

CINEMATTERS

by Stephen R. Mills

"Billy Jack" is a really remarkable picture in so many ways that I hardly know where to begin reviewing it. It would be best to point out its few weaknesses and then show how these are negated by its better aspects and by the way they combine to create the powerful effect the movie has on an audience.

"Billy Jack" is a student production which in no way speaks against it. It does, however, account for some of the flaws in the film which are mostly artistic in nature. (Please note: I say "account for" and not "excuse". I don't feel weaknesses need to be excused — just recognized and eliminated.)

The most outstanding weakness is the clumsiness of the picture: it is just a bit too long. This must first be attributed to the screenplay and then direction. The cumbersome length might also be the

reason some of the actors, particularly Deloras Taylor in a lead role, seem less effective than they could be. Dialogue appears at times cliched. The fact that it has been used in so many "rebel" or "youth" pictures does not take away from the truth it contains, however. What is said must be said but we should be saying it in a different way.

Yet these artistic weaknesses fade to near insignificance in light of "Billy Jack"'s virtues. The most pleasing aspect of the whole enterprise is the slick and satisfying professional technical quality. The photography is first class throughout and a variety of beautiful sequences — a herd of frightened wild horses racing through an early morning prairie world, impromptu theatrical and musical performances by real people (as opposed to actors), a slow motion karate-ballet are integrated into the regular

story shooting so well that one can appreciate them on their own AND as part of the whole. The actors, except when hampered by weaknesses in dialogue, are excellent, particularly Tom Laughlan as Billy Jack and many of the supporting cast. I thought the actor playing Martin, the persecuted Indian, did poorly but this was probably more the part than the performance. Musically, the picture was also quite satisfying. Incidental music was OK, the original songs by the cast worked well, and the "One Tin Soldier" theme was a natural considering the ideological content of the film.

This content is, of course, the most important feature of "Billy Jack" and deserves some comment. The conflict in the story is three-fold. First, there is a conflict between "The Establishment" — as represented by a redneck town run by a fat boss who controls the local law and a free-school filled with hung-up kids on an Indian reservation. The natural antagonism between young and old, aggravated by the racist elements in the town, make this conflict the most explosive and the central theme of the story. It is not, however, the central conflict of the film. Strangely enough, I don't even think the pacifism vs violence motif is central.

The film is titled "Billy Jack" and, while his actions and appearance suggest

the Western tradition of a lone hero fighting and triumphing over the forces of evil in the world, Billy Jack is a very modern individual.

The conflicts central to the film are found within him. True, violence vs non-violence is a main one, but there is also the Indian heritage vs the white man's ways (Billy is an ex-Green Beret now learning ancient Indian rituals and carrying with him a medicine bag to keep him in the flow of life's forces) and the way he is against the way he would be (in a characteristic bit of dialogue, Billy says his spirit has been in a rage since the day he was born but "that's not the way I wanted it at all").

Everything that happens in the film is considered on the level of how it will affect Billy Jack or how Billy will react to it. The town deputy's runaway daughter, the free school, the town, the kids, the local greasers all react to Billy Jack who first contains the violence of the situation, then unleashes it, then becomes its sole proponent, and finally, overcomes it in himself and gives in to the authorities, being hailed as a saviour-of-sorts when he is taken away.

The conflicts found in Billy Jack can be found in everyone of us and everyone should see the picture — the emotion and thought it evokes are well worth the effort.

CULTURAL DISPLAY AREA SCHEDULE '71 - '72

Nov. 20 - 30	Ernie McCally
Dec. 1 - 14	Greg Devereaux Part three of a show of Devereaux photographs. He is an artist, now working in Toronto and Halifax, using the photographic medium. Formerly a student at the Nova Scotia College of Art.
Dec. 15 - 31	Graham Dube He is a student at the NSCA and works in sculpture modes, using everything from blown up photos to railway ties.
Jan. 1 - 15	Wayne Stack A photographer with experience in journalistic and display photography. A Halifax native who uses photos to explore the wider environment of art.
Jan. 16 - 31	Scotian Journalist — Maritime Artist Show A show of work by various Maritime artists, sponsored by the Scotian Journalist.
Feb. 1 - 26	Susanne Paquette and Don Findblak Both students at the NSCA will present a unified changing show throughout the month of February. The month begins with the work of Findblak, wood floor pieces and as the month progresses the work of Paquette (oils and acrylics) slowly takes over, in a constant changing progression.
Feb. 27 - Mar. 14	Mr. & Mrs. Gene Ginsburg The Ginsburgs work in ceramics and in photography.

Pier 1 plays again

Pier 1 Theatre opens its second production on December 1st with a comedy entitled "Wind in the Branches of the Sassafras" by Rene de Obaldia.

The play is a sharp pointed spoof of the stereo-typed image of the Western settlers as heroes who could do no wrong. Hollywood has flooded us with the idea of the good white man struggling against the evil redskins and bringing peace to the great prairies. Any historian will tell you that this was simply not the case. Not all the settlers were symbols of purity, nor were all the Indians wild and ferocious savages. Quite often the reverse was true! The heroes of this play

are all slightly insane and not very intelligent, except for the cunning lynx-eye, the villainous Indian renegade chief. His battle with the grizzly old pioneer, John Emery Rockefeller, is a memorable one spiced with satire, slapstick, and farce.

The production will run December 1-5, 8-12, and 15-19 with curtain time 8:30 p.m. Tickets can be obtained by phoning the Central Box Office 424-2298, or Pier 1 Theatre on the day of the performance 423-7720.

If you haven't sampled Pier 1's brand of entertainment, now is the time!



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