

ARTS

Thorn Birds a thorn in the side

The Thorn Birds
a novel by Colleen McCullough
an ABC television miniseries
reviewed by Wesley Oginski

In the beginning there was nothing. Then the great networks said, "Let there be sitcoms." On the second through fifth days they created variety shows, dramas, and tele-films. And on the sixth day they made the mini-series.

Some have said television had come of age with its first miniseries. For the first time epic stories would not be limited by the attention span of the audience and the confinement of the theatre. It is a good concept and on occasion used effectively. But, as in all fields of entertainment, the eventual hits and misses occur. Wolper and Margulies succeeded with *Roots*, but (though ratings will probably be high) have failed with *The Thorn Birds*.

Richard Chamberlain stars as Father Ralph de Bricassart, the priest who eventually falls from grace because he loves a woman. Chamberlain is a fine dramatic actor and has proven himself on both screen and television. However, he cannot carry the film when direction from Daryl Duke is wandering. Between successive cuts from one sub-plot to another, you need a very discerning eye to pick out the changes.

One of the most insulting images of this program is when the homestead almost burns down. The scenes were very reminiscent of the burning of Tara in *Gone With the Wind*, but nowhere as good, nor as effective. Many other scenes create allusions to better old films.

Yet the greatest downfall of this presentation is casting Rachel Ward in the

role of Megan Cleary, the woman who de Bricassart falls from grace for. Ward's previous experience include a stint as a high priced hooker in Burt Reynolds' *Sharkey's Machine*, and the obligatory dame in *Dean Men Don't Wear Plaid* with

Steve Martin. She didn't display any talent in either of those films, nor does she start in *The Thorn Birds*. She is lifeless and rarely portrays emotions effectively. In fact the actress who portrayed Megan as a child does a far better job than Ward can muster throughout the film.

Unfortunately the need of networks to create stars has driven them to use untalented people like Ward. She is no different from a Susan Anton or a Farrah Fawcett, which unfortunately makes *The Thorn Birds* just a little better than *Three's Company* or *Dallas*.

ROUNDABOUT

Little Steven and the Disciples of Soul
Men Without Women
EMI 17086

by Nate LaRoi

Steve VanZandt may call his band the Disciples of Soul, but the E Street Band guitarist has more than just a little Keith Richards in him. From the fat guitar riffs of 'Lyn' in a Bed of Fire' and 'Under the Gun', a couple Stones-like rockers, to VanZandt's nasal vocal delivery, Little Steven's solo debut has all the party power of the long promised but never delivered Keith Richards' solo album.

Of course, VanZandt's specialty has always been horn arrangements (he was signed to the E Street Band on the spot after coming up with the trumpet arrangement for *Born to Run's* 'Meeting Across the River'). And usually Steve keeps his guitar to rhythm, allowing the brass section to carry the lead melody. Several cuts bring back all the heart-lifting R&B glory of Southside Johnny's *Hearts of Stone*, where VanZandt served as writer/producer.

All things considered, *Men Without Women* is not quite as strong as that 1978 Asbury Jukes album. 'Till the Good is

Gone', a duet with Gary U.S. Bonds, degenerates into a "yeah yeah yeah" marathon while VanZandt's stab at a Dylanesque drawl on 'Men Without Women' is about as successful as Keith Richards' attempt on 'All About You'.

Men Without Women does offer more stylistic breadth than *Hearts of Stone*, however. Particularly impressive is 'Princess of Little Italy', a tender ballad

about a girl who wants to "forget everything she was", "hurt everyone she loves" and "marry someone just like daddy". And to top it off, VanZandt has a great band, including ex-Rascals drummer Dino Danelli and assorted E Streeters.

After seven years under Springsteen's wing, "Little Steven" is finally his own man and getting things done to boot. Now, what took him so long?

Jump Cuts

by Jack Vermees

Okay, what's so special about the summer of 1983? Wrong, the correct answer is "It's the summer of the University International Student Film Festival."

A quick call to David Scorgie, assistant director of film and literary arts at Alberta Culture and Festival organizing committee member (try and say that without blinking) revealed that over forty entries have already been received from such diverse locations as India, Germany, Malaysia, Tokyo, the Philippines, Edmonton and more. Scorgie (of course) heartily encourages local student filmmakers to submit their works.

Any student or apprenticing filmmaker is eligible to enter a film (16 mm, or Super 8) or video (3/4 inch videotape) in any language. The deadline for entries is April 15, although Scorgie says that this deadline is "flexible."

An outstanding jury, including Holly Dale (director of *P4W: Prison for Women*) Joan Micklin-Silver (director of *Chilly*

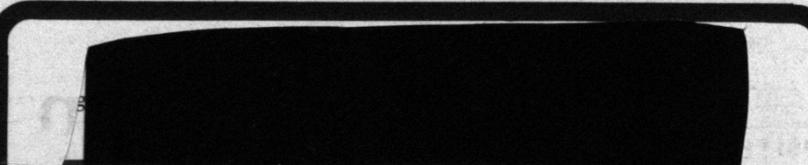
Scenes of Winter) Michael Rubbo (noted NFB documentary filmmaker) David Rimmer (from Simon Fraser University) and, hopefully, Bill Forsythe (director of *Gregory's Girl* and *Local Hero*) will award \$6500 in prize money to the best theatrical, documentary, experimental, and animated films and videos.

The festival will take place July 5 - 9 at the NFT. Day passes will be available for a nominal fee and will allow viewers to move freely between screening rooms. At the end of each day there will be a screening of one of the jury members' films.

If you want to enter or find out more information about the festival call David Scorgie at 427-2554.

All promo blurbs aside, it is with a sentimental sigh that I end my year of "Jump Cuts." Thanks to everybody who bothered to read this thing and I'll see you at the flics.

Arts Editor's Note: Jack Vermees has been elected next year's Arts Editor.



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