

Return to the land

(a continuation of the story begun last week about the 20th Century Fox film preview junket for university and college editors.)

by Jens Andersen

Saturday, 12 PM

Making Love, which we saw just before supper, is technically superb, as I had half expected (even a reviewer from *Rolling Stone* conceded that director Arthur Hiller's previous film *Love Story* was brilliantly crafted). But it seems to me it is more than just well constructed; it is a searching and quite plausible history of a homosexual's relationship with his wife, whom he leaves, and the lover who prompts him to do so.

A Fox representative told us the film had received mixed responses from gays who had screened it, with some saying that the film displays a superficial, slick, soap-opera view of the "homosexual experience", but the criticism seems unfounded to me. Assuming, as seems reasonable, that homosexual relationships are emotionally similar to heterosexual ones, running the gamut from shallow and sordid to deep and profound, *Making Love* seems to be an authentic representation of the latter.

That is to say, I find the behaviour of the characters portrayed in the film to be in character and quite convincing, especially in the the difficult and crucial climactic scene where Zack (the man in the middle) tells his wife he is in love with someone else...another man.

During our interviews afterwards, the scriptwriter Barry Sandler, himself a

homosexual, admitted the narrow and somewhat idealized portraits in the film (Zack is a doctor, his wife Claire is a television executive, and his lover Bart is a moderately successful writer), but insisted that since such people exist, he was perfectly justified in offering them as a counterbalance to the usual "grotesques" and "degenerates" portrayed by the media.

Sandler also anticipates some problems with the moralists when the film is distributed and shown.

The scriptwriter anticipates some problems with the moralists when Making Love is shown.

I, myself, had gone on the junket expecting a socially-conscious sermon fleshed out by two dimensional "nice" characters, and was pleasantly surprised by the actual results. The only objections I could scrape up were against few minor flaws like a touch of melodrama in some of the lines (at one point Claire, confiding to the audience, refers to her husband's departure by saying "damn his integrity"), or the absence of any scenes describing the repercussions of the marital split on Zack or Claire's family (later, at the press conference, we learned that there had been a scene where Zack broke the news to his father, but it had been cut).

But even if the smuthounds give the film free publicity by bashing it, I suspect it won't do more than fair-to-middling at the

box office. It isn't a gloriously shallow slapstick goof like *Porkey's*, and it doesn't have the element of weirdness in *Quest For Fire*, which masks that film's essential vapidty, and thus it probably won't gross as much as these two opiates for the masses.

Nonetheless it is light-years ahead of either. Unlike them it deals with a recognizably human situation, and does so well.

Sunday 6 PM

Sitting at the Vancouver airport waiting and hour for a connection to Edmonton: a good time for contemplating one's navel in order to come to some sort of conclusion about the junket. The only things that come to mind, however, are disjointed memories like suffering silently through the hifalutin hype at the *Quest for Fire* press conference, and then at the end receiving an expensive-looking (byt photographically mediocre) set of 11 X 14 stills from the movie in an embossed folder.

Another recollection: receiving a third T-shirt this morning after the press conference on TV programs. The T-shirt advertises the soon-to-be aired series 9 to 5 (based on the movie) and though it is allegedly size "L" it doesn't cover my aforementioned navel. Maybe I can use it as a dishrag...

Ah yes, the TV press conference: rather than let the delegates digest their breakfast in peace the 20th Century Fox programmers immediately followed the meal with some plugs for new and old TV programs.

A video projector was wheeled in and we saw a trailer for the upcoming edited rerun, *The Best of Midnight Special* ("The series that captured the youth of America!... four to five great stars on every show!... the 80's newest superstar: Christopher Cross!... Star power from the best of *Midnight Special*: Elton John! (laughter) Kenny Rogers! Paul McCartney! the Rolling Stones! the Commodores! the Who! Fleetwood Mac! Willie Nelson! Barry Manilow! (laughter)... the show that gives your viewers what they want: the real thing!!!).

Then another trailer for the current series *The Fall Guy*. It shows lots of car crashes, people flying through doors and female legs. In the accompanying press kit there is a postcard with a photograph of the show's four stars, including Lee Majors, and on the back, their printed autographs.

Heather Thomas, the cheesecake in the show, is called up afterwards to field questions. They are tough, but she handles them coolly.

The trailer for The Fall Guy shows lots of car crashes, people flying through doors, and female legs.

"Do you think you have a smiley look-pretty part?"
"No, I play a cynical human being - a protege of Lee Majors."

"In the show, why do you wear bikinis and shorts and not regular clothes?"

"Well, there is this thing called 'sweeps' (editor's note: something to do with ratings; don't ask me what)... but my part is kept in character. They throw in some T and A but they don't exploit it."

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