

Target aims — but misses mark

Target
Warner Bros.: CBS
Capitol Square

review by Myles Kitagawa

One of the most difficult traps to avoid in film making is the degeneration of characters from unique individuals into easily recognizable character types. In pure fantasy films, those built upon the fundamental conflict of good versus evil, use of character types is the most efficient means of telling an audience to like certain characters and hate others. In films intended to take place in a modern context, of which Arthur Penn's *Target* is an example, presence of character types should be downplayed as much as possible

possible. Sometimes *Target* deftly avoids this trap. Sometimes it falls crashingly in, head first.

Walter Lloyd is a typical middle aged man with typical middle aged problems. He runs a hardware store, goes fishing on weekends, and avoids driving on the freeway. Walter even has a teenaged son of the know-it-all-yet-knows-nothing type who has just dropped out of college in order to work as a mechanic. The scene seems set for an examination of American suburban stereotypes. The catch to this quaint little scenario is Walter's past, which is about to catch up to him with a vengeance.

What begins looking like a film about middle class dissatisfaction in America (Walter's

wife has gone to Paris to expand her horizons) turns into an espionage/revenge story when Walter's wife is kidnapped, and a whole new set of character types emerges. We learn, as does Walter's son, Chris, that Walter is not the boring old man that he appears. In his youth, seeking excitement and adventure, Walter worked for the CIA, and now somebody wants him dead. Once this secret is revealed, the film becomes a steady unfolding of espionage-related events as the search for Mrs. Lloyd ensues.

Target holds very few surprises. You can pick the bad guys out of a crowd by looking at them and then figure out what's going to happen. Also, as anyone who has seen *Three Days of the Condor* and *The Amateur* can attest, when you are dealing with the CIA, you never trust the man you think can trust. Even Chris' surprise with his father becomes

predictable. If you think of all the things you wouldn't expect Walter to do, based on his "good ol' dad" image at the film's beginning, you realize that he will do them by the end. *Target* has partially avoided the character types trap by combining and contrasting two types in one character.

There is nothing objectionable in *Target* but by the same token there is nothing that will leave a lasting impression either. Matt Dillon still reminds me of a pre-steroids Sylvester Stallone in speech and acting ability and there is nothing particularly intense about Gene Hackman in the role of Walter Lloyd. One of the supporting roles is downright laughable, but a beautiful young hitchhiker, who pops up now and again, is a truly interesting figure. If Disney Studios ever entered the James Bond market, it would be a lot like *Target*.



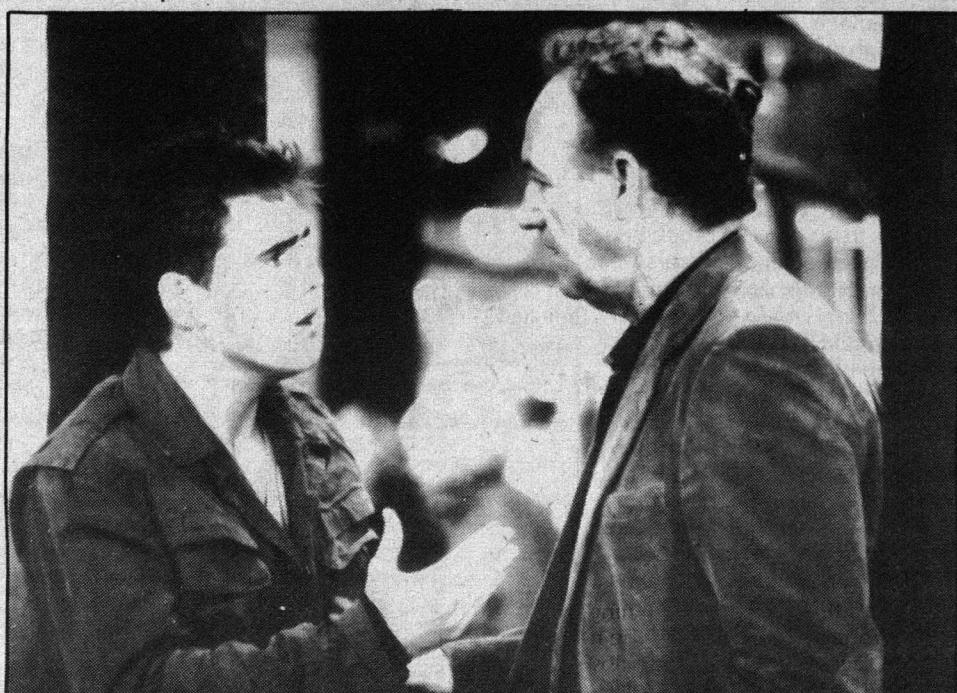
The Album Playlist is based on Airplay — a combination of programmer preference and listeners' requests. Tune in every Sunday at 12:00 for the Alternative Countdown — the favorite albums, EP's singles and tapes.

Albums

1. Tom Waits — Rain Dogs (Island/Atlantic (US))
2. Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy — I Only Have Eyes For You (ECM/WEA)
3. Waterboys — This Is The Sea (Island/MCA)
4. NED A4 — The Warmer Side Of You (A4 (Canada))
5. Various Artists — La Vie En Rose (New Rose (France))
6. David Byrne — The Knee Plays (ECM/Warner Bros.)
7. Pyewackett — 7 To Midnight (Familiar/Celtic Distributors)
8. Various Artists — Some Bizarre (Capitol/EMI)
9. Love and Rockets — Seventh Dream Of Teenage Heaven (Beggar's Banquet/Polygram)
10. Luther "Guitar Junior" Johnson — Doin' The Sugar Too (Rooster Blues/Stony Plain)

Singles, EP's and Tapes

1. Another Kind Of Blues (A.K.O.B.) — Explosion (Undergrowth (Canada))
2. Crimson Souls — Reason & Force (Tape)
3. The Detonators — Yer Child's War (Emergency Broadcast Systems (US))
4. Lethal Poor — Trancefloor (Poor/Rough Trade & Cartel (UK))
5. Jim Serdiak — I Want To Be In Love (Tape)
6. Tau Cell — Radiation (Small Horse Big Apple Beaches (Canada))
7. Simply Red — Money's Too Tight (To Mention) (Elektra/Wea)
8. Men 2B — In Need of You (Tape)
9. Water — Fagan's Smile (Tape)
10. Flesh For Lulu — Blue Sisters Swing (Hybrid (UK))



Matt Dillon (left) and Gene Hackman in *Target*: Disney in the James Bond market



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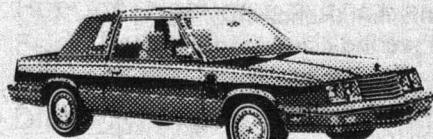
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