



Lights, Camera, Action!

Altamont film is shattering

By DAN MERKUR

Last year, at a free concert at Altamont Speedway near San Francisco, a black man was killed by a Hells Angel during the performance of the Rolling Stones. Did the slaying put an end to the Woodstock legend of peace and non-violence, or does the fact of a leftover 50's greaser knifing a black pimp with a gun justify the Woodstock image instead?

The excellent documentary, *Gimme Shelter*, now playing at Cinecity, of the Altamont concert raises questions of all sorts but does not answer these or any others in particular. Like any fine documentary, it yields plenty of evidence for all the arguments one may draw from that occurrence. To force one argument above all others would be to deny the validity of a relatively unbiased documentary. The film-makers, the Maysles Brothers and Charlotte Zwerin, are too good for that.

At Altamont several thousand freaks gathered and waited while paranoia pervaded the crowd, as the Hells Angels policed the festival. Outbreaks of violence were frequent. The Jefferson Airplane found it necessary to stop their show. At length the Rolling Stones came on, and a biker knifed a man who drew a gun on Jagger. Q. E. D. To cite the incident as of greater importance — as a microcosm of freak society, is to stretch a point. *Gimme Shelter* proves that Woodstock the Movie is not the be-all and end-all to cultural revolutionary movies; however, it does not purport to state what is.

Altamont seems to have been a turning point, the end of an era, regardless of what one believes happened there, or why. If the sixties began well with the Peace Corps, Freedom Riders, and flower children, only to be dwarfed by assassination, Vietnam, Chicago, Nixon and Agnew, still there was a beginning. The seventies have the Cambodian campaign, the Chicago trial, and Altamont as a beginning. *Gimme Shelter*!

Throughout the film Jagger remains a fascinating image. Through *Gimme Shelter* one gains insight into the character he played in *Performance* as well, a strangely possible prophecy of things to come. One understands, as well, the rock star of Peter Watkins' *Privilege*, a narcissistic, frail, hugely powerful semi-diet.

What one sees in Jagger is startlingly variable. I mostly see a child playing with tremendous power he is hardly aware of, let alone able to control. Some see a Machiavellian high priest of anarchy and revolution. Others, no doubt, see a greasy biker who got lucky; a frustrated juvenile publicly masturbating; or a king. Jagger is all these things and more. In any case, he is a unique figure, and fascinating to watch.

Filmed in colour by the Maysles Brothers and Charlotte Zwerin (makers of last year's excellent study of Bible hustlers, *Salesman*), *Gimme Shelter* is the best rock music documentary to date. It is also a case study of contemporary history, and an invaluable document of our times.



Mick Jagger in *Gimme Shelter*.

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SOCIETY and MARIJUANA

Panel Moderator: Lawrence Purdy - Director, Metropolitan Toronto Region, Addiction Research Foundation of Ontario.
Panelists: Lionel Solursh - Psychiatrist; David Reeve - Executive Director, Alcohol and Drug Concerns Inc.; C.W. Morrison - Judge, Provincial Court; Michael Barden - Director, Digger House.
Special Resource Person During Discussion: Gerald LeDain - Chairman, Commission of Inquiry into the Non-Medical Use of Drugs.

FORUM 2: Tuesday, January 26th, 1971 8 p.m.

SOCIETY and LONELINESS

Panel Moderator: Donald Willmott - Professor of Sociology, York University.
Panelists: Wilson Head - Professor, York University; David Collins - Physician, Toronto Free Youth Clinic; Anita Birt - Toronto Distress Centre; Vello Sermat - Associate Professor of Psychology, York University.

FORUM 3: Tuesday, February 2nd, 1971 8 p.m.

SOCIETY and CENSORSHIP

Panel Moderator: Robert Langford - Physician, Associate Professor of Public Health, University of Toronto.
Panelists: Julian Porter - Lawyer; Hans Mohr - Professor of Law and Sociology, York University; Mary Sue McCarthy - Mother of Seven; Family Life Education Specialist; Garry Braund - Lawyer; Chairman, League for Decent Literature.

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