



Lights, Camera, Action!

New and old reversed

I Am Curious - Yellow and Good Guys and Bad Guys

By LLOYD CHESLEY

When is the new old and the old new? When the cliches of yesterday are forgotten and used well and cliches of today are over-abundant.

One film everyone is sure to see is I Am Curious - Yellow. And I suppose that they should. It is quite modern and relevant, the story of a student-type girl trying to find a meaning to life (count cliché number one). It does have the "frankest" sex scenes this side of His Fair Lady, that is it does if the censor lets it through (otherwise it should be about 26 minutes).

But it is by no means simply pornography. After all, if it were, the couple would be attractive, while the girl actually is more reminiscent of Francis the talking mule than Bardot.

But this is part of what tries to be a real story with real people (I think we just found another cliché), a girl who "did it" the first 19 times only to satisfy the guys because she didn't believe that anyone could really find her attractive.

Anyway she is an actress, the point being that what we are watching is a film of the making of a film (another, no?). This idea is handled quite well, for at no time can you be sure whether you are watching the film or the film being made, resulting in more than confusion, for it gives the theme that the two cannot be differentiated (guess what that is).

The political scenes are very relevant, if you consider 40 minutes of the same simple-minded two questions getting the same simple-minded two answers particularly relevant (which only results in...)

What it comes down to is that besides the fact that the performances are all quite good, what we are seeing is a simple re-hash of the same themes that have been dominating the cinema since it became the new art. Art has destroyed fun and drama, the elements cinema was created for and handles better than any other medium, but the producers needn't worry about what I say here, because the sex and the cause of youth expressed in I Am Curious will bring out the crowds. And that is good. Go see it. Maybe this will be the saturation point for this type of formless, dull mediocrity.

What I like is The Good Guys and The Bad Guys, the stock western of the week. It was directed by Burt Kennedy who learned his craft studying the great John Ford, the man who created all the great cliches of the genre. It stars Bob Mitchum and George Kennedy who helped act out these early cliches. And it was written into a script that is cliches that everyone must know.

I won't go into them, because you probably won't go see it, and indeed it is good only for the western buff. But it is fun. It has laughs, it has excitement, it has drama, it even has a widow with a little kid. The originality is in the nice use of the camera which flows well and shows off good color. (I Am Curious would have been cleaner if it had been in color).

But basically it is the same story that has been the basis of as many westerns as Hollywood has shot off bullets. For



Full of all the old durable Western cliches, The Good Guys and the Bad Guys, starring Robert Mitchum and George Kennedy, and directed by veteran western director Burt Kennedy is a film for buffs only.

all these cliches, The Good Guys and The Bad Guys is enjoyable.

The western is indeed the most cliched type of movie. This year we have seen a lot of of westerns with the same theme: the passing of the "wild west" and the men left behind.

True Grit was fun and touching. The Wild Bunch was exciting and tragic. Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid was new wave and fun. The Good... is fun. It all points to the fact that the old cliches die hard. They are the good cliches, the ones that have lasted forever, it seems, mainly because they are strong and can be approached with originality from time to time.

The new cliches are too obvious and take themselves far

too seriously to affect us. All we can say after a movie of those cliches is "Yes". After a movie with the old cliches, be it westerns, a new Hitchcock or Kazan, or a Gene Kelly musical, we smile. Which do you prefer? Then which is more relevant?

THE GOOD GUYS AND THE BAD GUYS (1969) Warner Brothers-Seven Arts Production. Directed by Burt Kennedy. Written and Produced by Ronald M. Cohen and Dennis Shryack. Director of Photography, Harry Stradling, Jr. "The Ballad of Marshall Flagg" sung by Glen Yarbrough. With Robert Mitchum, George Kennedy, David Carradine, Tina Louise, Douglas Fowley, Lois Nettleton and John Carradine.

Great movies you'll never see

Hollywood just doesn't care about film classics

By DAN MERKUR

Item: I saw a showing last week of Robert Bresson's Diary of a Country Priest, which while not a great film, is a fine and interesting approach to cinematic construction. The screening I attended will be the last for quite a while, perhaps forever, of the film in Canada. The print is being shipped to the States, perhaps permanently.

