

films

About ten minutes after the opening of *Alfie* (at the Westmount) I turned to my companion and whispered, "Boy, am I going to pan this movie if Alfie doesn't end up getting his!"

Fortunately for the proprietors of the Westmount, his is exactly what Alfie ends up getting, and I recommend the film thoroughly, though not unreservedly.

Alfie starts as a sort of Cockney Playboy Advisor, zooming from bird to bird (I've learnt in English 314 this year that the use of "bird" to mean "woman" goes back to at least Chaucerian English), tipping the wink to the audience at great length, studiously avoiding getting emotionally involved with any of his birds, confident that he can enjoy himself without inflicting any particular damage.

Since Alfie acts as his own Greek chorus, commenting on the action incessantly, it takes the film's independent moral judgment some time to assert itself.

Once it does, the film becomes very bitter indeed. There is a fine abortion sequence that isn't at all funny and wasn't meant to be.

But also, as Alfie's pretensions to success with the birds are increasingly shown to be empty, we find ourselves feeling for him and with him. The film achieves something unusual: it turns the Playboy Advisor gradually into a human being for us.

To put it another way, *Alfie* starts as a heartless comedy, then turns on itself and bites. Perhaps the turn isn't accomplished entirely without heavy-handedness.

But Alfie's cynicism and the film's moralism relieve one another nicely, and the net effect is quite appealing.

The directing didn't strike me as brilliant, but the cast (headed by Michael Gaine of *The Ipcress File*) does a fine job.

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The Wild Angels, at the Capitol, is by most standards a bad film. Certainly it's hardly original, being a popularization (or bastardization) of Kenneth Anger's celebrated short film *Scorpio Rising* (banned in Alberta).

Anger was the first to exploit the iconography of the motorcycle gangs, and by all accounts he did a brilliant job. But Roger Corman, who puts the Hell's Angels through their current paces, has a considerably less sure hand.

The problem is perhaps that of finding a moral frame. The old gambit whereby Hollywood at once exploits and deplores a Shocking Phenomenon is pretty transparently at work in Corman's film, whereas Anger, who is rather self-consciously a diabolist to begin with, doesn't start with any obligation to deplore at all.

Anyway, here's Peter Fonda playing the leader of the Angels, infinitely impressive to look at (with his dark glasses he's almost as intriguing as Cybulski, the Polish star); and here's Nancy Sinatra as his girl.

Miss Sinatra succeeds in looking surprisingly wholesome in the midst of all the squalor, pot, rape, violence and so forth. Fonda looks positively noble. There's no real reason why in five years he couldn't take over the Junior Chamber of Commerce of the Californian community of his choice.

(By the way: has anybody ever made a film about the wild orgies at Chamber of Commerce conventions? If not, why not?)

But despite everything the film does leave one with a few beautiful images.

Fonda standing against the sky, for a start. The Loser, shot by a policeman, trying to rise from the highway. Indeed, all the highway shots, and the dry wastes of California.

The whole stupid "rescue" of The Loser from hospital is well handled, apart from the gratuitous rape of a colored nurse.

And, after the tedium of a monumentally dull orgy in a church, the funeral of The Loser, with which the film concludes, is brilliantly handled. I won't soon forget Nancy Sinatra striding at the head of the procession, nor the final shot of Fonda filling in his girl friend's grave.

All in all, an interesting camp film if you have the time for it.

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 Speaking of time, time's running out for the purchase of Main Series Film Society memberships (\$4 for students; 10 films, tickets at the Bay or the Dept. of Extension, Corbett Hall). I can't recommend the series too strongly. First film (the Russian *Hamlet*) on October 31.

—John Thompson

Alice in Annotated land

Batman? The Hulk? The Hobbits? No! Get with it, swinger—**Alice in Wonderland is In!**

All over the country Alice buffs are perusing their treasured first or fifth or ninety-seventh editions, following Alice through her adventures with such non-super-heroes as the Mad Hatter, the Mock Turtle, and the White Rabbit, and waging perpetual war against that nastiest villain of all, the Queen of Hearts!

The current revival of interest in the wonderful Lewis Carroll books, although one hesitates to call it "camp", certainly is connected with the present concern with the trivial, the childish, and the blunt.

But there is one major difference: Alice is worth it. She has lasted for a hundred years and still has a lot of life left in her. I think children stopped reading the Alice books about the turn of the century, and ever since then the adults have taken over.

Cheap, unannotated editions of *Alice in Wonderland* abound, and many of these include the equally delightful *Through the Looking-Glass*. Real Alice buffs, however, will want to pick up Martin Gard-

ner's *The Annotated Alice* (Forum, about \$3.50), which includes both stories, a fascinating introduction, and a complete bibliography, as well as the notes.

Gardner keeps in mind the danger of taking Alice too seriously, and confines his notes accordingly. He explains the tricks of logic which Carroll so skillfully worked into his stories, quotes in full the poems which are parodied, and explains many topical allusions which otherwise would be lost on a twentieth-century audience. As Gardner explains, "no joke is funny unless you see the point of it, and sometimes a point has to be explained."

There are six pages of notes on the Jabberwocky poem, which has probably been used as an example in every linguistic argument every devised. In fact, the editor goes out of his way to point out the many instances in which Alice has been called to witness logical and philosophical statements—Einstein and Bertrand Russell, among others, quoted from Carroll.

