

## Film

### Red Dawn hate literature

By DAVID W. OLIE

Well, that was the most obvious communist propaganda film I've seen in a long time."

My friend and I are standing at the entrance to the theatre as the throngs move around us. I'm too busy starting off across the darkened North West Arm to really notice his words at first, but eventually anything as bizarre as that has got to sink in. I turn and stare at him.

"Don't you see?" he continues.

"That movie is so bad that it clearly makes a mockery of the legitimate concerns of good, red-blooded Americans. No one serious could have made it. So, obviously, the whole idea was to make the prospect of a Soviet invasion look so ridiculous that no one will take it seriously, thus corrupting the defences of the Free World!"

He stands there, looking quite pleased with himself after that logical flurry, and for a couple of moments I am inclined to agree. But the anger takes over again, the anger that I have experienced over

the last couple of hours, and I find myself wondering how I will keep this review within the bounds of good taste. (I don't know why I should bother, though; good taste is obviously a closed book to the producers of this film.)

O.K., then, let's start with the basics. *Red Dawn* is a piece of shit. (Not too far out of bounds yet, I hope.) The shittiness comes across at several levels, rather like a central collecting manhole in a sewer system. First of all, it is badly produced, clearly hacked to bits in the editing process. Large hunks of the story-line are left to the imagina-

tion. This is fortunate, as the imagination is a real treat after being subjected to what passes for a plot in this film. Never in the course of human conflict have so many written such trite dialogue for so few.

These are all classic faults of 'mainstream blood'n'gore epics. The trouble here is that this is clearly intended to be a blood'n'gore movie with a message, and it is the violence and hatred of this message which has produced the anger referred to above.

This is a miserable, rotten, hateful film; its producers have gone to any length to realize their paranoid fantasies. They have, for instance, postulated an invading army from Nicaragua 500,000 strong. This, out of a country of about 3.5 million, represents about 14 per cent of the population. Need I say more? Mil-

itary science and theory were clearly thrown out the window during the making of this epic, and it does nothing for the credibility of those responsible when even a casual military student can blow their thesis to bits.

These people are not interested in rationality or making a coherent statement of their fears of Soviet supremacy. No, like all propagandists they have bypassed the brain and gone directly for the glands of the viewer; not being able to support their arguments, they are mongering hatred. This film is hate literature, and though on the one hand my mind is repelled by the prospect of censorship, my own emotions cry out for means of dealing with this monster which has crawled from the depths of the American psyche.

### Would critics have to invent R.E.M.?

By R.F. MACDONALD

R.E.M. have practically nothing to distinguish them from a thousand other 'critics' bands that emulate the early sixties and write obscure lyrics that cannot be deciphered, or at the very least, understood. They try to sound like the Byrds, or early electric Dylan, or maybe the mid-period Velvet Underground. Unfortunately, their records sound like velveta; the passion is all but implied and the textures are all homogenized.

The extravagant claims of the North-eastern critics that R.E.M. represents some kind of Southern musical renaissance shows just how out-of-touch the North-eastern

press really is. The real action is happening in Texas where a wild fusion of Tex-Mex, Outlaw country, Bluegrass and swing jazz has shifted the focus of country and popular music south. Ricky Scaggs is probably the best example of the post-outlaw-cross-genre artists. With L.A. producing mainly heavy metal and New York locked in a nihilistic post-punk colonial complex, it is left to the midlands (like Prince in Minneapolis) and the south to provide us with development of popular music.

Meanwhile, back at the R.E.M. ranch, the boys are worried that someone might find out that their lyrics aren't about anything at all. And furthermore, they are still figuring out how to do their album

covers, which by the way have to be the ugliest in recent American history. And finally R.E.M. are still working on reproducing the Byrds' guitar sound, not realizing that today's hi-tech recording techniques make it impossible to duplicate a sound created on 1965 12-string Rickenbackers and little Gibson amplifiers recorded on Sennhauser microphones through a mono 2- or 4-track, 2-inch tape recorder that looked like a demented icebox with ambition. No matter how long you practice in an abandoned church in Athens, Georgia, you are only going to approximate, at best, the Byrds' wonderful guitar sound of 'Mr. Tambourine Man' and 'Turn Turn Turn'. It's all rather futile anyways as most of the Byrds' output is still available and, in Columbia Records' infinite wisdom, with the original mono mixes intact.

And so, as I was discussing the development of popular music, I have not touched in detail on this second R.E.M. record. That is because it is not popular. Consider a favorite saying of my brother: "There is no such thing as esoteric popular music." Sometimes we wish there were, and that is why critics write about R.E.M. If R.E.M. didn't exist, the critics would have had to invent them.

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