

A superficial look at a complex political environment

by Anthony Pizzari

1978. The year Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro's death at the hands of the Red Brigades made headlines all over the world.

That is the setting for *Year of the Gun*, the story of an American journalist/novelist (Andrew McCarthy) and photographer (Sharon Stone) who become involved with the Red Brigades. They are implicated through McCarthy's rich girlfriend (Valeria Golina) and the novel he is writing about terrorists.

These are undeniably good ingredients for a formula political thriller: good guys, bad guys, a love interest and an excuse for exciting chase scenes.

Unfortunately, director John Frankenheimer is unable to capitalize on this potential. His film wants to do a lot, but accomplishes very little.

For instance, *Year of the Gun* wants to be as full of intrigue as the film *Gorky Park*. The acting is so rigid and unconvincing, though, that it comes across more like an episode of a soap opera.

Year of the Gun wants to be a thriller like *The French Connection*,

film

Year of the Gun
directed by John Frankenheimer
starring Andrew McCarthy and Valeria Golina
produced by Edward R. Pressman Film Corp.

but the chase scenes are flaccid and weakly constructed. The slow motion scenes of the hero are ineffective kitsch. If this was intended to be a comment on heroes or anti-heroes, it failed miserably.

Year of the Gun wants to critique the media's unscrupulous information-gathering and interpreting practices like *Absence of Malice*. The problem is that Michael Mewshaw's script isn't critical enough.

In fact, the script's ideological bias is a farce. A complex political situation cannot be reduced to good versus evil; this is certainly true of Italian politics. No mention is ever made, for instance, that the Red Brigades were retaliating against an incompetent government unable to cope with the country's internal problems.

Portraying the Red Brigades as a group of murderers terrorizing Rome without acknowledging in the least why is pure irresponsibility. The audience, especially any one from Italy, is left with the feeling that they've



Sharon Stone and Andrew McCarthy, stars of John Frankenheimer's *Year of the Gun*. Frankenheimer directed the paranoid political thriller *The Manchurian Candidate*, so he dearly knows his stuff. That just makes *Year of the Gun* harder to understand: its politics are far too simplistic and it isn't very thrilling.

been manipulated.

Year of the Gun is a political film with no politics. It is like every other American film (ie, *Salvador*) that shows that no foreign political situation is important until an American

gets involved, even if it is through his or her own stupidity.

Frankenheimer has made good films in the past, like *The Manchurian Candidate*; *Year of the Gun* is a real disappointment. Its superficiality

and one-sidedness defeat whatever good intentions the filmmaker may have had. Perhaps if it had been a little more like *All the President's Men* and a little less like *Red Dawn*, it may have been worthy of attention.



Valeria Golina, star of John Frankenheimer's new film, *Year of the Gun*. One of the many disappointments of the film is that you know all her secrets before they can surprise you, which is long before Frankenheimer reveals them.

Disney is a smug and grasping film production company, but they still make innovative and enchanting cartoons

by Ira Nayman

Walt Disney Studios is an easy target for ridicule. When one of its animators says, "When Disney does a fairy tale, it's forever," in an interview in *Premiere Magazine*, you can feel your satire muscles flex, preparing for a workout.

Yet, sitting in Nat Taylor, watching a presentation on *Beauty and the Beast* by Disney Promotions and Publicity Coordinator Dawn McCallum, much of this cynicism melts away. Despite the self-satisfied, grasping manipulateness of Disney

film

Beauty and the Beast preview
Walt Disney Studios
Nat Taylor Cinema
Monday, October 28

executives, the studio produces innovative and enchanting work.

Beauty and the Beast is the familiar story of a prince who scorns the attentions of an old woman, who is actually a beautiful spirit. She turns him into a beast, a form in which he will remain forever if he doesn't win a woman's love and himself learn how to love by his twenty-first birthday.

The animation is typical Disney: finely detailed backgrounds are combined with fluid character animation to create stunning visual effects. *Beauty and the Beast* features swirling camera movement, culminating in a rapid crane shot through a large ballroom.

Yes, it is a talking clock. McCallum graduated from York in 1989 ("The year Bruce Cockburn got his Honourary Degree") with a

degree in Film and Video Production. At the time, she

wanted to "get a job doing anything" in her field; getting a publicity post at Disney, which she says she enjoys, was the familiar matter of being at the right place at the right time.

This is not the first time York students have had a chance to go behind the scenes on a Disney film; in 1989, the studio had a similar program for *The Little Mermaid*. "It's half information, half marketing," McCallum admitted; it's good for film students to see the process, and it helps generate interest in the film.

On the other hand, the crowd at Nat Taylor seemed to be made up of older people. "I expected more students," McCallum said.

Beauty and the Beast opens on November 22.



Two characters from Disney's latest animated feature, *Beauty and the Beast*, Belle (top and bottom) and Cogsworth (middle). Yes, it is a talking clock.

29th Street is a strange soup of a film

by Pedram Fouladianpour

Imagine you have a bowl of soup in front of you. Apart from the usual ingredients, you find a big pizza slice, a floating club sandwich and some french fries. The soup is tasteless and impossible to swallow.

The same thing can be said of *29th Street*, which after 20 minutes seems like *deja vu*. The film concentrates on 28-year-old Frank Pesce (played by Anthony Lapaglia), who was born in New York's Italian-American 29th Street neighbourhood.

Pesce has just won six million dollars in the first New York State Lottery, but doesn't seem to be happy about his luck; on his way home, he stops at the local parish and attacks the church with words and snowballs. At the police station he is called upon by the church pastor to explain himself. The movie is his story.

Writer/director George Gallo got the idea from character actor Frank Pesce on the set of *Midnight Run*, for which Gallo wrote the screenplay. Gallo was so fascinated by Pesce's true story about winning the lottery, he decided to make a film about it.

In *29th Street*, one can easily see what Gallo liked about Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas*, Woody Allen's *Radio Days* and the soap opera *The Days of Our Lives*. Scenes reminiscent of Allen and Scorsese are



Anthony Lapaglia, Danny Aiello and Frank Pesce in *29th Street*, a film based on Pesce's life story. Pesce's luck may have run out with this Hollywoodized morality tale where doing the right thing pays off in the end.

film

29th Street
directed by George Gallo
starring Anthony Lapaglia and Danny Aiello
produced by Twentieth Century Fox

mixed with a sentimentality typical of soaps.

Although Gallo "didn't want to Hollywoodize this [Pesce's] story," he failed: *29th Street* is an average Hollywood film. The moral is familiar: doing the right thing wins, or, in this case, pays off.

In our world, Gallo seems to tell us, money brings happiness, reconciliation and affection.

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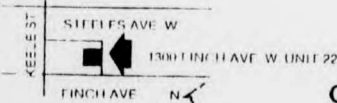
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