



Lights, Camera, Action!

By DAN MERKUR

It is late Sunday night, and Canada is in a state of war, and I am supposed to be typing about movies. The major thought that is running through my mind is a quotation, "We have seen the enemy, and he is us." The only name I can put to that is Pogo. If the comics are actually the origin of that quote, I can only think how fitting it is that western civilization is reduced to the funny papers.

I have just seen an abominable film with Jon Voight called *The Revolutionary*, that *Time Magazine* lauded as "at last a true revolutionary movie."

Recrimination serves no purpose now. It hardly matters whether the Canadian government blew the entire situation years ago, and created a need for an FLQ to exist; or whether the problem goes back to an unviable peace in 1769; or whether the whole thing just happened a couple weeks ago when the FLQ decided to escalate. It no longer matters at all.

I, and many people I know, reacted angrily against the government's position to declare a state of war through the enactment of the War Measures Act, on the grounds that such a measure constitutes a major step towards a fascist regime, though the establishment press seems to imply that the government means only to use the emergency powers in Montreal. Even so, it is still fascism in response to terrorism in the streets of Montreal.

There is, on the other side, the strong likelihood that I am overreacting, and that all will be back to normal by the time you read this; which is what enabled me to waste two hours in a motion picture theatre tonight.

I am not the impractical idealist revolutionary politico freak yippie madman that many people I meet seem to type me as. I am however a film-maker and a writer, which means that in my life I shall have the public eye and ear, as I have now. With that position there entails responsibility.

The cinema has been employed

by arch-capitalists to make Doris Day films, and the printed word has been employed for the writings of Edgar Rice Burrough. I take no exception here to the escapist entertainment values therein. I mean only to say that these works constitute an abdication of the artist's responsibility to his public; and that that abdication does not refute my point. An artist must necessarily know and understand the events that surround him, for he deals with people in a way politicians and academicians cannot, witness our society's resistance to socialism and true democracy, and its simultaneous embrasure of populism, which is effected through the arts.

I have seen crap until nausea became a way of life, from the gross misrepresentations of the Toronto dailies and the underground news services, to the tempest in a teapot politicking of the lip-service socialists who write *Excalibur* editorials. Where does the artist learn the truth?

Perhaps through a study of the people around him he can learn something of the nature of man. Certainly the marvellous, insightful, penetrating films of Ingmar Bergman reveal this sort of truth. But the artists of the mass media have too great an audience to stay out of politics entirely. Are even the insights of Shakespeare pertinent and far-reaching enough to constitute an artist's goal?

One wonders. Costa-Gavras, who made *Z*, feels that politics is the primary area of an artist's responsibility. Jean-Luc Godard seems to agree when questioned, but even his films have an infantile ivory-tower, academic approach. The cinema needs pragmatists desperately.

John Frankenheimer, who seemed to be getting to the point with his anti-HUAC *The Manchurian Candidate* and his anti-military *Seven Days in May*, seems to find *Grand Prix* and *The Gypsy Moths* controversial enough for today. Where is the cinema going?

Getting Straight was full of

revolutionary crap. The Strawberry Statement was crap revolution. The Revolutionary is so naive that it is sad to see. Joe managed to put across the paradox of our position in remarkably clear terms. But what the hell do we need more questions for? We need some answers.

Perhaps it is too much for one man to even attempt to unravel, and we need, like Robespierre decided, to kill off everyone who doesn't fit, and start again from the Year One. But that position is untenable, because there is no viability for corpses.

I have long been debating whether it is proper for me to plug a film like *The Out-of-Towners*, which is first-rate Doris Day pap, on the grounds that pap is what many movie-goers want to see; or whether I ought to be demanding a higher standard of relevance, to place polish and aesthetics a good deal farther down the scale than socio-political importance. I have decided. If you want Clyde Gilmour, you'll be reading Clyde Gilmour in the *Tely*, but not here.

