

## Vive L'Algerie - another view

by Doug Wilton

I almost didn't go to see Battle Of Algiers because I read Excalibur's first review and I didn't want to be identified as an Avenue Road Maoist, whatever that means. I don't give a damn about the politics; the art of this film transcends propaganda. It transcends anything socio-cinematic this man has ever seen. It makes Peter Watkin's The War Game look too very high contrast.

Battle Of Algiers raises propaganda to high art, which is most effective, most dangerous propaganda. France was wise to ban the film. It universalizes their oppression of the Algerian People to make a reverent testament to the soul of Man in the wrathful dignity of just revolt.

The compassionate eye of director Pontecorvo, behind a ruthless camera compels us to hold our breath in the Paras' torture chambers and watch the exquisite agony of old men and boys making a sacrament of their

bodies to human freedom. We hear the terrible conviction of a movement from Bach as these humble people are grotesquely bound, battered and mangled, while a brave young soldier of France holds the blow-torch to the emaciated belly of an Algerian.

A poet said:

"The eye-sockets of technology weep the blood of armies. Do machine-guns type out man's history?"

With technological precision and relentless machine-guns, the tall young Paras, like interchangeable units in the mottled uniforms they wore in Indo-China (Viet Nam), "search and destroy" in the shops and homes of The Casbah. They offer the stubborn rebels the choice of surrender or death by high-explosive with the innocent occupants of the tenements where they have taken refuge.

A music like orchestrated

gunfire scores the Panzer-like rhythm of swift, implacably unfolding sequences enfolding us in the slashing paradoxes of war: frightened, womanly, Algerian girls coldly planting plastique bombs in a café crowded with innocent bougeoise and children; a mob of little boys drag a drunken European to his death down a flight of steps; Mathieu, the French commander of the Paratroopers, a veteran of the Resistance, a hybrid of French humanité, imperialism and science, who freely accords admiration to his noble enemies. He moves with the calm economy of a panther and coolly annihilates the game and the opponent like a masterful chess player.

The photography is fierce and eloquent. It borrows the grainy authenticity of news film and couples it with faultless realism of properties, crowd movement, and acting. It is incredible that, as the credits state, not one foot of news-reel or documentary

film has been used. But only a callous eye could mistake the unique inventiveness of this imagery for news film: the guillotine blade falls on a prisoner's neck. Cut to: rain pouring vertically from a dark gable; a phalanx of paratroopers in a tall chasm --evocative of a battle painting from the Italian Renaissance. Cut to: the long, eerie shape of a helicopter floating in a pale rectangle of sky above the roofs.

Finally, the plain beauty of Algerian women dancing with the new flags of a free people, thrilling the air of a blackened city with wierd, ullulating cried in a vast, transcendental rhythm.

It was strange to see, at the end of the film, the audience of loyal colonists--standing for The Queen.

Doug Wilton wrote this article in response to a review of Battle of Algiers by Alex Cramer, in the Excalibur (Nov. 10, '67).

## YUP - they did alright

by Don McKay

It is hopeless to think that Anouilh's play Thieves' Carnival could ever be a great play, especially in the miserable translation supplied by Samuel French. In spite of this, the YUP production of Thieves was reasonably good.

Richard Banigan's costumes were humorous and sexy. They added color and in some cases beauty to the play. Mr. Banigan has a talent for theatrical design

that is far from amateur and very near to professional. He tends to get carried away by his flair for flamboyancy.

The lighting was designed by another student, Mary Ferrais. Her use of the softer British coloring technique gave the stage a warmth that is usually lacking in Canadian productions.

It is difficult to design sets for the stage at Burton, but the designer had the good sense to

subtly dress the stage so that desired effect of elegance was achieved with simplicity and subtlety.

Nicholas Ayre is no mean talent as a director. The cast was moved with skill and poise through many potentially dull scenes. At times in an attempt to improve the quality of the play his direction became a little too slick, but this was the fault of the play, not the director.

