



Lights, Camera, Action!

The cutting room

By DAN MERKUR

Otto Preminger, the curse of all reviewers, has done it again. There is nothing easier to criticize than brilliance and absolute crap. One needs only a supply of superlatives. Preminger's latest, *Tell Me That You Love Me, Junie Moon*, is neither brilliant nor crap, nor is it merely mediocre. It is a very fine melodrama, which by definition means it is an okay movie, with first-rate moments.

Confused? Let me continue.

Take three sickies — an acid scarred ex-easy lay (Liza Minnelli), a faggot cripple (Robert Moore), and an epileptic masturbatory 25-year-old virgin (Ken Howard) — have them live together, and ultimately have them all discover heterosexual sex and love through group therapy. That's *Tell Me You Love Me, Junie Moon* — a weird heartstring yanker if I ever saw one. My date cried a little; I groaned in disbelief.

But *Tell Me You Love Me, Junie Moon* is also a film containing performances of the first water by James Coco (Broadway's last of the *Red Hot Lovers*), Leonard Frey (the present in *The Boys in the Band*) and Robert Moore (Coco's Broadway director.) Minnelli is okay — her part is half assed though. Ken Howard is convincing, but I'm still not sure of what.

Yet Preminger's film is beguiling. His camera, once a problem to him (he is a director of actors, not a lens crazy montage man) is beautifully unobtrusive, except in the very cleverly conceived flashback/nightmare/hallucinations. After the eye-straining rack focus of *Getting Straight*, *Tell Me That You Love Me, Junie Moon* is so easy to watch that that factor in itself is almost an inducement to see it.

For film students, Preminger's composition of the wide frame is quite a lesson in how to shoot with a 35mm-shaped frame. His plotting of the film, his structuring of the story is marvellous. Not for one moment did my interest lag. His

economy is incredible — a lesson, no a full course in production all by itself.

Yet when all is said and done, I wonder just why Preminger did make the film. It's easy to watch, sure. But it doesn't say anything much. I'm not crying here for relevance in the arts, or for political stands by the film-maker (though I might some other time); but how about a little meaning above the boy-meets-girl level which constitutes the film's theme. *Tell Me That You Love Me, Junie Moon* says it all. The whole dramatic action is for a physically and emotionally scarred girl to learn to love. Q. E. D.

If your taste runs to excellently mounted movies of fine quality, dubious merit, questionable taste and prime amusement value — all entertainingly done, I hasten to add — do see ... *Junie Moon*. If you dig Bergman, Fellini et al, and are at all cerebral in your approach to film, don't.

If you're a reviewer and can see it free, what have you got to lose? I saw it. It's a nice move. *But Advise and Consent* was so brilliant. . .

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MR. PREMINGER, who I met, is a very nice man who claims that Billy Wilder has no temper, and who will talk for hours without illuminating very much. He is full of old world charm. He is witty (What did my film cost? Depending on where you see it, between \$1.25 and \$2.50.) He is full of stories — Joan Crawford, *Batman* TV shows, *Stalag 17* and *How a Nice Jewish Boy got to play a Nazi*. He is vehemently anti-censorship, although his own sense of taste often eliminates vulgarity. He is quietly Zionist.

He is outspokenly against cops on campus. He is the father of twin 10-year-olds. He is a very, very nice man. I could almost have really liked him if he hadn't said so bloody little that I wanted to know.

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CHICAGO '70, opening this weekend, offers, for your amusement, transcripts from the



Robert Moore, James Coco, and Ken Howard in *Tell Me That You Love Me, Junie Moon*

trial of the Chicago 7, plus one. In addition, in case you missed the high comedy of the trial itself, we are also offered excerpts from Lewis Carroll, and are clubbed over the head with the ding-dong little red school house romper room analogy.

It's all fairly nicely put together, considering that it was made in old T.O. in 16 millimetre and blown up to 35mm for general distribution. The only thing is that I don't think the Chicago trial was very funny, except maybe to Richard Daly. And then I don't think much of his sense of humour.

If I were Nixon I'd laugh. Maybe. (Is this a subject for a Canadian film? I mean you don't even have to be an expatriate to make an American movie these days, do you?)

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PERFORMANCE is a neat little movie that you might want to see since Mick Jagger is in it. But I would advise that you wait until it plays a double bill on a second run, because it is just not worth \$2.25 at a Yonge Street theatre.

It is an interesting analysis of decadence, vice and perversion, very capably done, with James Fox as a gangster/murderer on the run shacking up in the basement apartment of Jagger's home. Jagger plays a retired rock and roll star who lives with his two women and gambols a lot. Women's Liberation people ought definitely to avoid this film.

