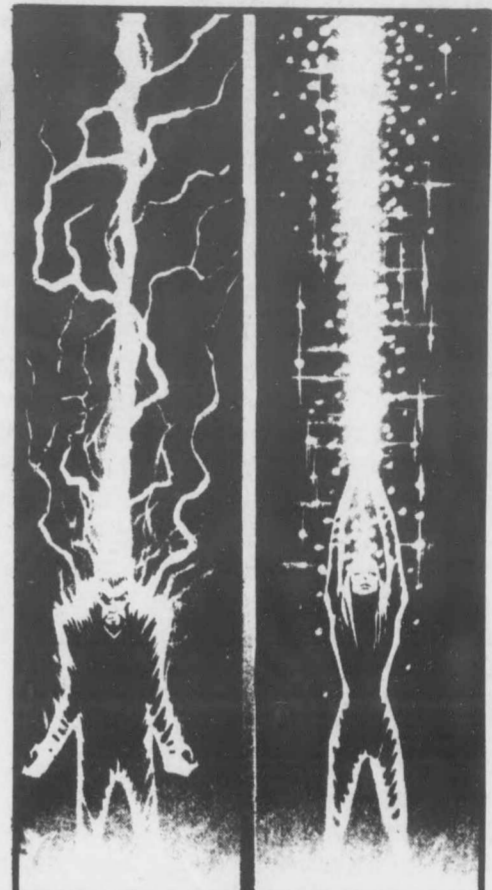
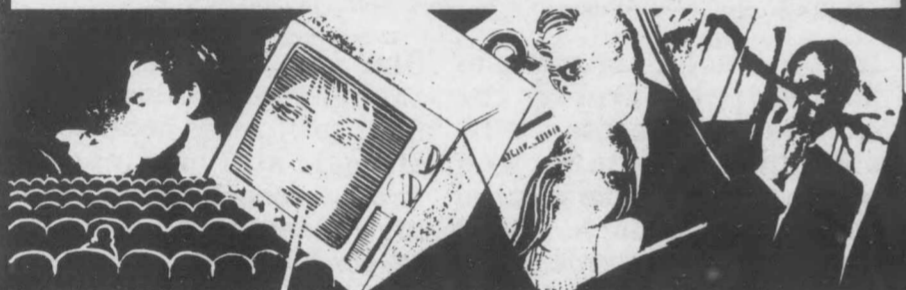


MEAT



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MISSISSIPPI BURNING

Whenever the cinema industry decides to play moralist to its captive audience, there can be no denying that mistakes can be made. More often than not when a sensitive issue is raised to the forum of motion picture entertainment the need to enlighten is reduced to the level of tinseltown schmaltz.

Misinformation, outright ignorance or insensitively handled crusades are the demons here, presided over by the methuselah of box office success. Grab the moolah and damn the responsibilities. How many can you count off the top of your head?

British director Alan Parker has made a film study of the atrocious bigotry and prejudice that flourished in some parts of the United States, and ostensibly serves to remind us that there is much to be done to strike down the evil that smothers inalienable human rights even today.

Based almost entirely on fact, the film builds from the brutal murder of three young men. These brave individuals were members of a steadfast human rights group that risked, and in this case lost their lives in an attempt to defy the reprehensible conduct in the south through education. Although local authorities maintained that the individuals have simply disap-

peared, the FBI saw fit to launch an investigation spear-headed by the young idealist Alan Ward here played by William Dafoe.

Given Alan Parker's past credits which include the albeit garish but vastly entertaining *The Wall* and *Angel Heart*, one might greet the dimming of the theater lights with some apprehension. Parker's work is always characterized by a natural flair for the breathtakingly creative, but would this be a style that could lend itself to such a controversial scenario?

I am delighted to say that in my opinion, Alan Parker has succeeded in making a veritable landmark in cinema art.

Accompanying Ward (Dafoe) is Agent Anderson (Gene Hackman) providing at first a virtual antithesis to the button-down approach of his younger superior officer. Ward is portrayed as the idealist and bureaucrat, still extremely wet behind the

ears with the belief that the presence of his organization itself will instigate some radical change in the viper's nest of human corruption that he has discovered. Anderson on the other hand is the weary pragmatist, whose laid-back approach serves merely to veil a twinkling souciance and rock hard conviction. The understanding that develops between the two men is one of many points of genius stamped on *Mississippi Burning*. Both experience the pressures of the inhuman environment to the

extent the eventually a poured of emotional collapse is reached. Rather than being disillusioned by the awesome task at hand, however, the men learn from each others short comings and we are able to

