

Flat Tire- Taxi Driver in review

by J.L. Round

In *Taxi Driver* Robert De Niro plays a New York variety of a creature who has a disgust for the "scum of the city" whom he picks up and chauffeurs for a living. His disgust drives him to pursue the

affections of a lovely young woman who represents purity, symbolically dressed in white and acted, barely, by Cybill Shepherd. This woman is a campaign worker for a senator running for president. When De Niro takes her out on a date (insert: she accepted the date with him because she felt a force in his eyes, in case you care to know) to a local skin-flick she is disgusted and decides that they have nothing in common (except for the force, of course.)

She refuses to see him again. For some undisclosed, though undoubtedly sagacious, reason the taxi driver now invests money in a stockpile of arms and becomes a one-man army, honing himself to physical perfection. (At this point De Niro's hair is cut very short - I am sure that this is symbolic of something, though I never quite figured out what.) About this time he decides that he must kill the presidential candidate - no reason, just that it is his fate, he decides. (Oh, we know this, by the way, because he is keeping a diary and occasionally we hear little narrated bits conferring his prize tidbits upon the audience as how he has to wipe the "come" off the backseat of his taxi every morning after a night of heavy driving, and how, on their first date, he had black coffee and apple pie while Cybill Shepherd had coffee and a fruit salad, or whatever.)

After being thwarted in his

attempt to kill the candidate De Niro goes to a whorehouse and tries to redeem a poor twelve-and-a-half year old hooker gone wrong. He accomplishes this by shooting the pimp (several times) and another socially-unacceptable person who rents rooms.

Sorry, I forgot another important piece of symbolism: when De Niro goes to kill the candidate his head is shaved bald except for a lone strip of hair running Iroquois-fashion down the centre of his head. Obviously this is of grave importance.

Anyway, to conclude our festering story, he becomes a local hero after splattering the whore-house in blood and sending young Iris (the whore, although she prefers to be called "Easy". In the film that is a very big joke. In fact, it is the only joke.) home to an ignorant but ever-so-grateful mommy and daddy. (P.S. Although our hero was shot in the neck by the pimp - this was before he had shot the pimp for the fourth time - and was in a coma for a while, he did manage to survive and return to taxi-driving, sadder but wiser.)

Well, so much for the plot. The acting, although not quite so terrible, is hard to criticize because none of the characters had anything sensible to say. (Actually, it becomes a competition to see whether the characters ultimately would be as unintelligent as the

story.) Both Jodie Foster, as the hooker, and Peter Boyle, as a fellow taxi driver, give about as good a performance as is possible with the material they had. Robert De Niro, too, gives a good performance, but it is hard to imagine a normal person so unintelligent and quite impossible to generate any interest in such a character. I cannot understand why De Niro, who won best supporting-actor last year's Academy Awards for his performance in *The Godfather Part II*, would appear in a film like this. I suppose it is called versatility to be able to switch from an excellent role in an excellent movie such as *The Godfather*, part whatever, to a movie like *Taxi Driver*. But it isn't logical. Then again neither is *Taxi Driver*.

What director Martin Scorsese (*Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*) seems to be after is a pessimistic character study in despair and loneliness in lower forms of life (i.e., taxi drivers, pimps and whores, etc.) What emerges from casual street shots is a realistic and disparaging view of life in New York City. He goes wrong, however, by adding characters that seem to be unconnected with each other in a disjointed story intended to serve as a study of society that was not worth making.

Even Sam Peckinpah will have trouble making something worse than this one.

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The Ice-Caputs

by donalee moulton

Back in town for their once-a-year performance was the Ice Capades Corps; this year managing to bring along Karen Magnusson successfully. According to press releases and members of the group, each year is a new show. The costumes change, the skate show settings are varied, but unfortunately, the chorus line remains its inept, stiff, too-smiling self. Solos and echoes of "seems to me I've seen that somewhere before". Skaters like Freddie Winkler have a repertoire of only three steps, supposedly funny, and these are the basis of three scenes he appears in each year merely masks the routines of the previous year's performance.

The most disappointing facet of a show such as the Ice Capades is the rigidity of the performers and the superficiality of the performance. There is no difference between Karen Magnusson on ice and her performance on a Fleishman's Margarine commercial. The impression one obtains is that of complete disinterest. The skaters are definitely not skating to entertain the audience; they are skating because that is what they are supposed to do. An absence of spontaneity and originality can be excused but the complete disinterest on the part of the performers is inexcusable. The can-can girls in their various routines are comparable to robots and airline hostesses. Not only are their actions devoid of relaxed mannerisms, but each girl is an exact replica of the marionette on either side of her.

Every year the Ice Capettes and the Ice Cadets link arms, form connecting lines and kick legs. Every year the corps. puts a chimp on skates -- after all, it is a family show. And every year some of the best skaters in North America are slotted into roles pre-created for the unimaginative. The disastrous result is their loss of creativity and seeming enjoyment.

As well, the costumes reflect the glitter and glamour of a Broadway

extravaganza featuring the 'dumb blonde' and the 'artistic male' who is anything but artistic.

Amazingly enough, two sequences deserve credit: a family of one father and four children were incredible in their acrobatic act and the chimp was, as he is every year, the saviour of the show.

World premiere at Dal

A specially commissioned work by playwright Michael Cook "Not As A Dream" and a light-hearted melodrama "The Independent Woman" or "A Man Has His Pride" are on the bill for Dalhousie Theatre Department's major production. The double feature can be seen each evening from Thursday, April 8 through Sunday, April 11, in the James Dunn Theatre, Dalhousie Arts Centre at 8:30 p.m. There is no charge for admission, but due to limited seating tickets must be picked up at the Arts Centre Box Office.

April 8 will be the world premiere performance of this new work by Canadian playwright Michael Cook. "Not As A dream" was specially commissioned by Professor Lionel Lawrence, chairman of Dalhousie's Department of Theatre for presentation by Theatre Department students. This is the first time a Canadian university has commissioned a work by a Canadian playwright. "Not As A Dream" - an elegy, concerns the life and memories of a Nova Scotia fisherman. Professor Lawrence describes the play as a "strong, sad reminder of what people in-Nova Scotia sold out on".

Tickets for the Dalhousie Theatre Department spring production of "Not As A Dream" and "The Independent Woman" or A Man Has His Pride may be obtained from Dalhousie Arts Centre Box Office by calling 424-2298. There is no charge for admission.