



DREAM PALACE

Broadcast News

With a pre-recorded introduction by director Sarah Smith (30 May only).

Twenty-four years on, this witty, whip-smart rom-com following the fraught TV newsroom love triangle of Holly Hunter's perky producer, Albert Brooks's insecure reporter and William Hurt's charmingly bland anchor-in-training looks like James L. Brooks's masterwork. A warm, humanist comedy about the struggle to reconcile work, love and ethics, it's the kind of character-driven, meticulously performed and emotionally crunchy work that Hollywood has lately rendered almost extinct. Though he made his name with TV sitcoms like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Taxi*, Brooks plays with classic cinema tropes here with an exhilarating confidence. A live broadcast takes on the rhythms of a sex scene, a race against time to edit a news item becomes the chase, the romantic lead doubles as the dumb blonde. Seen from another angle, that of its spiky satire of increasingly dumbed-down network news, it looks not just intelligent and playful but positively prescient. When Albert Brooks's character opines only semi-jokingly that his rival is the devil, who little by little will lower journalistic standards, he's announcing the birth of today's infotainment culture.

Kate Stables, *Sight & Sound*, April 2011

Contemporary reviews

In *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, which he created with Allan Burns and which was set in a Minneapolis TV station, James Brooks had a dry run at many of the media types considerably fleshed out in this satire-cum-romantic comedy set in the world of broadcast journalism. In particular, one of the most memorable characters in the TV show, its absurdly posturing anchorman, has been turned inside out to become the shy, always slightly fazed, but undeniably personable Tom Grunick. William Hurt, in a subtle piece of behavioural comedy, always manages to seem one step behind in comprehension without losing his charm or sex appeal. At the same time, the film is shot in the quick-fire style of any TV sitcom, with an emotional glibness evident in Brooks' directorial debut, *Terms of Endearment*, and a reliance on one-liners that gives a mechanically calculated air to the openness and indeterminacy that Brooks is at pains to create in the central triangle. This is eventually not resolved at all, or is resolved (as the ironic coda points out) elsewhere.

Romantic comedy in a traditional mould, in fact, wins out over the satire (although, in its portrait of how the news is assembled, or manufactured, the film might be said to bear out Tom Wolfe's remark about news reporters having the ethics of aluminium-siding salesmen). In one scene in the Nicaraguan jungle, producer Jane – the workaholic who also stands for integrity, to the extent of driving her colleagues out in droves from a conference on the responsibility of the news – is insistent that even a shot of a contra guerrilla putting on his boots shouldn't be staged. It would obviously have been difficult in this context to raise more important issues about the politics of that conflict, or the media's treatment of it. But the ethics and techniques of broadcasting in general are often little more than a background to the romantic triangle – a professional background little different, say, from the 30s conventions for newspaper stories – despite Brooks' own newsroom

experience, and his declared intention of exploring changes in the medium. 'When I came in contact with it again at the [political] conventions, I realised that it had so radically changed that I knew nothing about it ... I felt the same fundamental changes in motion pictures and in my friends' professions ... and I wanted to do the picture to deal with all these changes.'

Such changes really only filter through – again in romantic-comedy terms – as problems of timing: the effect of technology in speeding up human responses, the inevitable misconceptions between a demanding job and personal relationships. Here, Holly Hunter's Jane emerges most effectively, spilling over from a single character trait (again rather sitcom like, and something that affects all three leads) into someone divided between an obsessive, driven career woman and an affectionate co-worker. Even when railing against her father as a child, she doesn't forget to kiss him goodnight. Jane's drive pays off professionally, while she remains out of sync personally. Hesitation, regret and indecision end in repeated tearful outbursts. She links the ambitious heroines of 30s and 40s films with the 80s circumstances which have allowed young women to become media executives. What proves difficult is the transition from being tough and decisive at work and more pliant and flexible outside it; here she tries to be both helpmeet and housewife while what she needs *is* a housewife. In the end, only her two male colleagues manage to combine professional success with personal companionship. In this, the film is at its most traditional, most pessimistic and perhaps also its most realistic.

