The New York Times

LATE CITY EDITION

Weather: Mostly sunny today; fair and cold tonight, tomorrow. Temp. range: today 36-23; Tuesday 33-28. Full U.S. report on Page 109.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1969

10 CENTS

The Screen: 'Marooned,' Space Film, Opens the New Ziegfeld

Story Built on Perils of Planetary Trips

By HOWARD THOMPSON

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IT seems fitting that a handsome, professional and future-minded space drama in
fine color, like "Marconed,"
should open a new jewel box
of a theater, the Ziegfeld.

And should anything be
more dramatic than the
plight of three astronauts
stranded in a malfunctioning
craft and running out of
oxygen as the rest of the
world watches? Beamed in
below, the galvanized Mission Space Center at Houston records every utterance,
twitch and gasp aloft, with
the agonized three wives at
ringside. Suddently, in a

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MARCONED, streenplay by Mayo Simon, based and the novel by Martin Casion, the streen of the novel by Martin Casion, the streen of th

last-minute rescue lunge, a one-man, bullet-like projectile spurts upward, straight through the eye of a hurricane. How's that for a cliff-hanger—planet-hanger?

This ambitious, conscientious Columbia movie is a diffinitely intelligent all the way, with a good cast head-

ed by Gregory Peck (the ground chief). David Janssen (the rescue pilot) and Richard Crenna, James Franciscus and Gene Hackman (the marooned trio).

It is simply not the thriller it was intended to be. An intermission—now reserved-seat policy—severs the tension and cripples the dramatic crescendo. Either because of or in spite of this unstrategic break, the picture hits its real stride at the two-thirds point, with the rescue mission launched and the human drama already fulfilled in some effective, connecting vignettes.

Even with a story surprise, the stratospheric climax seems curiously antiseptic, after a long, claustrophobic wait Inside the

John Sturges Directs Picture Efficiently

space ship, with the desperate man—and the picture—running low on oxygen.

Minus a vital, culminative wallop, the film remains workmanlike. Leanly structured, crisply performed and beautifully directed by John Sturges, it neatly interweaves human behavior and scientific savvy.

The theory here, in Mayo Simon's adaptation of the novel by the knowledgeable Martin Caidin, is that stratospheric pioneering justifies the danger of manpower loss. So declares Peck, as the mission commander, looking and sounding like his old "Twelve"

O'Clock High" self. There is one exquisitely simple, loving exchange between Crenna and Lee Grant, her fingers tracing his speaking image on a tiny screen. The other two wives are Nancy Kovack and Mariette Hartley.

There is not a note of music in the picture, only an electronic hum or beep-beep in the strikingly photographed sequences. The dialogue is as blunt and honest as the acoustics.

"You may have put a man on the moon," a patrolman informs the speeding Peck, before connecting him on a car telephone with the President, "but you're a menace to the highways."

If "Marooned" falls short as a soaring blockbuster, it does keep both feet on the ground.



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opening of Radio City Muse-Hall in 1832.

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The major feature of the

By A. H. WEILER
Space age technology became part of the movie house scene here with the opening today of a new Ziegfeld Theater as the first local film showcase ver specifically built for automation.



projectionists will work shifts in the projection booth, among whom will be men specially trained as operators of the console, under ar-rangements with Local 306 of the Projectionists Union. The Ziegfeld Theater's pro-jection booth is automated for the disquire of the sear-