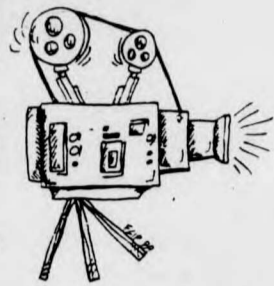


# Arts cont'd

## reel and screen



by Howard Kaman

When director Phil Alden Robinson decided to make a movie out of W.P. Kinsella's novel, *Shoeless Joe*, he may not have realized the difficulties involved. He overcame most of them with *Field of Dreams*, a film which captures the novel's magic with inimitable charm.

Here we have a movie that relies on performances. Kevin Costner, a likeable guy if there ever was one, plays Ray Kinsella, the ultimate dreamer. When Kinsella starts hearing voices while working in the fields, he feels he has no choice but to obey their commands. By doing so, he believes a void in his life will be filled.

That is the real focus of the film; it is not a film about baseball, rather it uses the sport as a vehicle to explore the pursuit of one's desires. Baseball is convenient because of the sport's mythology; no other sport is connected with as many heroes and rituals.

*Field of Dreams'* hero is Shoeless Joe Jackson, whom Kinsella believes will reappear from the dead. Jackson was blacklisted during the White Sox scandal of the 1919 World Series. (immortalized in the film and novel *Eight Men Out*.)

Costner's is not the only performance worth noting. Ray Liotta is mesmerizing as Jackson, attaining a ghostly aura in the role. James Earl Jones is also enjoyable as an author who loves baseball. Finally, Burt Lancaster shines as Moonlight Graham, who played in the majors for only one game.

Probably one of the most unusual movies you will ever watch, *Field of Dreams* will be shown, along with *Major League*, at Reel and Screen (Curtis Lecture Hall L) this weekend, January 26 and 27.

by Howard Kaman

Born on the Fourth of July directed by Oliver Stone Universal Pictures

The first thing you notice is Cruise. Gone is the immaculate hair, the sunglasses, the permanently affixed smile.

In *Born on the Fourth of July*, Tom Cruise plays Ron Kovic, an American who proudly went to Vietnam to serve his country, and ended up paralyzed from the chest down. Kovic lives his adult life in a wheelchair, and becomes a dedicated anti-war activist.

The initial shock of seeing Cruise in a wheelchair is almost as surprising as the power he has over the character. In a way, Kovic is the perfect character for an Oliver Stone picture, a man who finds himself alone with his conscience, in desperate situations. Like James Woods in *Sal-*

*vador* and Charlie Sheen in *Wall Street*, Kovic enters war with one attitude but comes out with another. Kovic's story is about a dream he realized could never come true, and the mistakes he made in the process.

Watching Cruise, one gets a sense that he took the same journey as Kovic. From his first starring performance, opposite Rebecca DeMornay in *Risky Business*, we saw an actor who could make his career the easy way, skipping from teen flick to teen flick.

But, as Cruise matured, so did his roles. This maturity is evident in his latest projects, *The Color of Money*, *Rain Man* and *Born on the Fourth of July*.

What makes this latest film so important is the lack of legends for Cruise to fall back on. While Paul Newman and Dustin Hoffman made fine company in his

previous films, they also served as crutches for the weak spots in Cruise's performance. With *Born on the Fourth of July*, there are no crutches, and Cruise stands just fine on his own.

But Cruise is not all the film has to offer; it is also beautifully filmed. Although the combat scenes are brief, they are among the most vivid images Stone has put on celluloid.

Suitably, he never relies on glamorous locations or angles. The small towns of America look small, the bars look claustrophobic and the military hospital that Kovic is in looks hellish.

As usual, Stone hammers his point in hard. *Born on the Fourth of July* is a film about the harsh realities of the Vietnam War.

Of course, it's only one of literally dozens of films on the topic and, perhaps, it has come 15 years too late. "The Vietnam

Movie," has almost become a genre unto itself, with films like *Platoon*, *Apocalypse Now* and *Full Metal Jacket* being compared to each other. But this film is different.

Rather than focusing on the battlefield, the movie details life before and after the war. Rather than a first hand look at the carnage, we get a sense of the war's broad cultural impact. This view comes complete with all the hallmarks of the era, including parades, drugs and rock music (courtesy of none other than neopie Edie Brickell, who makes a cameo appearance in the film).

