a scene. In a film that cries for Max Steiner, Nelson Riddle’s score melodramatically emphasizes the wrong points when it isn’t Mickey Mouse-ing the others. Aldrich, nervous that his first script (co-written with Teddi Sherman) is too visual and not enough verbal, hastily adds dubbed-in lines back at Culver City. What began as a serious “fun” picture ends up more fun in the making than the viewing; a “throw-away” movie, as it were. Thus is achieved Aldrich’s absolute worst picture, surpassing Sodom and Gomorrah, heretofore an unthinkable achievement.—DANIEL BATES.

Lilies of the Field. Consider the singing nuns of the desert. Since “everybody wants to give,” they cajole and cudgel everybody into realizing it, and then the Lord provides. Their principal victim, Homer Smith (Sidney Poitier), is too willing for sympathy; he always wanted to build something, so he builds them their chapel. Before he goes off singing happily (but badly dubbed), he manages to trick Mother Maria (Lilia Skala) into saying “thank you,” too. Of course, it might have been worse; they might have seduced him to their Romish ways. The stars occasionally make this uncommonly unappealing tale come alive, but most of the time Miss Skala is merely fierce and Poitier hangs desperately by his charm. The nuns’ colossal gall is matched by producer-director Ralph Nelson and perhaps by adapter James Poe as well: the end of their ninety-four minutes of bare competence is signified by the word “Amen.”

Love with the Proper Stranger. Rocky (Steve McQueen) got Angie (Natalie Wood) pregnant, but then they get acquainted and, after considering abortion, behave properly. Apart from its powerful plea for legalizing the operation, the film is a comedy in the “warm, human” manner. Under Robert Mulligan’s direction, the cast seems uncertain of the warmth and humanity of Arnold Schulman’s screenplay, but Elmer Bernstein’s score makes it quite plain, especially when the title-song comes on the radio just before the young couple’s initial plans prove abortive.

Mary, Mary is notable among the more recent filmed comic plays (Critic’s Choice, Irma la Douce, Take Her, She’s Mine, Toys in the Attic, Under the Yum-Yum Tree, Wives and Lovers) for the impression it creates that adults made it. On one hand, it is the Long Day’s Journey into Night of comedy (though it is no longer than 125 minutes): the camera keeps getting in the way; one feels that one ought to be able to see the entire stage. On the other, it does not often leer, and the bright lines that fall flat are merely that, not insults to the intelligence. Unfortunately, it’s easy to see why Bob (Barry Nelson) and Mary (Debbie Reynolds) split up and why they get together again. Both of them continually behave as if they were on a stage. It would be trying for anyone, even in so large an apartment; but obviously the two were made, if not necessarily for each other, for no one else. The play is by Jean Kerr, Richard L. Breen