For the most part the acting was good. Dirk Verhulst as Gustave and Sherri Bergman as Juliette captured the innate charm of the two shy lovers. As the befuddled admiral, Rick

Blair came off with great humor.

I feel that maybe I'm going to be too harsh in my criticism of Ellen Green as Lady Hurf as it is a difficult and sloppily formed character, but I know from her performances last year that Miss Green has more talent than she exhibited in Thieves.

Lady Hurf is the pivotal character of the whole play and Ellen Green's portrayal was a mere caricature of the rather sad person that Lady Hurf could be.

Thieves was not a rollicking three ring farce, but YUP's production was an amusing evening despite the flaws.



Rex Lingwood

Cast of Thieve's Carnival having a lollipop break.

## The Devils - jumpin' lucifer

by Frank Liebeck

"On 18 August 1634 Urbain Grandier, a priest of London, was taken to the Place Sainte-Croix, tied to a stake and burned alive."

John Whiting's "The Devils" is playing at Hart House this week at that university downtown. I forgot the name. Go down and see it, if only to hear Eleanore Lindo say she's pregnant.

James Bradford is Grandier, the priest who desires punishment and death so he may join his God. His desire for self-destruction isn't at all evident. I thought he was merely fond of

copulating, until I read the back of the program which said he had underlying religious motives. But he does have a quiet intensity, bordering on fanaticism, which reaches out to everybody, both on the stage and before it, and we feel that here is a man who will crash.

He leaves much behind. The most precious Phillipe Trincant whom he leaves pregnant and alone to find a husband for her child. Miss Lindo plays her with an elegance she does not lose after her fall. I would think that some poise should be lost considering her loss of dignity, but maybe not.

By far the finest acting ability is brought forth by Angela Fusca, who plays Sister Jeanne. Sister Jeanne has "uterus frustrations", which means she's horny. She imagines that Grandier visits her during the night. Her dreams lead her to insanity, and the priests must rid her of these devils and rid the world of Grandier. And so it goes.

Peter Ebert has had to direct 40 people in this production which is monumental in itself. He has achieved the finest moment when the sisters collapse before the town, possessed by their devils. The air was severed by their horrid groanings and shriekings. The audience didn't take a single breath during that moment. It was fun.

All the undercurrents and conspiracies make the play a bit hard to take. It lasts three hours you know. I got to the bar five minutes late and had to eat hamburger.

## Comedians no laugh

by The October Revolutionary

The Comedians is all about hate in Haiti or what to do till the fuzz arrive.

It seems that there is great unrest in that land and Alec Guinness has been sent to sell guns. But Richard Burton, who is only supposed to run his rundown hotel for gun-runners keeps running into Liz Taylor. She's an ambassador's wife whose affairs are not necessarily affairs of state. While her husband is antagonizing Haitian officials, she is practising rather unwifely husbandry with Burton, staying up all night and debauching, which is probably why there is great unrest in Haiti. Con-

fused!?!)

You see, in order to make this suggestive movie palatable to the over-40 set (who are really the only impressionable children around today), Liz and Dick do the big parting bit at the end, and he, like all great heroes from Superman to Dean Rusk, runs off to the mountains to do his bit for truth, justice and the Haitian way of life. To accomplish this he gathers together a large band of 12 followers to overthrow the government, which Alec Guinness would have done except he died shortly after Paul Ford, disguised as a vegetarian who is married to Lillian Gish, leaves the country in disgust because the police captain has stolen a dead body and had two people shot in front of 300 little

kids.

Now this is where the story really begins. You see, I haven't told you about the brothel and the black magic and the kid with the blood of a dead rooster smeared all over him, and about Burton's hang-ups, and the car accident, and Paul Ford's wheat-germ, and the statue of Christopher Columbus (you remember him). For that matter, you don't know anything about the Ton-Ton. (No, Virginia, that's not a kind of Indian drum!)

The amazing thing is that this collection of rubbish has been neatly interwoven to make an extremely engrossing movie. Okay, so it's a little too pat for words, but Graham Greene is always like that. Remember "Our Man in Havana"? . . . That's funny, I don't.