

ENTERTAINMENT

Death Watch:

Film explores ethics of 'the new pornography'



Romy Schneider as *Death Watch's* Katherine Mortenhoe.

Marshall Golden

"Death, it's the new pornography." This is the ethic of a society much like ours and not too many years distant. In a world where love has become routine and death by natural causes has been all but eliminated, the people need to see death to satisfy their voyeuristic desires. But who would consent to having their death filmed and broadcast on nation wide t.v.? Who would submit to this final and ultimate invasion of privacy? These ethical considerations are the backbone of *Death Watch*, a fascinating new film at the Carlton Cinemas.

Death is marketable

In the film, N.T.V. (National Television Network) decides that death is marketable and creates a show called "Death Watch" which documents the last days of a terminally ill person's life. In order to record this event in the least imposing way, Roddy (Harvey Keitel), has a camera implanted in his eye. 1984 is not far away. The T.V. show is an incredible hit,

capturing 74 per cent of the total viewing audience, Katherine Mortenhoe (Romy Schneider) is the next person the producers decide to highlight. She is young, beautiful and she is dying. Through some bullying and offers of huge sums of money, N.T.V. finally convinces Katherine to sign with them for "exclusive rights to her death." Unable to bear this final and ultimate indignity, Katherine decides to have the last laugh. After signing the contract and collecting the cash, she takes off into the countryside to die in peace.

N.T.V., not about to lose this one so easily, sends Roddy after her. He locates her, befriends her and travels with her. Katherine, thinking she has found a friend, reveals herself to him - her secrets, her fears and her fantasies - unaware, of course that everything she says and does is being broadcast nightly across the nation.

'Public's right to know'

Bernard Tavernier, the director and co-author, has raised some vital issues with *Death Watch*. When

does the public's right to know supersede the individual's right to privacy and when, or should, the right to privacy supersede a legally binding contract? In today's world of *60 Minutes* where people are constantly stripped of their privacy in favour of an informed public, we may have grown hardened to this reality. By exaggerating the commonplace, *Death Watch*, explores the limits of human dignity, forcing us to reconsider our position.

Flowery love story

Death Watch, although beautifully photographed and extremely interesting, is flawed. The ending is a departure from the issues and turns into a flowery love story with little feeling of resolution. This, however, should not deter anyone from seeing the film. It probes our conscience; it challenges our voyeuristic tendencies, and brings to light some key media-ethical considerations. In *Death Watch* we hold our hands over our eyes but peek through our fingers.

.....ENTS.....

Give us a break, give us a call

W. Hurst

Excalibur's mandate is to serve the York community and we take this mandate seriously.

Excalibur has been criticized for its coverage of college entertainment: some people say there isn't enough.

Although the *Excalibur* writers possess many wonderful qualities, we are not yet clairvoyant. To cover a York event, we need to know about it and we need to know in advance, which does not mean the day before opening.

Excalibur operates on deadlines and with limited space. Therefore, we need information as soon as possible, weeks or even months in advance. This time will allow for proper coverage - a preview, an interview, etc.

The excitement and vitality of York events make excellent reading, which is what *Excalibur* is all about. We have the commitment - what we need is the information.

Please contact us at 667-3201 if you are involved in a York/College event.

Surface Tension breaks the ice

Surface Tension, an independent Canadian film written, directed and produced by York film professor, Michael Kennedy, will be screened at the Nat Taylor Cinema on Wednesday, December 1st.

Selected for presentation at the recent Festival of Festivals held in Toronto, the film rights have just been acquired by the CBC.

Shot on location in Elora and Toronto, *Surface Tension* was completed in June 1982 with the financial assistance of the Ontario Arts Council.

Cast and crew members (17 of the 21 were staff, faculty or students at York) waived remuneration to make the 16 mm., 27-minute, colour film possible.

According to Kennedy, the film "is about fear" and focuses on a man's inability to and subsequent obsession with diving into deep quarry water.

A free screening at 8 p.m. in the Nat Taylor Cinema 1st floor of the Ross Building and the audience is invited to the Film Departments end-of-term party in the 8th floor lounge.

PJT

Mea culpa, Mea Founders

The Bopcats were presented by and at Founders College, last week. This dynamic little band was not presented by Vanier College, as reported in *Excalibur* on November 18. To Founders College, our sincere apologies for not giving credit where credit is due.

Bargain jazz for York students

One of the great jazz organists, Jimmy McGriff, is at Bourbon Street until December 4.

The club welcomes all York Students and beginning with this engagement students showing their York I.D. Monday - Thursday do not have to pay the cover charge.

