



Lights, Camera, Action!

The cutting room

Joe: sexploitation gone wrong

By Dan Merkur

Joe is easily going to be the most talked about movie on campus this year, and for no better reason than it is one of the most important films of the last ten years.

Within the opening five minutes we see a full frontal view of a girl as she climbs into her boyfriend's tub, followed by him getting out and shooting up some heroin. Never mind for a moment that heroin addicts hate water worse than cats do.

Five minutes into the film it seems like a ghastly sex, drugs and youth culture exploitation film — until the girl's father murders the addict-pusher, and trudges into a nearby bar to think things over.

And there he meets Joe, a half-drunk hard-hat (he works in a sheet metal factory) spouting off about the commies, the democrats, the hippies and the dope pushers, saying he'd like to kill them all. Compton, the girl's father, says he just killed one. Joe stops dead in his tracks, then laughs at the outrageous witticism.

Three days later the murder hits the headlines, and the strange relationship of Compton and Joe is born, a friendship born of fear and adulation.

What follows is a marvellous analysis of social class, with \$60,000 a year ad-man Compton juxtaposed to \$4.17 an hour Joe: Compton the liberal versus Joe the bigot: Compton, the father of a freak, and Joe, whose kid buys a motorcycle.

The plot thread — the search for Compton's daughter, who escapes from a hospital (following treatment for speed addiction) — is slowly nurtured along, just fast enough, from dinner party to Greenwich Village orgy (pronounced orgg-ie, by Joe) to commune in Connecticut.

See Joe, it is not to be missed.

CATCH-22

I both read the book and saw the film of Catch-22, and I must say that the film strikes me as more artistically worthwhile, more ultimately meaningful than the novel. Director Mike Nichols has, of course, applied his unique talents and created a technically

masterful movie, while Buck Henry has narrowed Heller's rambling narrative into a single thread line (Yossarian's).

We lose a great deal — but the message is all there, refined and emphasized as the novel failed to do. I stand almost alone in this opinion — everyone seems to prefer the book. But last month in an interview Heller said that Nichols did everything he had tried to do and failed, and that he preferred the film as a statement of his theme.

SATYRICON

Fellini Satyricon is a trip through a gallery of grotesqueries. It is a marvellous visual canvas. It is a freak show. It is not at all Petronius. It is Fellini. Which means it is great.

On one level, the primary level, Fellini is an exceptional filmmaker. He never forgets to entertain his audience at all times. On that level Satyricon is a delight, although I don't know whether I would care to see it without full command of my faculties.

However Satyricon is more than just a story of decadence and lechery, more than an aesthetic treat, more than a history of debauchery. And it is certainly not Rome before Christ (Satyricon by Petronius dates to c. 65 A.D.; Christ to 4 BC-27 AD), nor After Fellini. But it is a magnificent analysis of a society without structure or order.

I don't want to read too much into Fellini, but I suspect that part of why Satyricon appealed to him as a project is that it depicts an orderless society (with neither Italy's church, nor America's law and order), and that the study of people who must live not knowing whether they will be slaves, free, wealthy or dead on the morrow is a tremendous object lesson to those disgruntled by the overstructured church (or government.)

Technically flawless (what would you expect from the cream of Italian filmmakers?), with the best colour quality I have ever seen, weird, tragic, moving, absurd. That is Fellini Satyricon — just brilliant.

Don't go anywhere near On a Clear Day, with Barbra Streisand, or Move, with Elliott Gould. If you can find a theatre playing it, don't, don't miss The Landlord, with Beau Bridges and Pearl Bailey. Getting Straight is a lot of fun, if that is what you're looking for, but then you could rent Snow White and the Seven Dwarves from Sovereign for twenty-five bucks and really have a party.

At the Revivals: Wuthering Heights, with Laurence Olivier and Merle Oberon, directed by William Wyler and produced by Samuel Goldwyn (who never in his life had anything to do with MGM), initiates the Goldwyn festival at the Baronet.

Shanghai Express (1932) plays Friday only (7:15 and 9:30) at Cinematheque, 559 Avenue Road, at St. Clair. Marlene Dietrich's second most famous role, as Shanghai Lilly, in Josef von Sternberg's magnificent expressionist production. Clive Brook, Anna May Wong, Warner Oland and Gustav von Seiffertitz also star.

The Ontario Film Theatre is closed this week, because next week the Canadian Film Awards will be adjudicated at the St. Lawrence Centre. Admission is free. Check the Centre for details.



