



Lights, Camera, Action!

By DAN MERKUR

Costa-Gavras' film, *Z*, opened here about a year ago, and caused a great deal of noise, owing to its powerful political commitment. It was, however, put down rather hard by the unsympathetic, the righteous, and the whole critical camp devoted to irrelevance in the arts. Mostly, the criticisms were nit-picking attacks on the editing, the continuity, the lapses in the authenticity of the story, and the lousy ending. This time out, with *The Confession*, Costa-Gavras has left no room for these spurious attacks.

The Confession is an exceptional bit of film work, based on the autobiography of Artur London, once Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs for Czechoslovakia, a member of the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, and a leader of the French Resistance in World War II. London was one of the three men who survived the 1952 Czech purge trials, and his film biography, like Woodrow Wilson said of *The Birth of a Nation*, is "history written with lightning."

There is no denying the authenticity of the events this time. Costa-Gavras worked closely with London in preparing the film from London's book, and the film was intended to be shot in Prague, where it is set. The book was released and immediately became a sensation, making it necessary to make the film in France.

As a director Costa-Gavras has improved steadily over the years, and *The Confession* manages to pack more information, more detail, more drama, and give a clearer understanding than most any dramatic film in years. Working in a definitely dramatic format, Costa-Gavras has given the film the mood of fiction, but the impact of documentary realism, resulting in a "sleeper" effect. The full enormity of the film does not hit until it is over, for which I am thankful. The images on the screen were shattering enough.

Working in colour and wide screen, Costa-Gavras put the film together in short sequences, like a newsreel biography, cramming it with detail, with voice overlaps, and even with narration by Yves Montand, who plays Gerard in the film. There is no musical score, until the climatic final sequence, which I do not want to give away, and the music there, after so much silence, is powerfully eloquent alongside the incredible visual sequence.



Yves Montand plays political victim in the *Confession*.

Artistically, *The Confession* is a very great success, a near perfect blending of newsreel and studio footage, a magnificent meshing of history and political drama. With the possible exception of *The Battle of Algiers*, *The Confession* may very well be the best political film ever made.

Yves Montand is brilliant in the lead role of Gerard, as Artur London was called in the Resistance. His performance is flawless, capturing the mood and the mind of an exceptional individual, capable of extreme self-sacrifice, but no longer knowing where his allegiance truly lies. His punishment in jail is convincingly handled, even to Montand losing vast amounts of weight to portray starvation. The range required of him — paranoia, fear, cynical unconcern, anger, frustration, fatigue, hopelessness, then hope, fatigue, resignation, anger, nervous hilarity, and finally world-weary wisdom — takes an actor of rare talent. I kept thinking of Humphrey Bogart, chiefly because of the look about Montand's eyes and mouth, but the demands are not unlike those made on Bogart in *Treasure of Sierra Madre*. I think Montand is better, though Bogart gave on of the fine performance in film history in that picture.

The Confession is not a film on as high an aesthetic level as Truffaut's latest work. . . It is as good as anything else in town. It also is a good deal more significant than last week's moonflight. It is not a film to miss.

A tame Tait time trip

By JOHN OUGHTON

Sha-na-na and warm-up singer Don McLean took a gymnasium full of high school people, and the occasional York student, on a time trip back through the sixties and fifties, last Friday night. The audience had to wait so long it seemed the organizers were trying to beat the frustration record set the week before by Chicago. Technicians played games with the microphones for an hour or so before Don McLean's set began.

Social protest with wit is something that Tom Lehrer does better. Musically, McLean has good material; I found his rendition of a Josh White song especially good, but the crowd

liked everything he did.

Sha-na-na finally greased onto stage and did their thing: old rock with choreography. Visually, they conveyed the flavour of the duck-top white-sox uptight fifties well. Nearly everyone in the eleven or twelve member group can sing fairly well, which is fortunate since their musicians are nothing to make you jump on your piano and scream about.

Their versions of Teen Angel, The Hop and similar songs are funny but I don't think they're three dollars funny. However, most of the people whom I talked to afterwards really enjoyed them, so it seems there's still gold in that old grease mine.

Flaming Firesign radio satire



By JOHN OUGHTON

Let the Firesign Theatre inflame your movie and TV-drenched imagination and you won't here radio the same way anymore. Nick Danger, Third Eye; Rocky Roccoco and his deadly pickle; not really Mr. and Mrs. John Smith of Anytown, America; Porgy Tirebiter and his sidekick Mudhead and all the other Firesign creations are hard to forget. The Theatre is composed of four California people who do an even better job on 1940's rock, although their technique is similar: take the

original material, secretly love it, and inject with acid, irony and supreme skill.

Radio is a better format for surrealism than visual media since the listener creates his own visualization for a given voice or sound. Characters change as quickly as their voices. Many of the Theatre's scene changes happen purely on verbal cues: a pun becomes a cosmic lever. The Theatre has made three records so far and when you hear them on radio they really seem to belong there.

"Don't Crush That Dwarf, Hand me the Pliers" is their latest opus. It's not quite as hilarious as the early two, "Waiting for The Electrician" and "Nick Danger, Third Eye", but it manages to make your stomach hurt after a while. Most of the record is the sound track for a movie on television titled "High School Madness", with Porgy Tirebiter. As the show begins, Porgy is upstairs helping the maid making the bed. The amorous sounds of panting and heaving appear at the same time as Porgy's mother's voice wondering "where is that boy?" Porgy shouts "Coming mother!" at the critical moment with the maid, and Mom gushes: "That boy's so good with the servants." The record is a great cut-up of Archie and Jughead cartoons, Mamie Van Doren movies, those awful Henry Aldrich films and a lot of other things.

The Firesign Theatre have a unique ability to mine American kitsch and turn it into comic gold, if not Acapulco. If you don't like verbal humour and inventiveness, your imagination will miss its chance to walk some of the most wayward theatrical planks ever built on the airwaves.

Lover

by Gail Shister

beethoven is playing.
the candles burning
the shades drawn.
somewhere a lover
waits for a mate
he has not met.
she is not pretty.
he is not wealthy.

the doors are closed.
somewhere in his eyes
he tries to show
some sign of affection.
he knows no better.

and together they
undress to the music
he is fighting back the tears.
he whispers she is beautiful
and she pretends to laugh.
she knows no better.

outside someone watches
the candle stop glowing.
inside something magnificent
is supposed to be happening.

she brushes her hair.
he tries to look satisfied.
her shoes are replaced.
the terms are met.

he kisses her good-bye
he wants to be gentle
he wants to see her again.
he knows no better.

and outside his window
somebody is watching
and knows.

in the room his bed
is worn from love's labours.
he inhales slowly
and tries to smile.
he knows no better.

before he will sleep
there will be many more tears
wept and beds kept.
before he will sleep
there will be an endless line
of people who know.

he lies awake by her
and wonders if it will
always be like this.

he turns to her and
strokes her hair and
tries to hope
the pain away.

by Gail Shister