Of interest more as a curiosity than anything else is the new Dover edition of *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*. It's a photo-

graphic reproduction of the original hand-printed edition of the book that later became *Alice in Wonderland*.

I think the original story brings us closer to the author than does the later edition, prepared for mass consumption, and the drawings are interesting as Carroll's conception of his heroine. A great many scholars, eager to pin down Carroll as some sort of pervert who substituted friendships with little girls for real sexual experiences, have had a lot of fun seeking out the symbolism in these drawings. Needless to say, this is the type of scholarship that is best kept away from the Alice stories—it tends to detract from their entertainment value, and certainly does no good in bringing the qualities of the work to light.

All you eager young classicists will be delighted to know that you can supplement your reading of Cicero and Pliny with C. H. Carruthers' *Alicia in Terra Mirabili*, a Latin translation by a McGill University professor. I give you fair warning, however, that the Latin is by no means easy—after all, Carruthers had to make up words for "orange marmalade" and "tobacco". The Romans never had such vices. The book is published by Macmillan and sells for about five dollars. It includes the superb Tenniel illustrations (as does Gardner's edition above), but the "Drink Me" sign of the magic bottle has been changed to "Hauri me".

Well, there it is, folks—you can start your collection of Carroll books today. I guarantee that you'll get as much enjoyment out of Alice's adventures as you would from any Henry Miller book. And the time has arrived when you need not be so ashamed of an interest in fairy tales that you have to hide your *Wonderland* under the mattress.

—Terry Donnelly

Pleasure of his mediocrity

In Robert Glenn's production of *The Pleasure of His Company* we have a reasonably enjoyable performance of a very mediocre play. It is probably quite debatable to what degree Mr. Glenn is himself responsible for the enjoyment.

It is, however, quite obvious that Wayne Wilson, who plays a quick-witted and sententious grandfather, is the most entertaining force in the play. Mr. Wilson is probably the closest thing to genius that has so far been associated with the Citadel.

Miss Susan McFarlane of Edmonton provides an impressive but by no means close second to Mr. Wilson's acting. Her role, as a daughter caught in the cliché cross currents of affection for her long lost father and for her steer-breeding fiancé, provides Miss McFarlane with plenty of stage meat which she masticates quite well. Unfortunately neither daughter nor grandfather are the major roles in the play.

Old Mackenzie Savage and young Jessica Poole are merely next of kin to the divorced couple, Katherine Dougherty and Biddeford "Pogo" Poole.

The rest of the acting is only competent. Each actor taken individually might seem right for his parts but together they just do not meld. One fails to see why a certain reviewer has made so much fuss about the performance of Lynne Gorman as Katherine or why Guy Arbury's apparently impressive acting record makes him right for the part of "Pogo" Poole.

Mr. Glenn has mixed the type of actor who uses mask (Arbury, Kinasewich, Wilson, and Bonnell) with the type who depends on emotional reaction (McFarlane, Gorman, and Sutherland) and these types rarely mix.

Only once, in the first scene of the second act, does the performance get off the ground and the acting become transparent enough for the play to come through.

The opening act is extremely awkward, and the last two scenes are untidy, at times almost careless. The pace of last Friday's performance was ragged in all but the one scene mentioned above.

Thus, instead of a good professional job done we have a good job of professionalism, a piece of acting by a group of amateurs who act all the time and get paid for it. Instead of a group of imaginative people who are trying to accomplish something together, we have a group of people who are

trying to outdo one another. The result is merely entertaining, commercial theatre, a kind of theatre which is better left to the movies, as in the similar but less entertaining case of last year's Citadel production of *Under the Yum-Yum Tree*.

Local, non-professional drama need not worry about the presence of foreigners on the Citadel stage as long as local drama retains its spontaneity and relevance to modern life. If the Citadel wishes to compete with the "down to earth" superficialities of the cinema and television that is the Citadel's business.

One can only wish them good luck, with a slight feeling of regret.

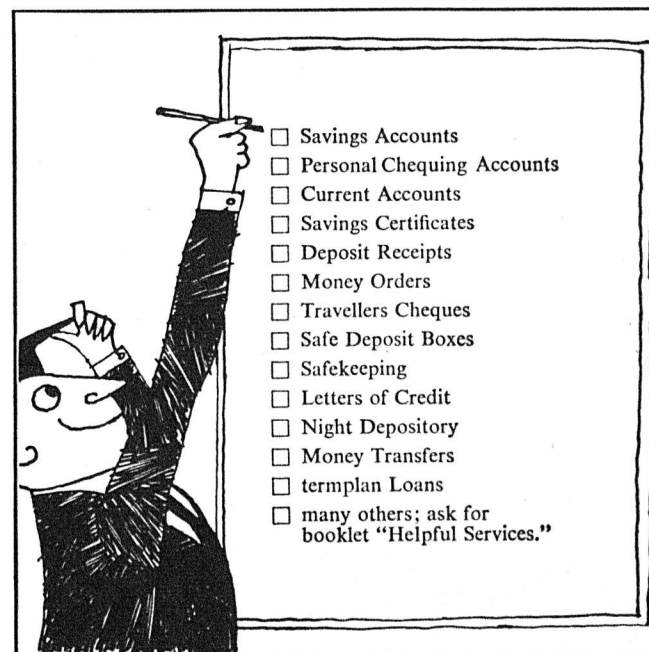
—Peter Montgomery

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