Bourbon Street Theatre
180 Queen St. W.,
598-3020

They've got the beat, daddy-o

York Theatre student, Peter Webster, announces another S. (Smash Pumpkin production, *A Beatnik Party* (aka the David Richards Party). It's at O'Bannions - "like it's a cool little pad at Jarvis and Front" - and there's no cover charge. Party starts at 8 p.m. and you're instructed to "bring your own philosophy."

The Poetry in Motion party

Poets out to launch Mann's film

Fausto Bedoya

9:00 A.M. The phone rings. It's Elliott Lefko, enfant-terrible producer and promoter of avant-garde poetics events. He wants me to review a gig at the Ontario College of Art. A promotional party/performance in collaboration with the new flick *Poetry in Motion*. Tonight, Friday 19th. I tell him, I'm busy. I hate O.C.A. and everything it stands for. I'm tired and have been working on my novel 18 hours a day. Get someone else. He pleads. I bargain. OK. I'll do it. I want a pass for myself and five friends. I want an endless roll of beer tickets and front row seats. He says there's no seats. He'll give me two passes and no beer tickets. Then he tells me who's performing. I tell him I'll do it and hang up congratulating myself on my shrewd business sense.

The event was to feature the bizarre rock ensemble, The CeeDees. The lead guitarist was wearing a dress and sneakers. But their licks were hot. Later on New York's back-street poet Jim Carroll was going to have a spot. But I came to see Fred and John. When I got there I quaffed back a couple of ale and then found Fred Gaysek and talked to him. Fred offers a rare blend of techno-funk poetics accompanied on the synthesiser by John Tucker. Eerie machine rhythms. Neo Latin electro-beat. Fred plays the cigarette while the audience settles down. Darkness. The synthesiser winds up evil. Lights come up slow on Fred who looks menacing in his black on black. Like a dangerous businessman. He sets the scene.

"The city is dark,
a wind twists up litter and leaves...
it is late,

...it is the first hour after curfew."

The electro background is breathing like a demented killer hiding in the shadows. Fred unravels a story about wild dogs attacking and devouring anybody foolish enough to be out after curfew. He moves the mind from the deep south where the sun is the centre of everything, to the skull-numbing dog-lust north, to the heart of the

machines that surround our fragile mortal shells.

"...no one dies...

the machines are true to their machines

and true to the system

so long as you understand control...

Gaysek understands control. He stretches the audience's mind on a rack of multiple meanings, mixed metaphors and metamorphic stage lights. I got a strong sense of angst, black on black. Fred's face half in the shadows, half blanched by hot-lamps. The techno-percussions by Tucker combined with Fred's voice compressed thru the synthesiser left me alienated and simultaneously attracted. The ambivalence spilled out of the fact that even though the presentation was laden with death imagery, there was some thing in it that I recognised. Like a horrible

deja-vu.

"You hear something,
it is the thing you want to hear
You hear someone,
it is the one you want to hear
You see someone,
It is the one you want to see.
...What I fear,
tempts me."

Something human pervades the nihilism. I felt it touch me, and I was paralysed. Death lost in anonymity, in the labyrinth circuits of the machine, in the meat-frothing jaws of mindless killer dogs. In the Soviet Union 20,000 fans will pack a stadium and scream in abandon for the poetry of, say, Yevteshenko. By dealing with the gun-metal alienation of inner city desperation Fred Gaysek and poets like him, are attracting substantial and excited audiences in Canada.

The Spotlight Theatre hosts Dracula's visit to McLaughlin Hall

Nigel Turner

Last Thursday, York was invaded by that infamous fanged villain, Dracula. The Vampire was resurrected in MacLaughlin Hall, courtesy of Spotlight Theatre. A near capacity crowd was treated to the delights of the traditional horror story about the 500-year-old curse. All facets of the performance-acting, lighting and directing-were professionally executed.

Heartened by the success of their first production, *Undercover*, Spotlight launched *Dracula*. The play is an adaptation by Mike Harms, of Bran Stokes's book of the same name. Spotlight will do in this, its first year, four shows of which three will be Canadian. "Each play takes us in a different direction," says Grant Smith, artistic director.

The play's plot is fairly simple, Dracula (John Weisgerber) moves to England for a change of scenery and falls in love with a young maiden, Mini (Eileen Flood). By Mini, who loves her new husband, Jonathan (Arndt Von Holtzendorff) frustrates

Dracula's advances and eventually causes his destruction. This simplicity, however, is vindicated by the language which is subtle, poetic, and at the same time inescapably realistic.

When an actress' scream makes you wonder whether she has actually been hurt, you know something's been done right. The acting was convincing. Appropriate lighting supported the actors in effecting a mood.

Mike Harms, who also wrote the adaptation, innovatively directed the play. As the play begins, for example, the entire cast lies on stage until it comes to life with a cacophony of moaning.

NEXT WEEK in EXCAL:
Bad Taste at Theatre
Passe Muraille...Oh,
Chaucer at York.....