



by Steve Mills

If you see "Soldier Blue", which is playing now at the Paramount Theatre in Halifax, and the Mayfair in Dartmouth, you will either be (a) disgusted by the violence at the beginning and the end, or (b) disgusted by the incredible plot in the middle, or (c) disgusted by the picture as a whole. I chose possibility (c), and I would like to explain why, in hopes of discouraging you from wasting your money on this film.

The key to my detest of this film lies, I think, in the fact that what could have been so good is so bad. You see, director Ralph Nelson made the picture to demonstrate on one level the unbelievable horrible treatment Indians were given in the days of the Wild West and on a higher level, man's inhumanity to man. Unfortunately, Nelson got fouled up somewhere along the line and what finally emerges is a routine creation, albeit somewhat more cruel than what we are used to, but routine all the same.

Take a look at the plot. A paymaster's wagon and its escort are attacked by a band of Cheyennes who massacre all but two of the party — one soldier and a girl who was on her way to meet her fiance at Fort Reunion.

The soldier, Peter Strauss, is appalled by what the Indians have done to his comrades, i.e. killed, and dismembered them. He wanders in a daze through them, finally falling on his knees, and amidst cuts of crying, recites "The Charge of the Light Brigade".

The girl, Candace Bergen, is unaffected by the slaughter because, we learn, she has lived among the Indians for two years and is used to such sights. While Strauss emotes, Bergen takes from the bodies anything they might need to make their way on foot to the fort.

They start out, the tough experienced girl, and the inexperienced soldier. Along the way, the soldier is told the U.S. Army treats the Indians worse than the Indians treated his comrades. He doesn't believe it. They go on. Several incidents occur, none of which are that entertaining or informative.

Finally, they make it to an army camp, where 700 troops are preparing to attack the village where (waddayaknow) Miss Bergen spent her two years among the Indians. She warns the Indians, but too late. They are attacked and 500 of them (men, women and children) are shot, stabbed, beheaded, dismembered, raped, etc.

Strauss again wanders through the carnage, but, this time utters no poetry. He encounters Miss Bergen, who in effect says, "I told you so", and he barfs all over the screen. The fadeout shows the surviving Indians moving out with the U.S. troops, who believe they have done a glorious thing.

Now, that isn't a bad plot. It should get the point across; the audience should come out of the theatre feeling a monstrous guilt for what has occurred on the screen.

But, they don't.

Who failed? Well, it wasn't Buffy Saint-Marie, who wrote and sang the title song. It wasn't the guy who composed the score. It wasn't the cameraman who handled most scenes well.

The script writer was somewhat to blame. The dialogue was not good. Miss Bergen and Strauss were not to blame. They played their parts well. (It is not their fault the parts were so incredibly inappropriate).

The fault must be Ralph Nelson's. "Soldier Blue" blows it because Nelson fails to realize that mass violence just does not mean anything to people. So, if you are going to use violence to make your point, you had better do it on a very personal level.

(I thought "A Man called Horse" did this very well. The point was not the same as Nelson wants to make, however, so perhaps no comparison between these two films should be made.)

I find it difficult to understand how Nelson failed to realize this fact, since two of his previous films, (Lilies of the Field, and Charly) proved he can work, and work effectively on the individual level.

I guess even film directors can't win them all.

The world's a stage



As production continues for "Inherit the Wind", Stephanie Reno and Hedi Kraus talk about themselves, in real life, and in the play.



STEPHANIE RENO

Mark Roza Photo

Stephanie Reno plays Mrs. Brady, wife of the prosecuting attorney. It is not her first role in a play, but she feels that she will become more involved in this role than others she has played.

Mrs. Brady is a difficult part, for she has a lot of stage time, and few lines. Therefore, the character has to come across more through her actions than the lines.

Stephanie is a former Engineering Physics student, now in the Theatre department. She is enthusiastic about the many facets of theatre, "as it is almost, or completely, a new field."

She is optimistic about the coming production because: "I think the cast and direction can come together to produce an united effort."

Hedi Kraus has another difficult part. She plays Rachel Brown, the daughter of the Rev. Brown, a fundamentalist. At the same time, Rachel is very much in love with the defendant, Bert.

"It's a new experience for me," she said. "The part is



HEDI KRAUS

Mark Roza Photo

difficult because throughout the play she is completely in love with Bert, yet must manifest this love in varying ways. Her life offstage has to be a continuation of the role she is playing, if she is to understand her character completely.

Hedi was born in Graz, Austria, and has lived in Halifax since the age of five. She is now a second year Arts student at Dal, studying German and French.

As a postscript, more production staff are required. Also needed are old clothes, pre-1940, three male actors, and some extras for crowd scenes.

Words from the wise . . .

Dear Sir:

As vice-president of the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students and as a member of its council, I feel the need to reply to the letter by Harold Harnarine in the November 27th issue of the Gazette.

I am disappointed that Mr. Harnarine did not make any attempt to contact the President, the Executive or the Council of DAGS with any of his comments about how the Association was being run. Had Mr. Harnarine wanted to know the answers to any of his questions, he might have made some attempt to go to any of the three general meetings that we hold each year. It is a

well-known procedure, and one that we follow, that the financial statement is made available at the general meetings of an Association. We have always followed this procedure. It would appear from the general lack of attendance at the general meetings that many of the membership are content with criticising the actions of others but are not willing to contribute otherwise to the activities of the Association.

I do not agree with Mr. Harnarine's statement that non-attendance at meetings is irrelevant. In fact, it is most relevant to the discussion. By not attending meetings or otherwise communicating criticism, he has abdicated his right to speak. The

members of the Council cannot hear a silent voice! They are not telepathic!

Since Mr. Harnarine has not attended any of the Association's fortnightly beer parties, he does not realize that the commitment of the council is the supplying of free pretzels, and that whoever comes to these parties pay for their own drinks. These parties serve a very useful function in getting the membership together so that they can discuss problems of mutual concern and make these known to the council. At the cost of a few pretzels this is good return indeed!

It will also please Mr. Harnarine to know that for the past month the council has been discussing the problem of the

graduate house preliminary to contacting the general membership about the question. IF ONLY MR. HARNARINE HAD ATTENDED A MEETING. It seems obvious also that he has also underestimated the problem that the council has in contacting its membership. The Council's recent one page statement on the Faculty Scholarship's committee has obviously not reached Mr. Harnarine and this was sent out through the Graduates Studies Office. This shows him the burden that the council has to work under.

The council has always had a policy of letting the membership know, through written statements and by other means, of important issues of interest to

graduate students and of decisions pending (witness the brief note on the Scholarships committee and the teach in on Quebec that we sponsored). Lack of paper flowing from the council does not mean lack of concern for graduate students or their interests. We like feedback but despite asking in our scholarships brief for comments, not a single letter was received!

We want to know problems, we beg of you to deluge us with mail, bitching and hollering. As usual, however, this plea will go unanswered and leave us with an empty mailbox at the SUB.

Sincerely yours,
Derek Hook,
vice-president, DAGS