

ARTS

Hollywood skewers booshwah ideals



John Reed, bringing a Care package to jailed anarchist-feminist Emma Goldman.

Reds
Paramount

review by Peter West

In a year in which the major money-making movies will doubtless be films like *Superman II* and *Conan the Barbarian*, Warren Beatty has made a bold choice for an epic movie. Beatty has been fascinated for years by the story of John Reed, son of a wealthy family in Portland, Oregon, who wrote for American socialist newspapers, was practically the only American socialist who remained pacifist throughout World

War I and went to Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution. Reed was regarded as a dangerous man by the U.S. Government and as a comrade by Lenin and Trotsky. He wrote a brilliant account of the revolution, *Ten Days That Shook The World*, and is the only American buried in the Kremlin. Obviously Reed was an amazing man - a successful American socialist, no less - but would he make a suitable Hollywood hero? Surprisingly - yes. Beatty plays Reed, as well as directing the film, and it's hard to fault him in either capacity. Beatty's portrayal of Reed is alive,

many-sided, and develops throughout the film; and yet to a great extent the film is dominated by Diane Keaton, who portrays Louise Bryant with a refreshingly unusual feminist brashness, though underneath this facade there is a cautious young lady very much concerned with the world's opinion of her.

We see the feminist side first. At a 'Liberal Club' in Portland, a fat businessman is giving a sermon about supporting the war to make the world safe for democracy, etc. He introduces Reed and says 'John, tell them what the war is all about'. Reed tersely replies 'Profits' and sits down again.

Louise has found a man who interests her, and asks him back to her apartment for an interview. She gets a lecture on the international struggles of the working man. When he is finished, she says 'I have something I want to show you'. His eyes gleam; he says 'I was hoping...'. She gives him some of her articles, plus his coat and says he has to go - she has an appointment. And so the confident young man finds himself outside the door.

The next time they meet he finds out that she is married (to a stuffy dentist) and, he presumes, not available. She reads his mind again and startles him *this* time by saying 'Let's see you with your pants down'. Flabbergasted, he obliges, and as the Salvation Army plays 'Onward Christian Soldiers' in the background, they begin their on-off liaison/marriage which will affront all the norms of middle-class existence.

Like *Gallipoli*, this film uses the relationship between two people to unfold a historical tale. The lovers' story parallels that of the communist cause: when they hit the rocks, the cause founders. The alternative is seen when Reed goes to Russia to see the revolution; Bryant follows him as a colleague, but won't sleep with him. Together they see Lenin and Trotsky

giving their speeches, the soldiers returning from the battlefields, and the workers seizing the Winter Palace and thronging in the streets in torchlit processions.

The Americans are caught up in all the excitement of the revolution and come together again as the *Internationale* plays louder and louder and the Bolsheviks seize power. And so the two stories take their inevitable course: the lovers become separated and the revolution bogs down in propaganda and bureaucratic inefficiency.

This film is a fascinating blend of romantic love and early feminism; it is anti-war but not depressingly so; and political without becoming preachy. Space won't permit a list of all the cameo roles, but Jack Nicholson's portrait of Eugene O'Neill exceeds expectations. O'Neill's fleeting attachment to Louise and long friendship with Reed allows him to make some searing comments about what each lover gets out of the other, and what little hope the radicals have of fomenting a revolution in the U.S.A. Reed faces that squarely, acknowledging that you might as well try to thaw Siberia as radicalise America - but he has to try anyway.

This is a better epic than most epics, a more believable portrait of marriage than most romances, and better history than most documentaries. Catch it while you can.



Ho-hum ESO concert

Edmonton Symphony Orchestra
Jubilee Auditorium
January 9, 1982

review by Beth Jacob

The ESO served up a mixed offering for its opening concert of the new year Saturday evening at the Jubilee. The program consisted of an obscure 20th century work by a little known (at least to the general public) Canadian composer: Pierre Mercure's "Divertissement String Quartet and Strings", and two standard warhorses from the 19th century repertoire: Beethoven's "Emperor Concerto" and Schumann's "Spring Symphony". The first two were relative successes, the latter a study in tedium.

Mercure's work was a well-crafted piece, featuring mild dissonances and strong syncopations, very much in the French style of Ravel and Honegger. The symphony's first chairs were fine as the string quartet and guest conductor Mario Bernardi's reading was secure and controlled. A pleasant piece, but perhaps one of Mercure's later, more experimental pieces would have proved more interesting.

The majority of the near-capacity audience came to hear guest artist Rudolf Firkusny play Beethoven's popular "Piano Concerto No. 5". Though the "Emperor Concerto" does not have the pervasive Romanticism of a Rachmaninoff or the showy virtuosity of a Liszt, it is usually played with a certain amount of verve and even flash.

Flash was totally missing from Firkusny's performance. We were given, instead, a restrained eminently classical interpretation, and within those guidelines he was quite successful. The balance between soloist and orchestra was generally good, allowing for a range of dynamics with some real pianissimos (although comments afterwards indicated there were

some problems projecting to all parts of the hall.) The orchestra occasionally sounded ragged or tentative on some of the entries, but in the main, it was a fine controlled performance on all parts.

The disappointment came after the intermission, when the orchestra played Schumann's "Symphony No. 1 'Spring'". The orchestra gave a credible performance but were not able to compensate for a flaw in the material itself. Schumann has often been criticized for his "brown" orchestration and I heartily concur with that opinion, as by the end of the second movement I was suffering from an acute overdose of tutti strings. A few horn and woodwind licks in the fourth movement provided blessed relief, but by then, it was too late as rigor mortis had already set in.

In conclusion, the concert was reasonably enjoyable but certainly nothing to write home about.

REDS

FREE!

Leonid's executive secretary phoned yesterday and said if we don't clear the Gateway offices of the last thirty or so *Reds* posters, the Arts editor will receive an all-expense-paid trip to Novosibirsk. So hustle up here and get them.

After all, you wouldn't want the Arts editor to get his toes chilly, would you? You would?

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