

**Recommendation for Mercy**

# Truscott trial exploited in gimmicky film

By **BILL GLADSTONE**  
 The story of Steven Truscott, theoretically excellent material for a film is in fact the basis for Murray Markowitz's new Canadian release, Recommendation for Mercy.  
 The real Truscott was arrested for a brutal rape-murder and sentenced to hang 'til a federal cabinet commuted the sentence to life imprisonment. After serving ten years of his sentence Truscott was freed and is currently living under an assumed name.  
 In 1966, Isabel LeBourdais' book, The Trial of Steven Truscott, proclaimed Truscott's

innocence, and condemned the courts for their travesty of justice: it became a best-seller.  
 Since Truscott's story has engaged and sustained the public's interest, it follows that a film version of Truscott's story would be equally well-received by the public.  
 Paradise Films, a Canadian film production company, set out to test this theory with Recommendation For Mercy, a film closely based on the well-known Truscott trial, but unfortunately, the production is so muddled and distracting that we may never discover whether the theory is

valid.  
 The best thing about Recommendation For Mercy is that, after a painful 94 minutes of running time, it finally comes to an end.  
 The story is told in bits and pieces that never seem to connect or to build upon each other. The annoying and excessive use of flashbacks, quick cutting, and elaborate but purposeless sound-mixes only act to tear the film apart, rather than unify it.  
 A general sense of misdirection is evident in the film as if the writers and director Markowitz could not decide upon a particular genre, and so alternated between

the whodunit, the courtroom epic, and the psychological drama.  
 Unfortunately, the various themes and directions of the film never synthesize, and the result is only confusion, a smorgasbord of opposing effects that diffuse the viewer's emotions and leave him only wishing he were someplace else.  
 It is the script, with more holes than a slice of Swiss cheese, that is the source of the confusion. It tends always to complicate the basic story, and by doing so, greatly loses touch with it. It would have been a more practical idea to present the story as simply as possible, and in chronological order.  
 Indeed, given the fact that the film industry in Canada has enough trouble just trying to present an unadorned drama, straight and simple, it seems doubly foolish to attempt to present this same drama using a complex and alien style. By concocting a feeble and much-flawed psychological mystery out of what properly should have been a sensitive and straightforward tale of social injustice, the film-makers have lost rather than sustained the interest of the audience.

him. Even the behaviour of the police seems senseless: when they try to reason out John's possible motives for the murder, they propose a set of ridiculous theories that are plainly absurd to everyone except the characters of the film.  
 The scriptwriters, as if aware that their characters seem incapable of saying anything relevant to their situations, try to advance the narrative without words at several points in the film, filling in the silence with a pleasant muzak-like soundtrack that gives one the impression of being not in a movie theatre but rather in a large department store or supermarket.  
 Also, the script underplays the importance of Robinson's parents, who only appear in a few scenes, while giving excessive priority to the boy's teenage friends. Many of the important character relationships in the film are therefore sketchy, while the irrelevant ones are enlarged upon to little purpose.  
 It is a tragedy that by making a film as confused and faulty as Recommendation, Markowitz has destroyed what originally could have been material for a first-rate film.

**Records**

By **EVAN LEIBOVITCH**  
**Acid Queen-Tina Turner (United Artists) LA 4956**  
 Although slicker and smoother than previous attempts, Ms. Turner never loses the energy that distinguishes her as an R & B vocalist. Ike Turner, who produced the album and wrote all of side two, does background vocals on the AM cut, "Baby-Get It On". It's easy nowadays for an R & B album to go the disco route, and it's nice to see something that's mainly an album for listening. Side one includes material written by the Stones and Led Zep. A studio version of the title cut is even nicer than one of the few good memories of the movie Tommy.  
**Born to run-Bruce Springsteen (Columbia PC 33795)**  
 Along with my copy came a release proclaiming that 'the world is ready for Bruce Springsteen'. On the merits of this album, he might finally be recognized as a superb songwriter who's assembled a top-notch band to back him up.  
 Most of the material is of the big city adolescent punk variety, sort of like Brownsville Station but with a lot more class, and the basic rock music is beautifully executed.  
 Perhaps, the one weak feature of the album is Springsteen's low pitched and throaty voice, that I could never get used to. But if you can follow the

words and music, it's easy to see that Springsteen has plenty going for him.  
**Monty Python's Flying Circus (Polydor 2424 109)**  
 While the album has been out for five years as a BBC import, Polydor's production should make it easier to get. This was Monty Python's first album (it's the one with the foot in the TV set on the cover) and is a collection of some of their best TV material. If you can ignore the laughtrack, you can enjoy some of their best stuff; otherwise, you run the risk of being the last one in your tutorial to know about Anthrax Ripples and transvestite lumberjacks.  
**Synergy (Passport-GRT 9167-98009)**  
 Synergy picks up where Switched on Bach left off, being mostly bouncy light rock synthesizer music. I had almost forgotten how versatile synthesizers can be.  
 On this album they imitate horn and string sections, as well as the range of guitar and keyboard instruments. The writing complements the capabilities of such a system, and since the album is basically a two man job (Larry Fasta and Marty Scott), it all fits together well. For you 4-channel freaks, every album is encoded in quadrophonic sound. It's generally an imaginative album that's very easy to listen to.

**Bethune movies offer variety**

Bethune films continues its odd-ball assortment of films guaranteeing a broad base of appeal.  
 This Friday, September 26, Federico Fellini's reminisces about life in a small Italian town during Mussolini's reign, in Amacord (I remember). It's vintage Fellini including a top-heavy shopkeeper and a witch-temptress, but Amacord is also uproariously funny and show's Fellini as a master of comedy as well as the serious and the absurd.  
 Saturday and Sunday, Peter Boyle of Joe fame plays the monster Gene Wilder as Dr. Frankenstein, created. Because Young Frankenstein is a Mel Brooks production, it will probably provide more laughs than chills.  
 That, at least, was the way Brooks, who became famous with Blazing Saddles, planned it.  
 You be the judge on this one.  
 Both films cost you \$1.50 each, \$1.25 for Bethune students.

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**You don't Have to be Jewish to Know Jesus but, it couldn't hurt**

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