

FEATURES

Critics Corner: reeling at the cinema

Howard Shulman

In 1971, North America was in an economically stable period. Times were good, inflation was unknown and only a few people knew what OPEC stood for. The movie fare of 1971 was also healthy with such celebrated films as *The Last Picture Show*, *Kluge*, *Panic in Needle Park* and *The French Connection* many of these filling theatres nation-wide.

In 1981, spiraling inflation, an 85¢ dollar, and the threat of nuclear war have severely damaged the latest crop of

Special Effects

films. Instead of the hard-hitting, real-life drama seen so frequently a decade ago, movie audiences this year are fed an innocuous diet of fantasy-adventure and giltzy special effects films, starting with the not so incredible *Shrinking Woman*, continu-



Nice hat, eh?

ing miserably through *Superman II*, and (hopefully) ending with *Time Bandits*.

Why is it happening? Because movie makers fear making anything that remotely mirrors reality during troubled economic times; they're convinced that we have enough problems in our day-to-day lives without seeing more of it on film. Instead, the cinema becomes an oasis for mindless Entertainment & Escapism.



Ming the Merciless, a 'bad guy.'

In his book *Movie & Society*, I.C. Jarvie explained, "People want to be distracted from their problems or from their boredom."

Instead of movies progressing as they started to with the Film Noir movement of the late forties, they have regressed to the horror and fantasy-adventure plots of the Depressed 30's. The cliché-filled *Raiders of the Lost Ark* could have been

made any time. It is filled with constant action-packed scenes, and the obvious climax of the prevalent theme of good vs. evil, the "good guy" as victor.

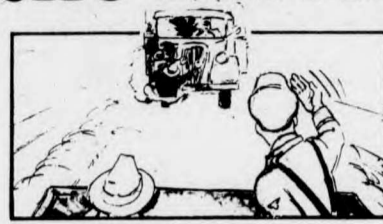
Many films of a half-century ago were directed with children in mind. These included horror films such as *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, et al; and the serials; *Flash*

The Thirties

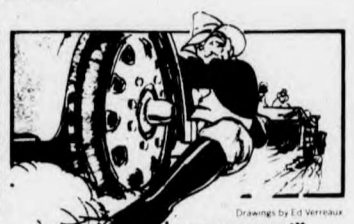
Gordon, *Tarzan* and the *Cisco Kid*. All were set in mysterious or exotic locals (*Tarzan in Africa*) where they met heroes or villains they could cheer or hiss at. *The Empire Strikes Back* is set in outerspace, we cheer Luke Skywalker and hiss at Darth Vader and in much the same fashion, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* was set in exotic Egypt and Nepal. We cheered Indiana Jones and hissed at



Young virgin about to be ravaged by the huge dragon...



"You just can't get good breaks



any more!"

the Nazis. Nothing new.

Movies themselves are becoming more serialized as well. Witness the never ending chain of *Star Wars*, "splatter," *Superman* and *James Bond* movies that have been released or are in production at this time.

Intelligent Films

Luckily, we have seen some signs of reality in the cinema this year with *Ticket to Heaven*, *Prince of the City*, and *Inside Moves*. Many movies coming out now, and for the winter, are a slow rehearsal from the sugar coated, Disneyesque prod-

uctions we've become subjected to recently *Ragtime*, *Ghost Story*, *On Golden Pond*, and *Absence of Malice* seem to represent a slice of life," and a semblance of reality.

Regardless of what's on our silver screen this winter, it is wise never to forget that fantasy and films will continue. For, as Alfred Hitchcock once said, "the cinema isn't a slice of life, it's a slice of cake."

Howard Shulman is one of the Features editors, and the opinions expressed by the author do not necessarily reflect those of Excalibur.

Jamaican showstoppers Toots and the Maytals are enduring

Clifton Joseph

In no Reggae figure are the triple pulls of Black-American music, Kingstonian ghetto life, and Jamaican religious/spiritual experience as clearly, self-evidently manifested as in Frederick "Toots" Hibbert, lead vocalist with the popular, enduring Jamaican band, Toots and the Maytals.

"I am a spiritual person. I am a

gospel singer. I grew up listening to Ray Charles, Wilson Pickett, Jackie Wilson, James Brown and of course, Otis Redding and Mahalia Jackson," says Toots in a telephone interview with *Excalibur* from his hotel room in Houston, Texas. Toots and the Maytals will play the Concert Hall Sunday night at 7 p.m.

