

"The Year of Living Dangerously" a poignant and memorable film

by Bea Renton and Anya Waite

The Year of Living Dangerously is the latest in a long list of Australian films to hit the North American movie audience. Unlike many of its predecessors, it is more polished technically although it is rumoured that filming was complicated and frequently delayed due to the hostile political opposition encountered on location in Indonesia. Director Peter Weir nevertheless confronts with painful lucidity the collision of political idealism and abject poverty in this country (Indonesia).

The film implores the audience's participation in the tragic exploration of the aborted Communist takeover attempt that occurred in the port city of Djakarta in 1965. More than this, it delves into the polarization of wealth and poverty and the moral dilemmas that arise in the pursuit of trust, integrity and conscience. These are not easy subject matters to grapple but, with a dash of sex and high speed chases, the film manages to entertain as well as ponder upon these aforementioned moral and social issues.

The film opens with the arrival of Australian journalist, Guy Hamilton (how Australian sounding can one get?) in the torrid, steambath weather of Djakarta. Hamilton, as played by Mel Gibson of **Road Warrior**, is immediately befriended by Billy Kwan, a curious Chinese-Australian photojournalist and dwarf of amazing mental and emotional intensity. Together the two become a for-

midable journalistic team and close friends.

Kwan's essential veracity wins him the trust of all whom he meets and thus gains him access to news-breaking interviews with Djakarta's political elite. It is also through Kwan that the story is manipulated and yet it is temporarily through Hamilton that Kwan vicariously exists.

What makes the role of Kwan even more puzzling is that it is played by a woman - Linda Hunt. With great sensitivity Hunt delivers a stunning and memorable (as excellent as Judy Davis in **My Brilliant Career**?) portrayal of this enigmatic, compassionate, and highly appealing character. She is testimony to the fact that a skilled performer need not endure four hour make-up sessions in order to personate with conviction a member of the opposite sex.

Admittedly, the role of Billy Kwan is a demanding one for he is a deeply complex and troubled individual who unlike his two co-stars (Gibson and Weaver) is unable to captivate the viewer with his sheer physical beauty. Kwan's spirit and mind are what must and do make him such a compelling character.

It is also Hunt's responsibility to bring off almost single-handedly the film's climax. Disillusioned with the ideals of social revolution, journalism, and friendship, Kwan is crippled with the tragedies of the world and asks only one question



Linda Hunt was stunning in her portrayal of the dwarf photographer Billy Kwan in Peter Weir's "The Year of Living Dangerously".

for which he has no answer - "What then must we do?" (Tolstoy). It is a haunting and poignant scene. Sadly, however, Weir does not have the sense to end the movie here and instead belittles the question's magnitude by toying with a somewhat token "happy ending".

The Year of Living Dangerously is an exceptionally good film if only to see Linda Hunt's performance. It

does employ what has become somewhat of an Australian film cliché: the use of an underwater dream sequence as seen previously in **The Last Wave** and **The Devil's Playground**.

What makes it such a revealing effort is the pertinent questions and issues it raises, especially when the film concludes on Hamilton's perilous departure to his new posting in

Saigon. We, the audience of the eighties, are uncomfortably reminded of the atrocities that will soon await Hamilton in Vietnam as well. Ironically, he has not escaped the miseries of Djakarta. Rather, Kwan's question resurfaces, "What then must we do?"

(**The Year of Living Dangerously** is currently playing at the Paramount Theatre on Barrington St.)

Introducing the NEW

**CASA
PEOPLE
PIZZERIA**

5507 Spring Garden
Next to the Cameo

FREE DELIVERY in the Halifax area, with any order over \$7.00, every night except Wednesday.

Fully Licensed Open 7 nights a week
Sunday - Wednesday 5:30 - 12:00
Thursday - Saturday 5:30 - 3:00

TAKE OUT - 423-2166

ALL MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS WARRANTED

**HALIFAX
FOLKLORE
CENTRE**

- GUITAR ● FIDDLE ● BASS
- BANJO ● FLUTE ● DULCIMER
- RECORDER ● UKULELE ● AUTOHARP
- MANDOLIN ● AMPLIFIERS
- HARMONICA ● IRISH TIN WHISTLES

UNUSUAL RECORDS AND BOOKS

1528 Brunswick St.

423-7946

Just off Spring Garden Rd

MUSIC LESSONS

Individual and group lessons in Folk, and Classical Guitar. Expert lessons in Jazz Guitar, Electric Bass, Recorder, Flute, Mandolin, Fiddle, Bluegrass Banjo, Autoharp, Etc.

NO REGISTRATION FEES ● DAY & EVENING