Fellini's Satyricon

New York festival shows film selection

By MICHAEL GOULD

The New York Film Festival is the most important and exciting film festival on this continent. With the recent interest in film, every little European resort and American college town have been offering 'festivals'; yet they rarely present much of interest. Even the festival in New York, the one most relevant to Torontonians, offers only a handful of films that will get major distribution. Still, the festival was quite worthwhile.

The main series of new films ran from September 10 to the 20th. Aside from the more esoteric offerings, like one movie, with the delightful title, Even Dwarfs Started Small, five films emerged as the most important, most of them likely to be seen in Toronto this year.

The only major American feature to be premiered was Five Easy Pieces, already being compared with Easy Rider. This comparison is not unjust; both are films about people riding and searching the roads of America. In fact, both were made by the same production company, with the same cinematographer (Laszlo Kovacs), and the same star (Jack Nicholson.) However, Five Easy Pieces is no imitation of its predecessor; it is actually much superior. This is a fine, simple movie dealing with human relationships. The cast are mostly unfamiliar actors, and all perform with a relaxed, almost improvisatory warmth. Because Five Easy Pieces deals more directly with a personal story, rather than the immediately topical "relevance" of the somewhat pretentious Easy Rider, it is a much more successful film.

FRENCH PREDOMINATE

Three of the major films shown at the festival were the newest works of France's most important directors. Claude Chabrol follows his film of last year, La Femme Infidele, with another equally masterful psychological thriller, Le Boucher.

In the press conference following the screening, Chabrol said that his much stated affinity with Hitchcock is not really so true. Chabrol said that he likes to get the plot as quickly out of the way as possible, so the audience can get involved with the character relationships. At first Le Boucher seems quite a pleasant little thriller, involving the discovery of a bloodied corpse in a small French town, but as the main relationship between a butcher and a pretty, unmarried school teacher builds, the film grows in depth and ends in an almost profound tragedy. As always, Chabrol handles his colour with great delicacy, and the film is visually lovely.

GODDARD BORING

The one thoroughly unlikeable film of the festival was Jean-Luc Goddard's, Wing from the East,

Bendit. In his own words, Goddard no longer makes "political films, but (I make) films politically." With this latest effort Goddard has just about strained the limits of filmmaking, with this lifeless harangue of Maoist philosophy. The style of the film tries to be non-existent, yet one can't help becoming so aware of it, due to its tendency to get excessively boring.

SILENT FILM STYLE

The one masterpiece of the festival came from the gifted hand of Francois Truffaut. L'Enfant Sauvage (The Wild Child) is the director's best film in years; a humanistic study of the relationship between a doctor of speech (played by Truffaut) in Napoleonic France, and a 12-year-old "wolf-boy" whom the doctor attempts to civilize. Besides being a film about learning, communication and understanding human frailties, the movie functions on a second level as a throw-back to the silent film of Griffith and others. Truffaut employs many stylistic devices of the silent period, and the film is shot in a very lush black and white; the only major film in recent years to use this almost out-dated format. In addition, dialogue is kept to a minimum, emphasizing the film's "silent" quality.

Given the subject of the transformation of the boy from savage to civilized human being, most filmmakers would jump at the chance to show the evils of society, and how much better off the boy would have been back in the jungle; however, Truffaut may well be the cinema's last humanist, for he treats both sides of the relationship with equal compassion.

The last film of major importance was Luis Bunuel's Tristana, starring Catherine Deneuve. I did not see this film, but judging from the excellence of Bunuel's Belle de Jour, this should be a very fine movie. Bunuel, as someone once said, is the dirty old man of the cinema. His weird sense of humour and perversity, combined with the cool beauty of Deneuve should make the film a notable one.

Other films of interest, though mostly not new films, were shown in different sub-series: one consisted of films on American minority groups; another on the use of colour in films (a tinted version of The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari was shown); and another, to be shown the last week of September, on some once "lost" Hollywood films from 1927-33. This last series was put together by the American Film Institute. Some of the AFI's selection of rare Hollywood films for last year's New York Film Festival will be seen in Toronto later this year at the Ontario Film Theatre.

The New York Film Festival offers a great conglomeration of movies from all eras and countries, and of all types. It is well worth a visit, if you've really got the time and inclination. For those less devoted to films, however, some of the better selections from the festival can be enjoyed here later this year.



Wind from the East by Jean-Luc Goddard