The Revolutionary was made last fall long before the May 4th massacre, before the Chicago Trial insanity, before a lot of things. (Did you know that the City of Toronto has passed a law making it illegal for several unrelated adults to cohabit, i.e. making it illegal for any communes to continue their existence in the Spadina community? Put that up against the "Americanization crisis" that the powers that be on campus are bugging each other with, and see if you can come up with anything besides an ivory tower.) So *The Revolutionary* may perhaps be excused for its naiveté. But if so, it cannot be excused for its gross misrepresentation.

The story involved a kid in 3rd Phil who gets pissed off with on-campus revolutionism when he realizes that bribing the police is just helping the system, and turns to union organizing, only to become disillusioned when several strikers get jailed and the union fails to do



Costa-Gavras' film, *Z*, concerned the events of the Lambrakis assassination in Greece.

more than support their families and defence funds. Then the kid runs into an anarchist, and the film ends with him carrying a bomb and standing five feet away from the guy he is supposed to throw the thing at.

But the kid is so dumb and so naive that the whole thing has the feel of a little kid playing with grown-up toys, and the audience just laughs at the cluck all the way through.

The story line has merit, because the politization of the individual is an important issue! Where exactly do we stand? But the handling of the whole thing is for farce, and farce is precisely what the situation is not. This purports to be a film about the realities of radicalism, and all it is is further nonsense.

In addition it is damaging, since it makes the case for all revolutionaries as dumb and naive and playing with toys they do not understand. But damn it, there are

an awful lot of clear-sighted, rational, informed, pragmatic, serious, honorable, realistic people who can be properly called revolutionaries.

Don't see *The Revolutionary*. Don't see *Getting Straight*. Don't see *The Strawberry Statement*. Don't support the proliferation of further insensitive, ignorant, and therefore, dangerous misuses of the medium. See *Potemkin* again. See *The Battle of Algiers*. See *Z*. See Joe.

If nothing else, the events of the last week served to bring home the fact that the myth of Canadian immunity from self-destructive political strife is only a myth, that the homeowner in suburbia and the ivory-tower campus are also battlegrounds. So are the cinemas.

If you want to live to see New Years Day, 2000, you damn well better consider the ultimate significance of everything you do to life on this planet.

Commercial sale ruins the Blues

By STEVE GELLER
Question of Balance

Question of Balance (Threshold TH53) is the latest album released by the Moody Blues. To say that it is an exceptional let down would be a mere understatement. Actually, it is pure garbage.

By now most people realize how the early Moody Blues music died out in 1965 and was replaced in 1967 with a totally new sound. The Moody Blues emerged with a new form of art. They subtly fused classical melodies to their own rock compositions. They shifted the emphasis from classical to rock and rock to classical in each of their compositions according to what message or effect they wanted. Their early material was therefore unique and quite good.

With Question of Balance the Moody Blues seem to be interested less in what they want to say and more in what they think the music public wants to hear. Leading off with Question, they ramble on without sincerity about war, and the problems of America. The classical-rock fusion has lost its subtlety and has been replaced by an uncouth display of how a mellotron can be crudely imposed upon a meagre rock writing.

The two relatively good cuts, *It's Up To You*, and *The Balance*, are not enough to redeem the Moody Blues' unbelievably straight-forward commercialized attempt at musical salesmanship.

Steve Miller Band - Number 5

The Steve Miller Band have been around for a few years now but they should make their biggest impact with their latest album, Number 5 (Capitol SKAO-436). Aside from being their best effort by far, Number 5 could wind up being a top-ranking contender for "record of the year" award.

Never before has the Steve Miller Band been so totally together in just about every way possible; musically, lyrically, structurally, and arrangement-wise.

They have changed to a lighter premiss than in previous albums. They manage to encompass soft rock, country, gospel, and a subtle blues element into one fantastic, controlled sound. Back up musicians such as Lee Michaels and Nicky Hopkins add to the album's excellence.

Number 5 is one of those albums where it becomes hard to choose a "best" cut. This is because all the tracks display a distinct qualitative element and are linked only by the tightness of the group and the overall cohesiveness of the production techniques.

For those who have had previous experiences with Steve Miller's albums, Number 5 will be one of the most pleasurable musical experiences in a long time.

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