It's all very nicely done, with a first-rate musical score (influenced strongly by Jagger's presence, I suspect.) But when it's all over, the film is fairly boring, mostly dull, and not that I'm categorically opposed to sordidness, but there is only so much fascination to be had from squalor, and I think the movie-going public had its fill years ago.

But then again, it's a Jagger vehicle, and I suppose all you Stones fans will definitely see it.

Clive Denton strikes again with an awfully nice programme at the **ONTARIO FILM THEATRE** (at the Science Centre, Tuesday nights at 8:30.

Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (Germany, 1925, subtitled) plays October 6th. This film is so great, so important, that words fail. See it.

Kameradschaft, by G.W. Pabst (Germany, 1931) is about German miners who aid Frenchmen during

a mining disaster. Again, not a film to miss.

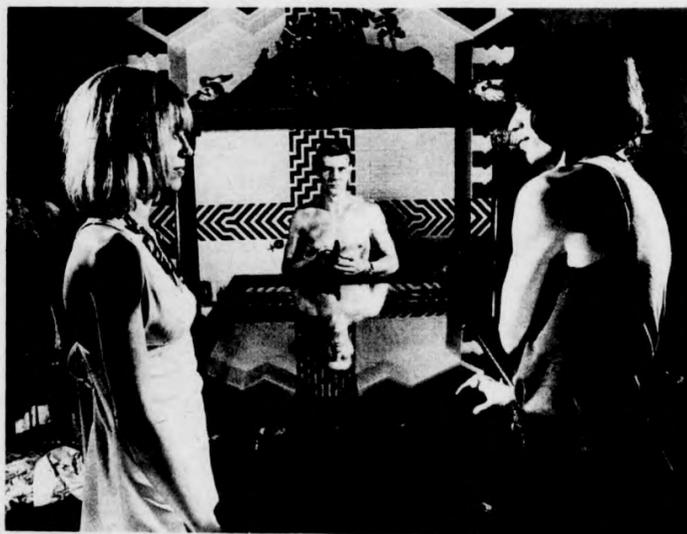
Sergei Eisenstein made *Strike* (USSR, 1924, subtitled), showing October 20, directly before making *Potemkin*. *Strike* is about the suppression of a factory workers' strike in Czarist Russia. Need I say more?

Victor Halperin was a little known film-maker who is Clive's own discovery. *White Zombie* (USA, 1932) stars Bela Lugosi, as the mastermind of a South American sugar mill, worked by

Fay Wray and George Bancroft. *The Glass Key* was made twice. This, the earlier version of Dashiell Hammett's greatest hard-boiled novel (he also wrote *The Maltese Falcon*) is the tougher of the two, starring George Raft and Edward Arnold.

Key Largo wraps up the series, with the brilliant work of Bogart, Edward G., Lauren Bacall, Lionel Barrymore and Claire Trevor.

If you are at all a gangster fan, this series cannot be beat, either for the quality of the films, or for



Anita Pallenberg, James Fox and Mick Jagger in *Performance*.

Zombies. Halperin's approach to horror was to scare the shit out of you, and he was good enough to do it. At its worst, *White Zombie* is a weird, weird film, with some terrific action scenes.

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CINEMATHEQUE is running a festival of Gangster films on Wednesdays beginning October 21 (at the Music Library, Avenue Road and St. Clair, at 7:15 or 9:30, \$6.50 the series ticket.)

G-Men stars Cagney and Robert Armstrong, and is absolutely one of the greatest shoot-em ups there ever was.

High Sierra follows. Directed by Raoul Walsh, it stars Bogart, Ida Lupino, Arthur Kennedy and Cornel Wilde. This film made Bogart's reputation.

Thunderbolt is the first talkie by Josef von Sternberg, whose Underworld of 2 years previously was the first gangster film ever made. *Thunderbolt* stars Richard Arlen,

the price. Order tickets from Cinematheque, 26 Whitmore Avenue, Toronto 10. Please specify which show (7:15 or 9:30) you will attend.

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There is a **Goldwyn** festival under way at the Cinema, in the T-D Centre. Upcoming are *The Pride of the Yankees*, *The Best Years of Our Lives* and *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*. While the first is kind of frivolous (Gary Cooper as Lou Gehrig), the second took more Oscars because of sheer brilliance than almost any film to date. *Best Years of Our Lives* stars Myrna Loy, Fredric March and Hoagy Carmichael.

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty is precisely the way James Thurber would have wanted it, and stars Danny Kaye, Ann Rutherford, and Boris Karloff. Kaye made his reputation with this film, and it is easy to understand why. Tickets, I believe, are \$1.50.



Humphrey Bogart stars in Raoul Walsh's *High Sierra* and John Huston's *Key Largo*, both part of Cinematheque's Gangster Festival, beginning October 21.