Louise Sweet, Monthly Film Bulletin, April 1988

In *Broadcast News* the performances are so good they almost seduce you away from seeing what the film is really about. It caused a great stir in America because it was taken as a devastating exposé of the much-respected TV news producers and presenters. It is, of course, nothing of the kind. At the heart of the film is an old-fashioned Hollywood triangle: Aaron Altman (Albert Brooks) is a brilliant but depressed reporter with no screen charisma. 'If insecurity and desperation were a turn on,' he says, 'wouldn't this be a great world.' Tom Grunick (William Hurt) is the opposite, an empty-headed aspirant anchorman floating inevitably to the top. Jane Craig (Holly Hunter) is a talented, idealistic news producer, with a neurotic temperament and a delightful Southern accent.

Most of the satiric bite is to be found in the performances. The funniest is by Jack Nicholson (uncredited) as the God of this little world, the network news anchorman. Anyone who saw *Prizzi's Honor* or James L. Brooks' previous film, *Terms of Endearment*, many have wondered whether Nicholson could ever bring his acting style back from over the top, but he has managed it here. His adoption of the bogus gravitas of a Cronkite is in itself a fine satirical achievement.

At least Brooks hasn't just written a love story with a news studio as a background. This film is much more in the mould of *Hill Street Blues* and Brooks' own *Lou Grant*. The drama emerges, along with some good jokes, directly from the mechanics of the job: editing, editorial decisions, network economics. It also shares those programmes' amiable and forgiving attitudes to its own central characters. The film is consistently interesting and entertaining, even at 130 minutes. But compared with other films about broadcasting, like *Network* or *The Ploughman's Lunch*, its critique of the new system doesn't amount to much.

Sean French, Sight and Sound, Spring 1988

BROADCAST NEWS

Director: James L. Brooks
Production Companies: Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, Gracie Films, Amercent Films, American Entertainment Partners
Executive Producer: Polly Platt
Producer: James L. Brooks
Co-producer: Penney Finkelman Cox
Associate Producers: Kristi Zea, Susan Zirinsky
Production Executive for Gracie Films: Richard Sakai
Senior Production Associates: Diane Brooks, Paul Germain
Production Co-ordinator: Cynthia E. Streit
Unit Production Manager: David V. Lester
Location Manager: Stuart Neumann
Production Assistants: Sebastian Ballhaus, Margaret Murphy, Lynsey Evans, Craig Knisek, Clay Griffith
Assistant Directors: Yudi Bennett, David Sardi, Barbara Bruno
2nd Unit Assistant Director: Peter Schindler
Casting: Ellen Chenoweth
Additional Casting: Paula Herald
Washington Casting: Central Casting
Miami Casting: Unique Casting
Voice Casting: Barbara Harris
Screenplay: James L. Brooks
Director of Photography: Michael Ballhaus
2nd Unit Photographer: Gregg Heschong
Camera Operator: David M. Dunlap
Video Co-ordinator: Richard Clark
Video Technicians: Douglas A. Degrazzio, Van Scarboro
Video Camera Crew: Bruce Kissel, Greg Larson, Winter Byrd
Graphics: The EFX Company
Editor: Richard Marks
Additional Editors: David Moritz, Margaret Goodspeed, Mike Mulconnery
Production Designer: Charles Rosen
Set Designer: Harold Fuhrman
Set Decorator: Jane Bogart
Production Illustrator: Sherman Labby
Costume Designer: Molly Maginnis
Women’s Costumer: Oda Groeschel
Men’s Costumer: Tony Scarano
Make-up: Carl Fullerton
Titles: Saul Bass
Titles Co-ordinator: Jeff Okun
Opticals: Cinema Research Corporation, Clayton R. Marsh, Apogee Inc.
Music: Bill Conti
Orchestrations: Jack Eskew
Music Editor: Robert Badami
Music Recording: Lee DeCarlo
Sound Recording: Thomas Causey
Sound Re-recording: Don Mitchell, Rick Kline, Kevin O’Connell
Additional Sound Re-recording: Steve Maslow, Grover Helsley, Gregg Landaker
Supervising Sound Editor: Robert Grieve
Dialogue Editors: Jacqueline Christianini, Jack Smathers, Dave Kulczycki
Sound Effects Editors: Patrick Drummond, Linda Whittlesey
Supervising ADR Editor: Beth Bergeron
ADR Editors: Jessica Gallavan, Jeff Rosen
ADR Recording: Charleen Richards
Foley Editors: Cindy Marty, Mark Stoeckinger
Foley: Taj Soundworks, John Roesch, Ellen Heuer
Stunt Co-ordinator: Jery Hewitt
Technical Co-ordinator: Charlie Wilson
Special Adviser: David Davis