With an appearance by Willem Dafoe, who made his name in Stone's other war epic, *Platoon*, *Born on the Fourth of July* is solid proof of both Stone's ability as a director and Cruise's enormous potential as Hollywood's next great leading man.

## extended twilight zone

by Ira Glick

I dropped into this press screening late and was sure I had come into the wrong room. Not only is *Carnival of Souls* in black and white, it is also about thirty years old. Nobody told me, so there I was thinking, "wow this art direction is brilliant — you absolutely can't tell this film is new."

The plot? Three young women are challenged to drag race across a wooden bridge. Their car plunges into the water. Police and searchers dredge the river. Nothing. A few hours (!) later one of the women, Mary Henry, a beautifully vacant blonde, drags herself ashore.

You might say *Carnival of Souls* is like *Beetlejuice* without the

humour. But that would only be giving you the roughest sketch of what is a truly weird film. *Souls* is a genre pic; a psycho-horror in the same vein as *The Shining*. It's a film that works on the viewer subliminally — the screen almost flutters and winks, the high contrast black and white almost sends us into a trance.

Mary's goal, once back to life, is to continue life as usual (she wants to get a job as a church organist). This need to continue on as if nothing had ever happened gives *Souls* a wonderful tension, a real hook. We can't quite get a hold of what exactly makes this existential heroine tick.

Neither can she. In and out of bizarre, alienating hallucinations

services of a creepy psychiatrist. He tells her to "get social," become more involved in life. This isn't a likely option, because Mary is dead.

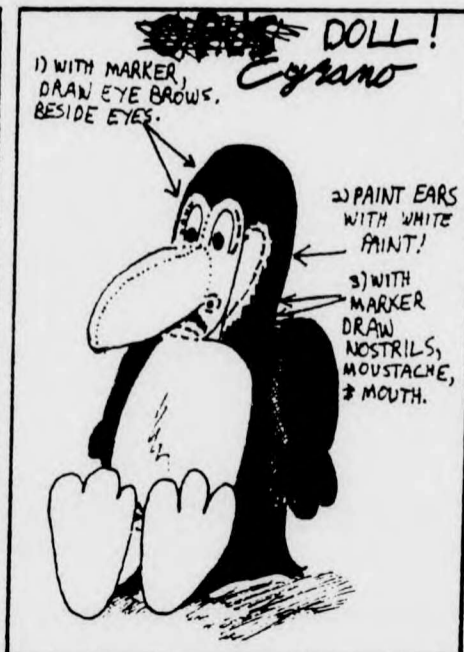
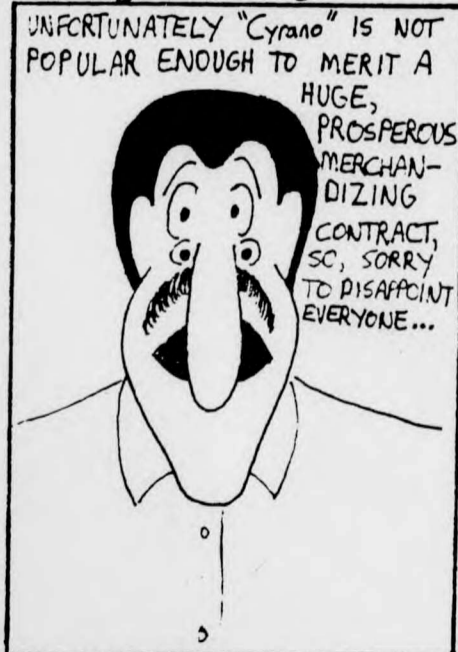
*Souls* is weird. It's not a laugh-a-minute cult flick a la Russ Meyer (although it did play to pretty

rowdy crowds at last year's Midnight Madness screening). One sophisticated punter called this film "Topper directed by Ingmar Bergman" — I'd call it an extended episode of the *Twilight Zone* scripted by Albert Camus. Limited release.

### Film buffs take note

*Excalibur's* arts editors are looking for film critics for a brand new film page. If you are interested in writing or if you have a review or article to submit please come to the *Excalibur* office at 111 Central Square. Ask for Jeannine or Roslyn or leave a message.

Cyrano



By: F.W. Cameron.