

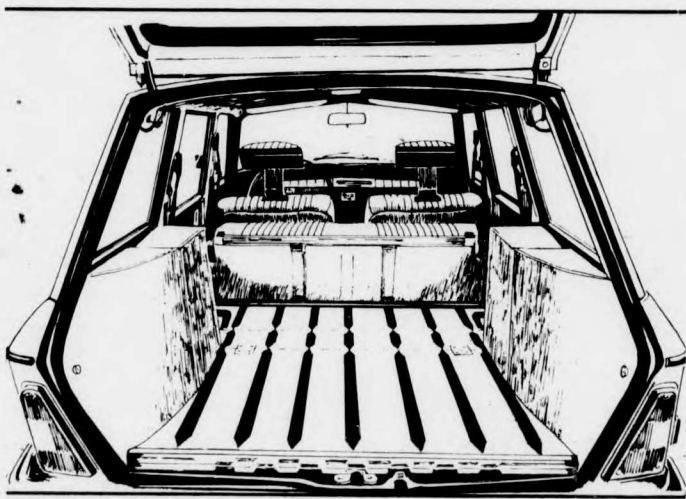


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# Sunday, Bloody Sunday

By LLOYD CHESLEY

There are certain times when having a column is more fun than usual. The best fun is when you can attack a movie that's getting raves all over the place. That isn't to say you just go out and do it. No. The real fun only comes when the film honestly deserves to be attacked. Such a film is Sunday, Bloody Sunday.

I don't know what it is about John Schlesinger, but he always gets raves and he always makes me sick. It was the same with Midnight Cowboy and now it is with Sunday, Bloody Sunday.

I should mention that the film was written by a critic, Penelope Gilliat, who, it appears, is quite well liked in New York. I guess she is something of an idol to critics worried that they are ivory tower, artistic eunuchs. It would help if they would realize the actual creative possibilities of their own field instead of worrying about

with a great deal of depth and honesty for us to get anything out of it. Unfortunately, John Schlesinger is about as subtle and sensational as any 42nd street film maker. Why I dislike him can be summed up by recounting one small scene from the film. Finch is driving along when an old lover, a young guy, sees him. Stuck at a red light, Finch must take the guy into his car or he will smash the window as he slams it with his fist. So he picks him up. But his hand hurts from hitting the car. Being a doctor, Finch takes him to a drug store to get him a pain killer.

In London, where the film takes place, heroin is legal and can be obtained from a drug store by prescription. As Finch goes through the store, there are strung-out freaks all around waiting for their prescriptions to be filled. A stranger to the chemist, Finch has trouble having his prescription filled, even though he is a doctor. Heavy, eh? Bull shit. This is one of the most important facets of one of the western world's major problems and Schlesinger has the nerve to pass over it so lightly. All he wanted to do was to get in a few shots of addicts so we'd know how "hip" he is. For me, that's the most dishonest form of sensationalism and it pervades every minute of this story of bisexualism.

Basically, he is just a bad director. Although written by the manual, the screenplay works and there is lots of acting talent in this film. But Schlesinger can't direct. He can't shoot a conversation to make it say more through the medium than the dialogue alone says, so he dresses it up with fancy dull shots or tries to "open up" the film with boring and pseudo-heavy sequences based on montage and dissolves and other good stuff badly used.

The one pleasant note is the totally irrelevant but funny existence of a far-out super liberal family that provides some laughs for the film and a good performance by the mother (I don't know her name, but she played Isadora Duncan for Ken Russell on TV).

Otherwise this is the most superficial and pretentious "hit" I've seen in quite some time.

But there is some fun around you haven't got to yet. All my friends kept telling me how great Billy Jack is, so I figured I better go. Well, it wasn't great, but it's not a bad way to blow a coupla bucks.

Made by young film makers, probably out of UCLA, Billy Jack is mostly sensationalism, like Joe was. But, like Joe, it hit on some good things, so the sensationalism has an interesting basis. The film combines Westerns and "youth" films as it tells of a superman half-breed named Billy Jack who protects Indians on his reservation and a progressive school there by wiping out the rich pig fascist capitalists (did I get them all in?) who run the bigoted (I knew I forgot one) town nearby.

"That's heroism!" said a friend of mine, and he's right. It's a Western with good guys and bad guys who couldn't really exist which is the very reason they're so great to watch. The villains, including a psychotic youngster, one of my favorite villain "types", are as well developed as Billy Jack. Billy, by the way not only knows Karate, but has super hearing and becomes a friend of the snake in an Indian ceremony where he lets a rattler bite him many times in order to see god (or Mescalito for you Don Juan freaks out there).

The movie doesn't say much. Like any good Western it never resolves that problem the heroine always voices when she says, "When will all the guns be out of the valley." And the villains get theirs, so we are happy. Exciting, visceral stuff good for the libido. It's nice to see things in black and white morality sometimes: it's relaxing...and fun.



Glenda Jackson is one of the best actresses in films these days. It's a shame she's wasted in John Schlesinger's newest film, the badly over-rated, simply bad Sunday, Bloody Sunday.

such things. Critics must be very insecure people. I mention all this because the film was definitely written from the "screen writer's manual on how to write a proper screenplay." The purposes of scenes in terms of development and dramatic position are as clear as the photography and just about as dull.

The film concerns the eternal triangle. But with a twist: the competitors for the young man are a woman and a man. I might mention an apology to Peter Finch and especially Glenda Jackson. These are two amazing talents and it is little more than unfortunate that they got involved in such a superficial project. Especially insulting is the prescience of the object of their affections, played by David Head as the most innocuous and plastic sex (?) figure of the year.

As you can see, the subject is one that has to be treated

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