Item: George M, a musical comedy about the life and times of the great composer-entertainer, George M. Cohan, will be playing (with Darryl Hickman) in Toronto shortly. In 1941, James Cagney won an Oscar for his portrayal of Cohan in Yankee Doodle Dandy, one of Hollywood's best musicals. But Toronto audiences will never see Cagney's performance because the Cohan estate has prevented the film's revival in Canada.

Item: An aborted attempt to document the career of Irving Berlin has been aborted. The musical history, titled Music by Berlin, was just too expensive to create. But how about Berlin's WWII propaganda film, This is the Army, where Berlin sings, "Oh How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning!" and others of his war tunes -- You're in the Army Now, It's a Long, Long Way ...? How about that film? It has been permanently shelved. Berlin owns it, and won't let it be seen.

Item: Scarface, possibly the greatest gangster film of them all, Hell's Angels, containing the best WWI dogfight footage ever done, and The Outlaw, probably the most censored movie ever made (delayed eight years for release) are all unavailable. It seems they all belong to millionaire Howard Hughes, and you know how difficult he is to find.

Item: Marie Antoinette, the MGM film with Norma Shearer, Tyrone Power and John Barrymore was recalled, and all prints and negatives destroyed.

Item: Warner Brother's Mystery of the Wax Museum, an early (1933) color film, was magically destroyed in a fire.

Two prints now exist, one in Jack Warner's personal collection, the other in a private collector's library.

Item: Universal's Showboat, with Irene Dunne, Alan Jones, Charles Winniger, Helen Morgan and Paul Robeson, the 1936 musical, one of the top 10 of all time, was scrapped when MGM bought the remake rights.

Item: Of Human Bondage, with Leslie Howard and Bette Davis is as good as lost, the only prints both being in private collections.

Item: Frederic March's version of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, for which he won an Oscar, an early sound film by Rouben Mamoulian, is both historically important and a damn good movie. There are two known prints in existence - one in Denmark, the other in a private collection in New York.

Item: In Old Arizona, the first sound Western shot on location, containing Warner Baxter's Oscar winning role as the Cisco Kid, is a film now believed entirely lost.

You can add to the list films like Animal Crackers and Gunga Din, which may not be shown in Canada for copyright reasons; and films like Charlie Chaplin's A Woman of Paris; and the eight edited hours of Greed, of which no prints exist anywhere in the world having been burned for the silver content (worth 43¢) in the negative. And quite fairly add Orson Welles' Falstaff, which just isn't marketable as foreign skin-flicks, and so will not likely be shown in Canada. And of course there are Charlie Chaplin's later films, which he made at United Artists, which he owns outright, and hoards, preventing their showing anywhere, even to the point of stationing lawyers all over the world to prevent the showing of black market prints of them.

The saddest part of getting to know films is undoubtedly getting to know about the lost films, and the legally lost films. The owners have copyrights on all their works, but there is no copyright for the historian or buff. And the worst

part of it is that if a film is ordered in order to save shelf space, it won't even be given away to archives like New York's Museum of Modern Art, or the Eastman Collection in Rochester. The prints are just destroyed.

It is stupid, criminally stupid, to destroy knowingly works of art and works of entertainment that will be of invaluable worth to historians of future generations -- both film and social historians. And of course it is insane to destroy works that might very well make good money if they were revived.

Consider for a moment the films produced by Sam Goldwyn, a group of perhaps 50 films, which are notable for their high level of craftsmanship, their superior acting and scripts, and of course for the care with which they were made. Some outstanding films, like Mamoulian's Becky Sharp, Wyler's Dead End, The Little Foxes, The Westerner, The Letter, etc. are in this group.

For years now Goldwyn's son has been travelling to Toronto to offer them to the CBC at exorbitant costs -- something like five times what the CBC would pay for Cleopatra -- before the Goldwyns will allow their showing in Canada. And of course unless the CBC brings the films into town, they will never be shown in Canada. So it is either move to the United States or forget about the Goldwyn productions.

All that can be done about this state of affairs is the writing of articles and letters of indignation and the negligence and stupidity involved in the situation, in the hopes that no more films will be destroyed or taken out of circulation. And of course we can pray that William Everson will unearth some more films that were presumed lost -- films like Mystery of the Wax Museum and The Old Dark House, as well as Of Human Bondage and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde -- and to hope that someday he will make his private collection available for screenings for the public at large.