

Fortune and Men's Eyes: a film for thinking

Fortune and Men's Eyes, now showing at the Plaza One theatre, is a shockingly different prison film.

Most of us, at one time or another, have seen the old Edward G. Robinson "tough con" type of picture in which there is a semi-heroic prison break-out attempt foiled only by a courageous warden taking an outlandish risk in the face of opposition from all sides (i.e., the governor, the other prisoners, the guards, his wife).

Fortune and Men's Eyes, however, has no heroes. It doesn't even have an anti-hero. The leading character, Smitty, is a sort of 'everyman' figure whose experiences are the focus of the film and on whom the audience's sympathies are concentrated.

Smitty, played by Wendel Burton, has been sentenced to six months in prison for possession of marijuana after his parents discovered him smoking and turned him in to the Police. He arrives in prison naive and innocent of what is about to happen to him.

His first idea of the inhuman environment which he has entered comes with the issuance of his prison uniform. Asked what size he wears, he gives all of his measurements to the inch, only to be put down with "That will be small."

He is taken to his cell, where he meets Rocky, a tough who is just stupid enough to think he's smart.

Rocky, sensing Smitty's ignorance of what the prison is like, seems to take on the role of protector. He defends Smitty when another tough tries to assert his superiority over Smitty at a meal by taking food from his plate.

Two other characters, Queenie and Jan, are the cell-mates of Rocky and Smitty. Queenie is, as his name suggests, the 'queen' of the prison - a flagrant, stereotype homosexual who make no bones about his hangup. He is aggressive, dominating, and sarcastic. When Smitty asks him what the prisoners are like, Queenie says, "We got all kinds, dear, faggots, pushers, politicians..."

At this point Smitty interrupts him "Politicians? This is the last place I expected to run into politicians."

"Listen, dear," Queenie says, "Politics is everything in prison."

The fourth prisoner is Jan, who is always called 'Mona' by the other prisoners. 'Mona' is short for 'Mona Lisa'. Mona, played by Danny Friedman, is 'public property' which means that he may be used by any of the prisoners for sexual purposes.

Mona is a virtual slave in the prison. He is forced to do petty chores for the others, and is constantly abused and insulted by them. He accepts it all passively and does not protest what happens to him. He explains himself to Smitty by saying that he just lets life happen to him.

Mona tells Smitty that he came to prison after being homosexually raped by four men, who, when a policeman approached, charged Mona with propositioning them. Mona did not have the money for a good lawyer and wound up getting six months in prison.

The main action of the picture involves the conflict between Rocky (played by Zooley Hall) and Smitty. After Smitty has seen Mona homosexually gang-raped while the guards stand by and do nothing, he asks, "Why don't the guards do somethin'?"

Rocky answers, "Ain't nobody gonna interfere with a man while he's getting his oats."

Rocky offers to become Smitty's "old Man", which means, he tells Smitty, that he will protect him from what has happened to Mona. Smitty, not understanding the homosexual aspect of the relationship readily agrees. Only later, when Rocky tells him to get ready for a shower, does Smitty understand what he has let himself in for.

After Smitty has submitted to Rocky, he becomes his slave and is forced to perform small chores. When Smitty tries to rebel, Rocky blackmails him by threatening to turn him over to the crowd which raped Mona.

At this point, Queenie (played by Michael Greer) intervenes, telling Smitty that he does not have to put up with Rocky if he doesn't want to. Queenie, who has been shown to be one of the prison's most powerful 'politicians', tells Smitty that all he needs to do is beat Rocky in

a fight next time they go to the showers. When Smitty tells Queenie of Rocky's threat, Queenie tells him not to worry - his crowd can take care of Rocky's.

In the fight that ensues, Smitty knocks Rocky unconscious, thus freeing himself of Rocky's control. The remainder of the picture deals with the decline of Rocky and Smitty's attempts to rise to power.

The real villains of the film are the guards who brutalize and exploit the prisoners. In one scene, Rocky provokes another prisoner into accusing him of stealing a lighter. Rocky has in fact stolen the lighter, but has palmed it off on an accomplice. When the other prisoner accuses Rocky of stealing the lighter, the guard searches Rocky, and, finding nothing, uses the 'false' accusation as an excuse to take the other to a locked room where he is so brutally beaten that he dies as a result. The prison authorities gutlessly assent to call the death the result of pneumonia.

