

# MOVIE REVIEW

NEW YORK NEWSDAY, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1992

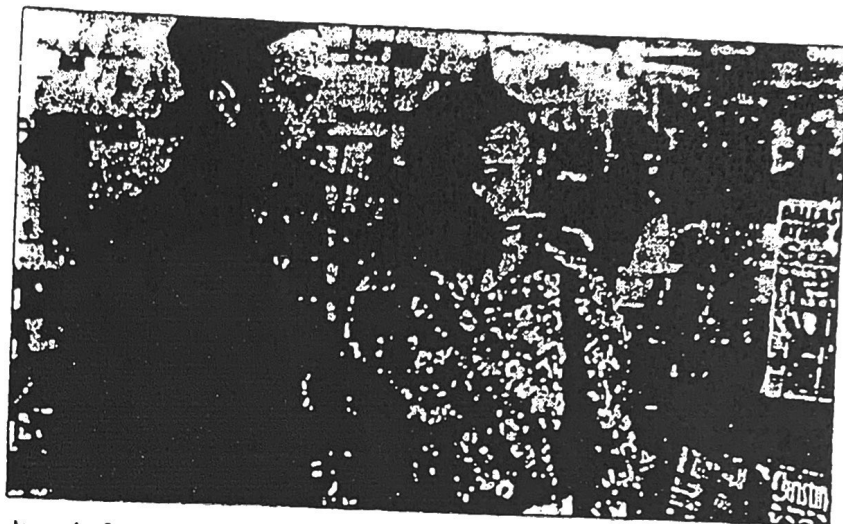
## Wife With A Gun And A Hot-Shot Hubby

... **MY NEW GUN.** (U) A small-caliber, on-target comedy about shattered suburban illusions, with well-aimed performances by Diane Lane, James Le Gros, Stephen Collins and Tess Harper. Written and directed by Stacy Cochran. At the Angelika Film Center, Mercer and Houston Streets, Manhattan.

By John Anderson  
STAFF WRITER

**A**FTER YEARS of being cast as the Perpetually Tarnished Ingenue, Diane Lane has developed into a Really Interesting Actress — too interesting, perhaps, to be playing a New Jersey doctor's wife in "My New Gun." But the film, which is less about guns than about blowing holes through perceptions, begins on such a darkly screwball tone we're set up to accept anything.

Anything includes the highly unlikely match between Debbie (Lane) and her insufferable husband, Gerald (Stephen Collins), who treats her like one of his overpriced possessions, when he's not treating her like a ninny. When his partner, the unctuous Irwin (Bruce Altman), buys his teenaged fiancée Myra (Maddie Corman) a big engagement ring and a small gun, Gerald feels compelled to buy Debbie one, too; had Irwin paid Myra's carfare, Debbie would have gotten a BMW. Gerald is, if nothing else, single-mindedly materialistic: When they're in bed and Debbie complains that the gun in the side table is a



James Le Gros and Diane Lane are mismatched neighbors in the comedy 'My New Gun.'

distraction, Gerald abandons sex rather than the pistol.

Debbie knows immediately that she wants nothing to do with the gun. Only later will she realize she wants nothing to do with Gerald, and the gun helps instigate the breakup. Skippy (James Le Gros), a neighbor in their claustrophobic condo development who's obviously infatuated with Debbie, offers to help her with her gun problem, so he steals it, and various calamities result. When Gerald comes to get the gun back, for instance, he shoots himself in the foot, goes to the hospital and contracts botulism.

But while Gerald refers to Skippy as a "Satan-worshiping drug addict," there's more to him than meets the eye — including his mother (Tess Harper), a former country star running from her psychotic ex-husband, Andrew (Bill Raymond), who's the reason Skippy wanted the gun to begin with.

Debbie's something of a cipher all along — sexy, intelligent and charming in her reticence, but you would say Gerald has turned her into a domestic drone if you knew anything about her to begin with. To Lane's credit — and that of first-time writer/director Stacy Cochran — Debbie has enough dimen-

sion to keep our interest even after events turn towards the more conventionally comic and the obvious questions become more obvious. (It's sort of

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a bait-and-switch, but plot lines don't come under the jurisdiction of the Consumer Affairs Commission.)

But the metamorphosis of the film is like the metamorphosis of the characters: The situations we're given at the outset — Debbie and Gerald, Skippy and his threatened mother — are unnatural, and so Cochran gives the proceedings a demented tone. Later, as the relationships resolve themselves, the lights seem to come on, both on the screen and in our heads.

For a first-time director — indeed, an any-time director — Cochran has a very steady hand and sharp eye for the perversely comic. Aided by Pat Irwin's witty score — which ranges from the Bermuda-shorts-and-white shoes beat that introduces Gerald to the eerie pedal-steel guitar that accompanies Andrew — she scores a bull's-eye. / ■