

## 'The Pilot' a high flyer

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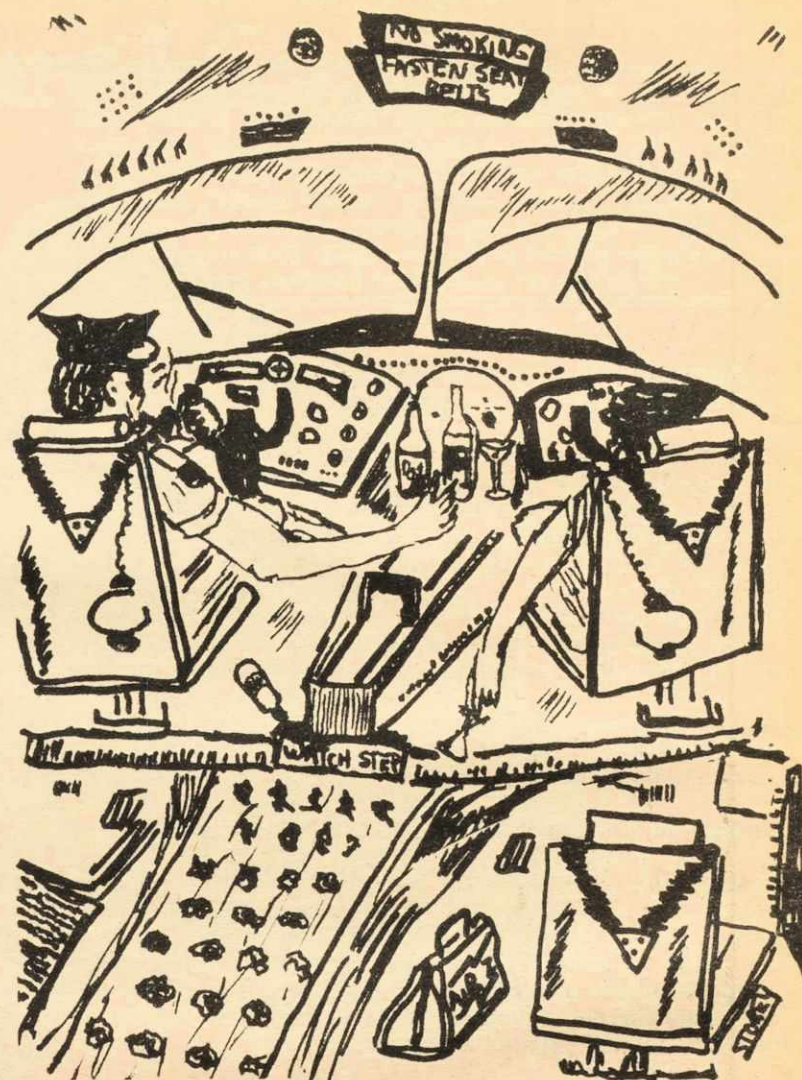
by Michael McCarthy

**The Pilot**, at Scotia Square, directed by and starring Cliff Robertson, is a well-made quietly intense drama of one man's attempt to come to grips with the reality of himself. The man is Mike Hagen (Robertson), an airline pilot. For over 20 years, he has been a flawless, unimpeachable professional. For over 20 years, unbeknownst to anyone (including himself), he has also been an alcoholic.

By chance, he is prevented once from imbibing his usual covert in-flight "shots", and finds he cannot function without the liquor. The movie depicts the effect of his dependence, on Hagen and others, and the man's attempt to shake his addiction and pull his life together amid the added complication of a secret airline investigation of him that could prove ruinous if he is found out.

Like Robertson's Oscar-winning **Charly**, this movie focuses on the problem of the man, its depth and drama; making the sufferer vividly real and human, rather than attempting a final judgement on his failings or panacea for them. Robertson turns in a low-key but convincing and sincere performance as a man trying to save himself from becoming an obscenity. The supporting cast, including Frank Converse, Gordon MacRae, and Diane Baker (who has a pleasing resemblance in looks and presence to Grace Kelly) all play relatively minor roles. They respond to the star's direction with competent, feeling portrayals which meld into an excellent background to the central figure alone with his crisis, heightening the focus by revealing nuances of the main character's inner forces and external circumstances.

Much remains unsaid in the film, with many bases touched on but only implicitly, such as Hagen's entrapment, due to family pressures, in a job he



doesn't want and the John Dean Syndrome (is the informant a dutiful citizen or a squealing rat?). The whys of Hagen's alcoholism are not detailed, nor is his future resolved clearly. No reconciliation is made between his genuine desire to be cured, and the fact that he nonetheless continues to risk the lives of others by flying while not physically sound. The questions are raised, however, and the conflicts revealed. The profundity of the rights and wrongs is left for the individual audience members to work out.

The movie is well paced, with no wasted dialogue, contrived histrionics or commercial gimmicks. The story evolves naturally through a solid screenplay (Robert Davis, based on his novel) and Robertson's tour de force acting and coherent direction. The pilot, when quitting, explains, "I got a problem." The admission is a big step to discarding any crutch, and facing the realities of life. In the process of showing Mike Hagen's battle with his "crutch", **The Pilot** becomes a first-class movie.

## Shlock in the thrillers

by Michael McCarthy

There are two terror-type movies in Metro currently, **Dressed to Kill**, which leans towards suspense shock, and **Beyond Evil**, which leans towards supernatural/shock.

In **Dressed to Kill**, director Brian de Palma leads us on a merry, macabre chase after a mysterious blonde who kills off Angie Dickinson early on (mercifully, before she does much talking). Michael Caine plays a psychiatrist who is torn between finding the murderer of former patient Angie, and protecting a transsexual who leaves messages indicating he (she) did the deed. The pot is sweetened by a hooker who has the choice of finding the killer or being jailed as the prime suspect, and the teenage son of the murdered woman, who happens to be an

électronic genius who bugs the police and uses an automatic camera to surveil the psychiatrist's office.

The protagonists are followed along their trail by the movie camera, which records a number of masterful suspense-building sequences similar to others in such Hitchcock films as **The Birds**, in which disaster gets irrevocably closer, but you don't know when, who, or how it's going to strike. Not too much of the plot can be revealed without spoiling the movie's effect, but I will tell you that there are two nightmares mixed in with the real terror, and the killer isn't who you think it's going to be, when revealed in a Machiavellian twist to the plot near the end of the film.

**Beyond Evil**, with John (I don't believe in that hocus-pocus) Saxon and Linda (I'm fine, now, really) Day George, is a forgettable, cliché'd sell your soul/possession flick which is bearable, but probably best left until it resurfaces on the late, late show in a month or two. A macho construction trouble-shooter brings his wife to a remote, haunted house, despite the warnings of a faith healer and bad-spirit-fighter, and the poor woman is taken over by a centery old satanist who shoots green nasty-beams from her eyes. You will be pleased to know, though, that the evil possessing spirit is killed by placing the host body's wedding ring on her finger. Let that be a warning to those of you planning to get married.