

Mills on Media

MOVIES and MORALITY

by Stephen R. Mills

SEVERAL years ago, in a fairly successful attempt to attract the entertainment-conscious public from the 'boob-tube' back to the 'silver screen', film promoters coined the slogan "Movies are better than ever." It's a catchy phrase and in the light of new filming techniques like cinerama and the Expo-inspired split-screen method, the revolutionary lessening of censor-restraint, and the rise of "bright, new stars" like Dustin Hoffman, Peter Fonda, Raquel Welch, etc., it appears to be true. Certainly it appears true when one considers the tremendous increase in movie-house attendance in the last decade.

No one, including myself, can deny the fact that technically movies are better than ever but this is, of course inevitable. As intelligent human beings, however, we should be primarily concerned with the question; is movie content 'better' in the moral sense?

Naturally, a person's answer to this question depends on his belief of what is meant by 'better' or, more precisely, what constitutes a 'good' movie. This belief depends on a person's viewpoint and because there are many viewpoints, there are many beliefs and consequently many answers to the original question. I'd like to discuss several of them, including my own in the hope of enlarging the outlook of the average movie-goer. (I feel I can safely assume there are enough "average movie-goers" reading the Gazette to make such a discussion relevant.)

A natural place to begin is at the source of all the films we view, the film studios and the producers, directors, and actors who create motion pictures. In 'the business', a "good movie" usually means a high gross at the box-office (which these days is accomplished by a huge gross-out on the screen.) However, though this idea

is common, it should not discredit the many producers, directors, and actors interested in, and dedicated to, film-as-art. It's a safe assumption that no matter how commercial flicks become, there will always be a Fellini, a Ford, a Welles, or a Kubrick to produce the master-pieces.

A second viewpoint to be examined is that of the professional critic. These men too are primarily interested in film-as-art and tend to lean rather heavily on pictures that are not art and don't pretend to be. Of course there are many who review for the general audience and usually they share the general audience viewpoint. The public tends to ignore artistic critics and attend whatever appeals to them, desiring to form their own opinions on what is good.

The general audience good is based on appeal. Furthermore, appeal is based on common morality in a double-standard manner which, when explained, leads inevitably to an existentialist view of movie-goers and society. Allow me to elaborate: First, the new movies filled with explicit sex and violence, shock and offend many. They find such movies repulsive because they violate the Judeo-Christian morality which is "gospel" to them.

However, another huge segment of film audiences flock to such movies, seemingly unable to get enough explicit sex and raw violence to satisfy them. When this fact is shoved in their faces (which isn't often), they defend their position with the "new morality, claiming that under "situation ethics" they can justify their claim that these pictures are "good". Unfortunately, the situation which makes said films good is that the degenerate masses are able to satisfy their perverted desires vicariously, which indeed would be a good thing if the movies did not also tend to shatter the weak moral armour of many and swell the already large mass of degenerates loose in North America.

From all this we can conclude that some consider modern films bad and some consider them good in that they can't call them bad without damning themselves.

Let me now present my own view as expressed in this one sentence; Movies are not "better than ever" from any moral viewpoint. On the Judeo-Christian level, it is readily apparent how wrong current cinema presentations are becoming. It is very difficult, if not impossible to find a film today that does not violate the Twelve Great Commandments of the Bible on which the J-C morality is based.

Strangely enough, the moral wrongness in regard to 'situation ethics' is just as apparent when 'situation ethics' are understood. Let's pause for a brief look at the controversial "new morality."

Basically, and I must apologize for what I know is an oversimplification, situation ethics says that your moral decisions and judgments should be based on the consequences of what you choose to do. That is, rather than make a snap decision based on a rigid moral code, one looks ahead and makes the choice he feels will yield the most favourable outcome. (Naturally, the situation ethicist must have a set of moral priorities and fundamental beliefs on which to base his view of consequences but it is not necessary to go into this for the purposes at hand.)

In the light of this explanation, one can see that a true situation ethicist need only base his decision-projection on past evidence to conclude the moral wrongness of most current motion pictures. Continual explicit sex and raw violence on the screen produces such in society. I will not say that this alone can cause the disintegration and eventual destruction of society but anyone who is half-intelligent knows it is a contributing factor and a great one.

In conclusion, I make this plea to campus and Metro movie-goers; If you see film advertised that you know is bad (or X in the true and traditional sense of the rating) then don't merely make a verbal protest while sneaking off to see it. Boycott the theatre showing it and encourage others to do likewise.

Be advised: A better world begins with you and so do better movies.

"maybe they need to make war as much as we need to make love."

Little girls are little flames
But Lolitta was a raging inferno
And when she played,
Everyone got burned
medium cool

WHO'S THAT KNOCKING AT MY DOOR?

18 yrs.

SEX... GOD... AND PASOLINI!

Lolitta