



Roger Ebert.com

Rosalie Goes Shopping

Roger Ebert May 02, 1990

Most movies have a dominant quality, and in "Rosalie Goes Shopping," that sought-after quality is Reassurance. The movie is about a woman who reassuringly provides her family with all of the best things in life, and reassuringly lies to the banks and the credit card companies that she will be able to pay for them, and reassuringly assures herself that she is a splendid wife and a wonderful mother and an exemplary human being.

Sometimes, to be sure, she has her infinitesimal little moments of doubt, and when they spring up, she goes to confession, where her parish priest listens in wonder to her tale of scams, con games and check kittings. He gives her the best advice he can, and she leaves him trying to reassure himself that he belongs in the priesthood. How does a priest feel when a penitent seems more positive about her sins than he does about her redemption? The whole movie takes place somewhere in rural Arkansas, where Rosalie ([Marianne Sagebrecht](#)), a plump German woman with a beatific smile, has settled down with her husband to raise a large and increasingly affluent family. The husband ([Brad Davis](#)) is a crop-dusting pilot who presumably wooed and won Rosalie during a tour of duty with the Air Force in Germany. Now he is confronted by a wife who is a delight and a puzzlement to him. She showers the benefits of the consumer society on their family, she walks around the house in a cocoon of serenity, and yet, and yet - the question must be asked: Where does the money come from? The answer is that the money comes from thin air. I have a friend who was once a credit card swindler, and the way he explains it, the credit card companies are almost pathetically happy to send you their cards and let you use them, and not as swift as they ought to be to figure out who isn't paying. When you use one card to pay another, and combine that with the judicious use of check-floating strategies and a home-equity loan on a home with no equity, you can live pretty well in the short run. And of course you should never even think in the long run

"Rosalie Goes Shopping" is the third movie directed by [Percy Adlon](#) and starring Sagebrecht, whose previous collaborations were "Sugarbaby" and "Bagdad Cafe." She is an unlikely looking movie star, plump and angelic and somewhere around 40, but it cannot be denied that she has a particular screen quality: She glows. It is an innocent, benevolent glow. She is happy with herself, pleased to make others happy, and she lets tomorrow take care of itself.

The movie doesn't tell her story as a financial thriller, with lots of dates and times and bank balances. Adlon is more concerned with the meaning of ~~what she does~~. She sees comfort and plenty all around her, she wants it for her family, and she finds that people will sell it to her on credit, time and plastic. So why save up first? Live it up now and let your ship come in tomorrow! The family has its doubts. Some of the children seem to suspect uneasily that Mom may be living in a dream world, and Davis would be worried, too, if he thought about such things. Certainly Rosalie's parents grow concerned when they visit from Germany and see children being raised with little discipline, a household being run on credit - and their own return tickets being sold to raise a little emergency cash.

"Rosalie Goes Shopping" records the mood of a large part of society - of those people in the TV commercials and sometimes in real life, who measure their happiness by material possessions, brand names and the latest models of the newest gizmos. Rosalie occupies the center of the film, almost in a daze; she's a juggler who can keep all of her balls in the air only if she stays half-hypnotized by their rhythm.

Call her attention to anything - especially her current net worth - and the whole act would come crashing to earth.

Comedy



[Roger Ebert](#)

Roger Ebert was the film critic of the Chicago Sun-Times from 1967 until his death in 2013. In 1975, he won the Pulitzer Prize for distinguished criticism.

Now playing

German gives big boost to 'Rosalie'

By Janet Maslin
THE NEW YORK TIMES

Rosalie Greenspace (Marianne Saegebrecht) is a queen-sized woman with a heart to match, and she can't help being generous to a fault.

Each of the important people in Rosalie's life seems to need something, something that person can sometimes describe right down to the brand name and list price and serial number.

It just so happens that Rosalie keeps a secret stash of bad credit cards and bouncing checks, toying with these things in the privacy of her bedroom as if they were illicitly satisfying — as indeed they are.

Using these hidden resources, she does her best to supply the computer, the crop-duster or the 16½-pound catfish that would warm some family member's heart.

Rosalie's activities would look strictly larcenous if they weren't also rather sweet. Transplanted from West Germany to the rural backwater of Stuttgart, Ark., Rosalie is, according to the filmmaker Percy Adlon, simply trying her best to understand, practice and master the American way.

In "Rosalie Goes Shopping," co-written by the director and his wife, Eleonore, Rosalie manages for a long time to coexist cheerfully with small-town bankers and shopkeepers who surely must flinch when they see her coming, with creditors who send her so many notices that even the mailman is impressed and with a family so wholeheartedly on her wavelength that they all sit around parroting television commercials in unison.

