

REEL REVIEWS

By WILLIAM CLAIRE

Christmas advertising started right on time this year, the day after Remembrance Day, not too far behind is the first movie of the Yuletide season, A Christmas Story.

The story is the quest of a nine-year-old living in 1940s Indiana. His goal? A Red Ryder B-B gun with a compass in the stock from Santa.

Written and narrated by American humourist Jean Shepherd, the film will appeal to adults and children, but is primarily aimed at the adult market, specifically those grownups who stretched out in front of the radio for an evening's entertainment instead of staring at the boob tube.

The cast is well chosen. It includes Darren McGavin and Melinda Dillon as the parents of Ralphie (Peter Billingsley) and Randy (Ian Petrella). Billingsley is a standout, supplying the necessary acting skills in a role that requires spoofing as well as heavy-duty emoting.

Shepherd's literate narration is carefully composed of nicely-tuned phrases, transforming everyday events in the life of a fifth-grade student into incidents of epic proportions.

Bob Clark, best known for Porky and its sequel, directed A Christmas Story. He shows he can craft a comedy that rises above the teenage titillation of Porky's pap.

Ralphie's memorable adventures include a battle with the neighbourhood bully, initiation into the rites of the Little Orphan Annie decoder ring, and his premier vocalization of the ultimate expletive -- "the queen mother of the dirty words" -- within earshot of his mother.

Of course, Christmas would not be Christmas without a visit to Santa. Tag along with Ralphie as he encounters the jolly fat man. Visiting Santa will never be the same again!

THIS IS NOT A SEQUEL --Amityville 3-D, the third movie since last Spring to be released in the "improved" 3-D process, is not without its problems.

The movie fails on three counts.

One, the story is old hat. A writer (Tony Roberts), who is a firm disbeliever in supernatural forces, purchases a house where a mass murder once took place. His girl friend (Candy Clark) warns against his buying the house. The supernatural forces, as they did in Poltergeist, live in a graveyard under the house. A psychic investigator, as one did in Poltergeist, confronts the spirit.

Steven Spielberg, Poltergeist's director, did it better, made it much more suspenseful and frightening, and he didn't even use 3-D. Interestingly enough, four of the Amityville 3-D special effects crew had worked on Poltergeist.

Two, the 3-D process was at its best in the last five minutes, but that five minutes was not worth the wait. Most of the remaining 3-D effects add nothing to the impact of the movie.

In addition, the night I attended, the mirrors in the special lens were slightly off kilter for the right eye, resulting in poor focus for much of the movie. This problem seems to be a perpetual one, also having occurred in Spacehunter 3-D and Jaws 3-D.

Three, the 3-D in the title, as it did in Jaws 3-D alludes to the fact that the film is the third in a series. The house in Amityville; a horrible murder took place in the house; the word "Amityville" is in the title. Yet the advertising stresses the film is not a sequel to the pictures The Amityville Horror or Amityville II: The Possession.

Wouldn't it have been just as easy to give the film a different title and remove the other Amityville references if the producers had not wanted to give the impression the film was a sequel? It makes you wonder.

"A Christmas Story" "Amityville 3-D"



Malcolm Ross to give lecture

Malcolm Ross, a driving force in the promotion and preservation of Canadian literature, will return to his native Fredericton on Wednesday, November 30 to present a lecture at 8:00 p.m. in Tilley Hall, room 28 at the University of New Brunswick.

Though Dr. Ross will be addressing a joint meeting of the Fredericton Branch of the Humanities Association and the UNB English department, the public is invited to hear his speech.

His topic, "The Story of the New Canadian Library: Some Literary Reminiscences," will draw on experiences from his 20 year stint as general editor of the New Canadian Library. This series of reprints, chosen very selectively from the Canadian canon, has made possible the widespread study of Canadian writing from colonial times to the present.

Dr. Ross holds a BA from UNB, an MA from the University of Toronto and a

PhD from Cornell. He has taught at the University of Manitoba, Queen's, Trinity College at U of T and he con-

tinues to serve as McCulloch Professor of English at Dalhousie.

An expert in Renaissance and Victorian literature, he

is an officer of the Order of Canada and holds honorary degrees from UNB, St. Thomas University, Trent and Dalhousie.

"Kind Heart and Coronets"

This charming 1949 film starts Alec Guinness and Dennis Price. There are only two leading actors, but there are nine leading characters; Guinness plays eight of them with his typical style.

It was made at a time in British film history when the script was the primary ingredient in a good film. Comedies were supposed to be witty, clever and amusing - "Kind Hearts" is all three. It was written and directed by Robert Hamer who emphasized style in all his films; he is at his most stylish here.

Guinness' eight characters, in no particular order are: a general, an admiral, a duke, a banker, a parson, the D'Ascoyne brothers and Agatha D'Ascoyne. They are all related and are all potential beneficiaries of a particular-

ly large estate. Louis (played by Price) is also a potential beneficiary, but he is ninth in line.

Realizing that the inheritance would be his if or when the others pass on, Louis decides to help the process along. To give you a hint, Guinness has been quoted as saying, "I must admit that I'm not looking forward to the scene in which five of the eight characters I play meet at the funeral of the sixth!"

Both Guinness and Price are superb; as is the rest of the cast. In this "comedy of Edwardian manners," you'll have a hard time keeping your upper lip stiff.

"Kind Hearts and Coronets" will be shown by the UNB Film society Friday and Saturday, November 25 and 26 at 8:00 p.m. in Tilley Hall, Room 102.