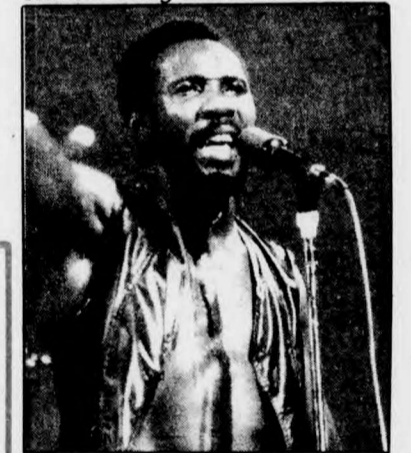
The Maytals alumni will be

there: Raleigh Gordon, past Viking and an original Maytal, on congo drums and vocals; Harold Butler and veteran sessions-man Winston Wright on keyboards; Jackie Jackson on bass guitar; Paul Douglas on drums; and Carl Harvey on guitar.

Lead vocalist Toots' voice has endured the changing stages of Jamaican song. He has often

been compared to the best of the shouters and screamers and soul singers of the Stax/Atlantic/Memphis Soul Review axis: Wilson Pickett, Otis Redding, James Brown and Sam Cooke. His vocal power is evident on such showstopping hits as "Reggae Got Soul", "Funky Kingston", "54-46, That's My Number", "Monkey Man", "Time Tough" and the phenomenal

"Pressure Drop" which, along with "Sweet and Dandy", was included on the soundtrack of the first Reggae movie, *The Harder They Come*.



Reggae music has today become one of the most influential musical expressions around. Its' influence has been felt in R&B, Funk, Rock, Jazz, New Wave and Punk. And in what seems to be the further internationalisation of the music, such Bands as Peter Tosh, Dennis Brown, Third World, Black Uhuru and Toots and the Maytals themselves seem bent on extending the music to even farer shores. Toots is confident that the music will extend.

Born in Clarendon, Jamaica Toots moved to Kingston in the early 1960's in an attempt to make his mark on the musical landscape but it was not until he banded together with two other vocalists (Raleigh Gordon and

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Country-Style Restaurant: urban Chowdown



E.P. Curean

Aah! Recently deceased Aunt Bertha wasn't as forgetful as you once thought. Or perhaps the last three digits of your Wintario ticket were in the proper order for that 'big' prize. Perhaps your just-arrived OSAP cheque has three major digits after the dollar sign. A good way to celebrate any of these fortuitous circumstances would be to visit the *Country Style Restaurant* at 450 Bloor St. West, just east of Bathurst Street.

In spite of its name, this unpretentious nook, which seats about forty patrons rather too closely together, is definitely urban. It's the kind of place you might happen across in an

inexpensive part of Budapest or Prague: the manager-cum-cashier chats up waiting customers and the waitresses place orders and banter back and forth in what can only be best described as "Anglo-Hungarian."

Once seated, a waitress arrives with a basket of fresh rye bread, complete with pats of butter, and asks if you would like some coffee. Alas, the *Country Style* is not yet licenced.

"The restaurant's menu is a simple affair."

The restaurant's menu is a simple affair, with each day's items varying slightly according to the day of the week, although some dishes are available most of the week.

A small dent in your OSAP cheque can be made by ordering

from a large selection of soups, with Beef Noodle costing 80 cents and Cauliflower and Mushroom varieties selling at the low price of only 90 cents each. Bean soup is just a dollar.

Familiar main courses at the *Country-Style* include Beef Stroganoff, Cabbage Rolls, Sour Cabbage with pork and Chicken Paprikash, all costing just \$3.80 each. As well as these daily items, Weiner Schnitzel and Parisien Schnitzel are available from the grill, both costing just under \$4 each.

Desserts at *Country-Style* are definitely worth a bit of Aunt Bertha's parting gift. A choice of homemade strudels is available for 90 cents each and Hungarian-style Crepes (with a choice of cheese, ground walnuts, poppyseeds or apricot jam fillings) are \$1.

On the night Chowdown visited, *Country-Style's* patissier must have been in top form. A rolled, jam-filled crepe

was served, dusted with icing sugar and flavoured with a tart hint of lemon. Too bad the filling itself appeared to be ordinary supermarket grade stuff.

Coffee and tea at *Country-Style* cost only 40 cents with an Espresso double that price. Soft drinks are 50 cents.

Although *Country Style* is well worth a visit any time, it might be prudent to avoid Saturday nights as it seems waiting in line for a table is quite normal, and lingering over a cup of coffee, if not actively discouraged, tends to make the serving staff perhaps a bit impatient.

Chowdown is a regular column of the Features section. Anyone interested in submitting restaurant reviews and other food-related items should contact Lloyd Wasser at 667-3201.