

Midnight Express is brutal

By Elliott Lefko

Sickness will surely take you Where minds don't usually go Come on this amazing journey And learn all you should know.
—Peter Townsend from Tommy.

On October, 6th, 1970, Billy Hayes was busted attempting to carry four pounds of hashish across the Turkish border. The prosecutor vehemently pressed for a stiff punishment — life. The presiding judge mercifully said four years.

Fifty-six days before Hayes' release, an elated prosecutor, after repeated argument, re-opened the Hayes case and won a thirty year extension of the sentence.

Midnight Express is an upcoming film directed by Alan Parker (*Bugsy Malone*) Based on the novel by William Hayes with William Hoffer, *Midnight Express* attempts to re-create the experience of the young American Billy Hayes, then a Marquette University student, now twenty-eight, from the strapping-on of four pounds of hashish (about twenty large, chocolate bar-sized packets) to his body, until his eventual escape from the hell-like captivity of a Turkish prison.

Billy Hayes: "Why did I do it? I was smoking. It seemed like a good idea at the time. The day before I had gone to customs, checking it out. Nobody was being searched. I thought I could make it."

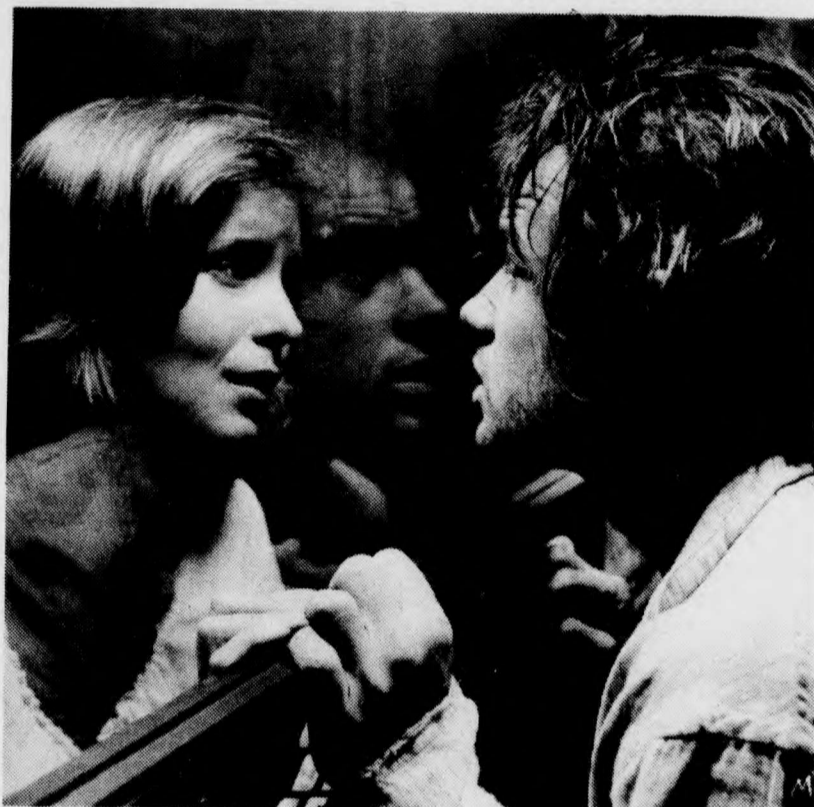
The movie works as a powerful inducement to read the novel. How close is fiction to real life? In the case of *Midnight Express* the film is almost a documentation. The inhuman conditions of the prisons, the mockery of justice that masquerades as a Turkish

days to reach the Greek border, and freedom and that two-day period kept flashing into my mind while I was on the set. It was a very strange feeling, believe me!"

In mid-July the film debuted at the Cannes film festival. Through its Martin Scorsese-like documentary candor combined with a last ditch *Great Escape* — like ending, *M.E.* shook the festival into a voice of fevered

The scenes between the two characters colour the dominating grey scenes filmed within the prison.

Randy Quaid (*Duddy Kravitz* and *The Last Detail*) and Norbert Weisser are Hayes' cellmates. Among the Turkish murderers, rapists, thieves and junkies live these young men. They keep their spirit alive, the former through violent pranks and the latter as a



Susan, Billy's girlfriend, provides a rare moment of tenderness.

protest; the culmination of which opened negotiations for an exchange of prisoners between the Turkish and American governments.

A number of scenes burn fiercely with seemingly senseless violence. Yet Hayes and director Parker are both quick to vehemently justify their inclusion.

As seen through the eyes of Hayes and others in Turkish prisons in the late sixties and early seventies the violence did indeed occur. Hayes and Parker clearly set out to make sure that the world would see what had taken place.

"If you don't believe the violence, I suggest you spend a day in a Turkish prison", Hayes recently remarked in response to the critics of the film's violence.

As startling as the original plot is, all elements of the film's production had to sing before the film could deliver its emotionally tinged punch. And deliver it does. This is a picture that realizes precise camera (John Stanier), sound (Giorgio Moroder), editing (Gerry Hambling) and finally acting.

Brad Davis (portraying Billy Hayes) is a young actor who, it is said, gave his agent long fits before he finally consented to take on a job. The wait for the right script was worth — it echoes Marlon Brando and *On the Waterfront*.

Mike Kellin adds credibility and humanity in the form of Hayes' father. The character is understanding, simple and direct.



Billy's outburst in court

courtroom, the inefficiency of the American embassy and the high level politics that made Hayes a martyr/pawn (incensed over the amount of heroin entering the U.S. by way of Turkey, Nixon turned his anger to the Turkish government who in turn took it out on smugglers like Hayes) are all true, according to Hayes and the book.


B.H.: "I walked onto the set of *M.E.* on October 2nd, 1977, exactly two years to the day I escaped from the real thing. It took me two

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Due to a number of unforeseen difficulties the date of the Fall Convocation has been changed from November to

1:30 pm, Saturday, December 2nd.

Faculties and Colleges will be sending detailed information to graduands later
Note: Atkinson College convocation is at 10:30 am, December 2nd.

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Screening

Independent filmmaker Richard Myers will present his new film *Floorshow* today at one in S137 Ross.

Considered the Fellini of the underground cinema, Myers makes his films with simple cameras but incorporates elaborate special effects. His previous films include *Akran*, *Deathstyles* and *37-73*.

The department of Film and Ken Dancyger will host a discussion to follow the screening.