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Cast:

William Hurt (*Tom Grunick*)
Albert Brooks (*Aaron Altman*)
Holly Hunter (*Jane Craig*)
Robert Prosky (*Ernie Merriman*)
Lois Chiles (*Jennifer Mack*)
Joan Cusack (*Blair Litton*)
Peter Hackes (*Paul Moore*)
Christian Clemenson (*Bobby*)
Robert Katims (*Martin Klein*)
Ed Wheeler (*George Moore*)
Stephen Mendillo (*Gerald Grunick*)
Kimber Shoop (*young Tom*)
Dwayne Markee (*young Aaron*)
Gennie James (*young Jane*)
Leo Burmester (*Jane’s dad*)
Amy Brooks (*Elli Merriman*)
Jonathan Benya (*Clifford Altman*)
Frank Doubleday (*mercenary*)
Sally Knight (*Lila*)
Manny Alvarez (*Spanish cameraman*)
Luis Valderrama (*guerrilla leader*)
Francisco García (*guerrilla soldier*)
Richard Thomsen (*General McGuire*)
Nathan Benchley (*commander*)
Marita Geraghty (*date-rape woman*)
Nicholas D. Blanchet (*Weekend News producer*)
Maura Moynihan (*make-up woman*)
Chuck Lippman (*floor manager*)
Nannette Rickert (*Paul’s secretary*)
Tim White (*Edward Towne*)
Peggy Pridemore (*Tom’s soundman*)
Emily Crowley (*Emily*)
Gerald Ender (*newsroom worker*)
David Long (*Donny*)
Josh Billings (*Chyron operator*)
Glenn Faigen (*technical director*)
Robert Grevemberg Jr. (*technical director*)
Richard Pehle (*control room director*)
James V. Franco (*Weekend News director*)
Jimmy Mel Green, Raoul Rizik (*assistant directors*)
Mike Skehan (*technician*)
Franklyn Bullard (*audio visual engineer*)
Glen Roven, Marc Shaiman (*news theme writers*)
Alex Mathews (*audio visual engineer*)
Steve Smith (*Aaron’s cameraman*)
Martha L. Smith (*Aaron’s soundwoman*)
Cynthia B. Hayes (*mother in hall*)
Dean Nitz, Phil Ugel, Lance Wain (*young toughs*)
Susan Marie Feldman (*Ellen*)
Jean Bourne Carinci (*Tom’s female colleague*)
M. Fekade-Salassie (*cab driver*)
Jerry Gough (*uniformed cop*)
Robert Rasch (*Defense Department spokesman*)
Robert Walsh (*NATO spokesman*)
John Cusack (*angry messenger*)
John Badila, Heather Ehlers, Arlene M. Dillon, Sam Samuels (*guests at ball*)
Rochelle Deering (*woman at speech*)
Albert Murphy Sr. (*man at airport*)
Eleanore C. Kopecky (*woman at airport*)
Jeffrey Alan Thomas (*airport cabbie*)
Jack Nicholson (*Bill Rorish*) *

USA 1987
133 mins

* Uncredited

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