

Gentlemen, do not accept this *Mission*

The Mission
Westmount

review by Graham Bell

The Mission (directed by Roldand Joffe) stars Robert DeNiro and Jeremy Irons although at times the real star of the movie seems like the series of spectacular waterfalls around which much of the action of the movie unfolds. This film gives moviegoers a sumptuous historical adventure as handsomely mounted as they could hope for; however, the film, despite its lavish production values, is somewhat overblown, pretentious, and simplistic in plot and character. This movie delivers a great sound and light show — all gloss and spectacle, but no real dramatic substance.

The Mission, purported to be based on a true incident, takes place on the borders of the Spanish and Portuguese South American Empires circa 1750. Jesuit priests, led by Father Gabriel (Jeremy Irons), establish a remote mission station amongst Native people who live on a remote branch of the Amazon above the series of spectacular waterfalls. In the movie, the Jesuit mission stations are all sweetness and light. The Natives even sing, somewhat incongru-

ously, like English school boys. (This is not surprising as much of the haunting original sound track is sung by a London boy's choir!)

The secular authorities, headed by slave-owning European aristocrats, covet the Jesuit missions. The movie climaxes in a fast moving battle between Natives led by renegade Jesuit priests and the imperial authorities.

A subplot tells the story of Captain Mendoza (Robert DeNiro), a reformed slave trader turned Jesuit novice. In an act of contrition for the slaying of his brother, DeNiro drags a huge bundle of armor and weapons through the jungle and up the waterfalls to the Jesuit mission. DeNiro has the movie's most powerful part; in contrast, Jeremy Irons as the leader of the local Jesuits seems limp, like an English curate rather than an impassioned Latin Jesuit priest.

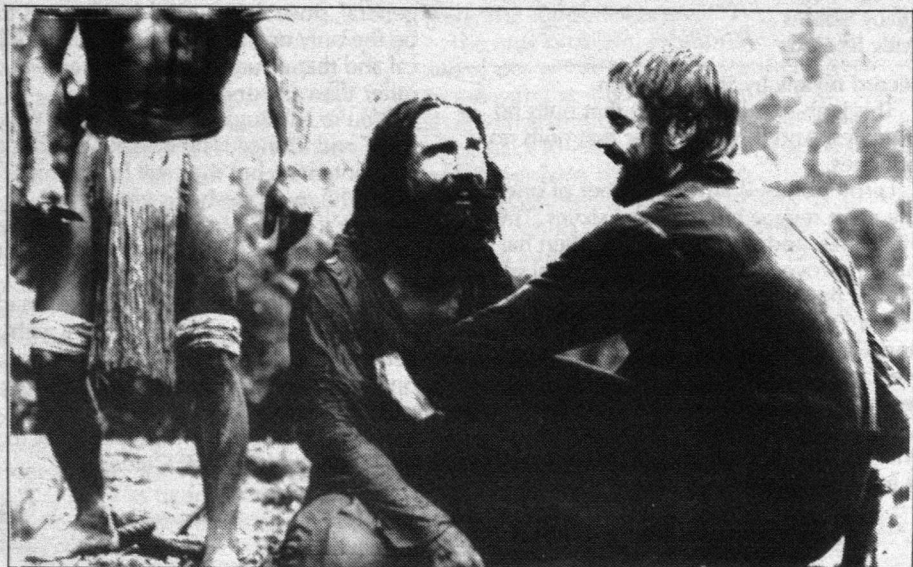
The film moves along at a fair clip, seeming to me at times almost like an old fashioned swashbuckling pirate flick rather than a weighty vehicle for moral and political statements about the nature of imperialism.

The movie was produced by Britain's David Puttnam. Puttnam (*Chariots of Fire*, *The Killing Fields*) at his worst seems to think that if a movie combines visual

excitement, a haunting sound track, and a moral message, it will be a winner and make David some more millions. He might be right. *The Mission* will probably succeed and save the fortunes of Puttnam's production company Goldcrest Films; audiences seem to like this mixture of gloss and swashbuckling adventure laced with the pretensions of moral drama. The movie

also delivers the most exciting stunts and special effects — chiefly men crashing over gigantic waterfalls — we're ever likely to see on the screen.

For spectacle, *The Mission* is probably worth the whopping six dollar admission, but I doubt if the movie would bear too much thinking about; it's too much packaging, not enough real content.



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Do you want to do something about this situation? The Anti-Cutbacks Team (ACT) needs YOUR support and participation.

Join us in the Heritage Lounge (Athabasca Hall) on Thursday, January 8th at 4:00 p.m.

For more information, contact Martin Levenson, ACT Chair, at Room 274 SUB, 432-5329 or ACT office, Room 280 SUB, 439-9331.