Then, finally, getting an extra boost from her home computer, Rosalie hooks herself up with local industry and makes it into the financial big league.

It would be difficult to say where Adlon would be without the incomparable Saegebrecht, the star of his earlier films "Sugarbaby" and "Bagdad Cafe" and the shrewd yet beatific center of this one.

With her doll's features and her feisty, oversized body, this actress is as physically startling



THE ASSOCIATED

Marianne Saegebrecht is naive German married to Brad Davis in "Rosalie Goes Shopping."

Someone else might have made Rosalie more abrasive or her motives more identifiably anti-establishment, thus heightening the faint element of cultural condescension at the heart of this West German-born filmmaker's vision of desolate, merchandise-mad Americana.

But Saegebrecht is so disarming, so serenely tough and so utterly unclassifiable that her presence works real magic.

The rest of the cast is anchored firmly to this central dynamo, which is a lucky thing, since both the characterizations and the performances risk going well over the top.

Brad Davis as Rosalie's husband, Ray, a pilot who gives Rosalie his utter trust as well as his paychecks, makes a likably eccentric yet thoroughly elusive figure. (A key revelation about Ray's problems comes when Rosalie realizes he can barely see and buys him new glasses, not to mention a new plane.)

John Hawkes, as the son who hopes to become a master chef (hence the catfish), is yet another of the household's many oddballs, proclaiming a grand "Voila!" as he presents every meal. "Y'all Swedish?" a visiting girlfriend wants to know on the night when one family dinner is followed by festive videotapes of Bavarian beer.

Also contributing to the film's offbeat, merrily unpredictable mood are Rosalie's visiting parents (Erika Blumberger and Willy Harlander), who hardly approve of Rosalie's new life as a mall dweller but are soon reduced to visiting a local duck museum and buying the souvenir sweat shirts.

Judge Reinhold, presiding over the Sacred Heart of the Prairie Church, is amusingly dumbfounded and also furtively intrigued by the confessions Rosalie insists on making, all as part of her little game. He can smell her coming even when he can't see her, since she often has a new perfume.

Contributing greatly to the blithe, high-rolling mischief of "Rosalie Goes Shopping" are songs by Bob Telson, one of them a prayer imploring the Lord to "turn my debts into debts of gratitude."

In a more sharply satirical film, this might be overkill, but here it's light as air.

"Rosalie Goes Shopping," which is rated PG, opens exclusively today at the Century 14 in Century City.

REVIEW

★★★ — ROSALIE GOES SHOPPING, a "peacetime Bavarian war bride" transplanted Stuttgart, Ark., naively masters the intricacies of the middle-class American financial system, directed by Percy Adlon, screenplay by Percy Adlon and Christopher Doherty, music by Bob Telson, photography directed by Bernd H. Produced by Percy and Eleonore Adlon. A Four Seasons Entertainment release. Rated PG.

Rosalie Greenspace.....	Marianne Saegebrecht
Ray Greenspace.....	Brad Davis
Priest.....	Judge Reinhold
Rosalie's Mother.....	Erika Blumberger
Rosalie's Father.....	Willy Harlander
Schnukie.....	John Hawkes
Twins.....	Lisa and Lori Fit

IMDB

10/10

Wonderful satire of banking systems and mindless consumerism

[katydidmail](#) 16 May 2010

This movie is clearly a clever, subtle satire of banking systems. The tag line is the premise of the movie "When You're \$100,000 In Debt, It's Your Problem. When You're \$1,000,000 In Debt... It's The Bank's." Now, in 2010, we're seeing that if banks owe many billions of dollars, then it is the taxpayer's problem. Rosalie's problem has recently become a problem for all of us. This problem is not only limited to one country or banking system.

Rosalie is not a heroine, she is the personification of consumerism gone out-of-control, and a banking system that enables it. The movie really provides an underlying warning message. It should be required watching for anyone who wants to understand why things can easily go wrong in any banking system.

Although I first saw this movie in the early 1990s, I think it will make most sense to people now, in 2010!

9/10

Phenomenal

[gilinfiji](#) 14 March 2006

A buddy of mine watched this for the first time (it was my second or third) and he captured it perfectly: "It's like 'the Addams Family' in Arkansas, without the creepiness." He was right. If you like movies with small casts, that are quirky, feature great cinematography and use subtle humor to open a window to an interesting little corner of the world, this film is for you. Percy Adlon also works this magic with "Bagdad Cafe" and "Salmonberries." The only disappointment was singer Jim Lauderdale not releasing the equally endearing country/reggae fusion end credits song, "Flyin' Back to Rosalie," an absolute gem. I liked this movie so much, I actually went out of my way while driving across Arkansas to visit the town of Stuttgart, see the Riceland Mill and see the museum, all places where the film was shot.