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**TCM THIS MONTH**



**31 DAYS OF OSCAR**

**SPOTLIGHT**

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**[Starring Walter Matthau - 6/14](#)**

Though more famous for his comedy roles opposite Jack Lemmon, he was also a formidable character actor and our line-up runs the gamut from critically acclaimed dramas (**A Face in the Crowd**, 1957) to Matthau's only directorial effort (**Gangster Story**, 1959).

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**Summer Wishes, Winter Dreams**

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[Summer Wishes, Winter Dreams](#)



In the early '70s, the social liberation of the '60s was still expanding the lives of young people and the generation of WWII was full into middle age, with all its potential malaise. **Summer Wishes, Winter Dreams** (1973) covers the generational spectrum of the era, with a focus on the older side.

Joanne Woodward portrays Rita Walden, an aging New York wife/mother/daughter struggling with her place in a world that seems at once dull and un navigable. She is a dissatisfied, unhappy person, combative with the people in her life – her grown daughter, mother and sister. Martin Balsam is Harry, her oculist husband, a mild man, patient with his wife's chronic bitterness. When Rita's mother (Sylvia Sidney) dies unexpectedly, Rita falls headlong into a midlife crisis that recalls many painful memories of the past.

If the film title and its existential probing seem Bergmanesque, it's no accident. In one scene, Rita and her mother see a Bergman film together, *Wild Strawberries* (1957), in which the lead character, like Rita, faces his dawning mortality and begins to question his relationship with his family and the choices of his past. Like that character, Rita has frightening visions, mostly involving her adult son, who has fled to Amsterdam to be free of his parents' conventions and live with his boyfriend. Her regrets

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of how she's dealt with her son's homosexuality are a recurring theme in the film.

Eventually, perhaps spurred on by his wife's crisis, Harry begins to grapple with his own ghosts. On their trip to Europe, he revisits the site of the Battle of the Bulge and his traumatic experiences there. The visit unhinges him and it's this break in his normally steady demeanor that gives Rita a chance to comfort him for a change, to her benefit as well as his.

**Summer Wishes, Winter Dreams** was written by Stewart Stern, who penned *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and *Rachel, Rachel* (1968), another much-lauded role for Woodward, in which she also depicts a character having to come to terms with her lot in life. For Stern, who so exquisitely explored the angst of '50s youth in *Rebel*, **Summer Wishes, Winter Dreams** offered a chance to explore the anxieties of late middle age.

Director Gilbert Cates has worked primarily in television and is best known as a long-time producer of the Academy Awards®. His 1970 film, *I Never Sang for My Father*, another dissection of family relationships, earned three Oscar® nominations. He is the uncle of actress Phoebe Cates.

**Summer Wishes, Winter Dreams** is a true reflection of an era when moviegoers were more patient with somber character studies. It was nominated for a Best Actress Oscar® for Woodward and a Best Supporting Actress Oscar® for Sidney. Woodward won the BAFTA for best actress, the New York Film Critics Circle Award and was nominated, along with Sidney and Balsam, for a Golden Globe.

Producer: Jack Brodsky

Director: Gilbert Cates

Screenplay: Stewart Stern

Cinematography: Gerald Hirschfeld

Music: Johnny Mandel

Film Editing: Sidney Katz

Cast: Joanne Woodward (Rita Walden), Martin Balsam (Harry Walden), Sylvia Sidney (Mrs. Pritchett), Tresa Hughes (Betty Goody), Dori Brenner (Anna), Ron Richards (Bobby Walden).

C-89m.

by Emily Soares



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