The film is very depressing and gives one of the most scathing commentaries ever made on the North American Prison system.

Filmed on location in a Quebec prison, it has a feeling to it that suggests it is really happening in front of us. The tension that the director, Harvey Hart, produces is completely effective; it is all the more effective because of the very skillful injection of humour into the horrible circumstances in which Smitty finds himself.

If you go to see the film, which you should if you are at all interested in serious productions, expect to be shocked and shaken.

The film is concerned with the very sick environment that is our prisons, and it is extremely successful in showing what it sets out to portray.

Fortune and Men's Eyes is a shocking, nasty, brutish film. It is more than entertainment, it is a film for those who want to think. As such, it is the best film I have seen in a very long time.

by Dick Nimmons

Brauss to perform



Helmut Brauss, associate professor of music at the U. of A., will give a concert of piano works Friday night, February 11, at 8:30 in Convocation Hall.

Mr. Brauss received his musical training in Germany after the second world war and has toured extensively throughout Europe and North America, never failing to impress the critics with his mastery of his instrument.

Because of his German musical background, Mr. Brauss specializes in the music of Beethoven, Brahms and Schumann although his

repertoire ranges from the Baroque to the modern composers including both Haydn and Hindemith.

Since arriving in Canada, Mr. Brauss has appeared with the Saskatchewan Festival Orchestra under Arthur Fiedler, the Vancouver and Winnipeg CBC Orchestras, the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, and has played at most of the major centres in the country.

The concert is being sponsored by the Edmonton Musical Club. Tickets cost \$1.00 for students and \$2.50 for adults and are available at the door.

E Y O concert scheduled

The Edmonton Youth Orchestra will be presenting its major concert of the year on Sunday, February 27, at 3:00 p.m. in the Jubilee Auditorium.

The featured piece on the program will be R. Murray Schaffer's *Threnody for Nagasaki*, a piece composed for youth orchestra, choir, 5 speakers and electronic tape. The Orchestis dance club will also be performing with this piece adding another dimension to this multi-audial work.

Threnody for Nagasaki was written by Schaffer, a Vancouver composer, to illustrate the total horror attendant upon the dropping of the atomic bomb on that ill-fated city towards the end of the second world war. It employs a very free-form approach to the music with every participant reading off the complete score and constant improvisations called for from various players both in solo and with the whole orchestra.

At an EYO performance of *Threnody* given a year ago in Convocation Hall, the effect created by the piece was so overwhelming that the audience sat in stunned silence for half a minute before scattered and self-conscious applause ferried them back to their own reality.

The orchestra will also perform Dvorak's *Symphony*

From the New World, surely one of the greatest orchestral masterpieces ever written; Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Minor* (listen for the fugatto in the third movement, it's one of Beethoven's best); and Strauss's (Johann) *Emperor Waltz*, Viennese "soul" of the highest order.

The Edmonton Youth Orchestra is putting on the concert as part of their fund raising efforts to pay to get the orchestra to Switzerland this summer to compete in the International Festival of Youth Orchestras.

Other fund-raising efforts include playing, for fee, in some of the shopping malls and banquets in the city, and selling tickets on a car raffle for a dollar a ticket (these can be purchased from any orchestra member).

Tickets to the concert on the 27th cost \$1.00 for students and \$2.00 for adults and are available from any orchestra member, at the Bay Box Office, and at the door.

The Edmonton Youth Orchestra is looking for the support of the community of Edmonton in this, their largest undertaking to date. They are especially looking for support at their concerts and particularly from students. It being an orchestra of, by and for students, this is only natural.

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THE CALGARY SCHOOL BOARD will interview applicants, who are presently enrolled at the University of Alberta, at The Student Placement Office from February 14 - 18.

Applications will be received from Teacher-Librarians, Music Specialists, and within the areas of Special Education, Business Education, Technical and Industrial - Vocational, Industrial Arts, and Home Economics.

For application forms and interview appointments, contact:

Canada Manpower Centre
Student Placement Office
University of Alberta
Box 854, Telephone 432 - 4291.