

Hey! Refuse Tom Cruise—See “Lolita” Instead

Reviews by R. F. Macdonald

Tom Cruise is supposed to be the next Marlon Brando? Whatever star quality Cruise exuded in the overly clever *Risky Business* is nowhere to be seen in *All the Right Moves*, an ineptly made morality tale of high school football set in a declining steel town somewhere near Pittsburgh.

This film has been getting lots of good notices from well-intentioned American critics whose faculties must cloud over when “Football” is mentioned. It brings out the worst “sports as metaphor for life” blinkers that results in them crowing about “gritty realism” and “honest integrity.” What they are seeing is their idealized American past; I can assure you that most American film critics probably never made the tiddlywinks team, never mind the football team. And of course to fail at sports is to fail at the Hemmingwayian ideal, which is simply awful for people who are mostly failed novelists, screenwriters, and



failed filmmakers.

You're dealing with a loaded gun when you're dealing American ideals; fortunately their myths are not our myths (at least I think so) therefore I feel totally free to expose this turkey for what it is; a movie for teenagers.

The storyline is the usual mix of sentimental teenage aspira-

tions to escape and transcend their environment while remaining true to their roots. Tom Cruise plays Stephan, a reasonably normal high-schooler who wants to be the first college-bound offspring in his steel-worker family. The town he lives in is declining and even the usual fate of industrial servitude is dis-

appearing. The only way out is a football scholarship. Thinking is not involved here, academic excellence doesn't get you anywhere; it's the brute physical exchange of football that defines your future. Wonderful. Now I like sports as much as the next guy, but c'mon it's not all that crucial, is it?

Anyways, the film is very poorly recorded, which is probably intentional because the dialogue is pedestrian at best. The editing is so haphazard that it's a wonder you can follow it at all. The camera work fails to convey any sense of anything except “let's get this damn narrative over with”; many of the shots are never carried through. Consequently the film appears to have seams where scenes were ponderously inserted to shore up the dramatic sequence. The possibilities of the setting are wasted as director Machael Chapman concentrates on Stephan and not on Stephan's situation.

Of course if you were smart

you'd be hip to the whole thing if you figured out that that queen of the trash “B” movie themes, Jennifer Warnes, was singing the title song over the opening scenes. I didn't, and I had to watch the whole movie. I wish you better luck.

Actually, I can do better than that. I can recommend next week's installment of the Dal film series. Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of Nabokov ranks with his best work; with a stellar cast of biggies, Kubric brings a raw humour to the book, lightening the tone somewhat while retaining the strident modernism of the novel. James Mason has his most impressive role, and Peter Sellers and Shelly Winters are especially wonderful. I've forgotten the girl who plays the nymphet who is the central issue in the film; then again I think everyone has. And after all that controversy! Anyway, *Lolita* is full of Kubrick's brilliantly controlled style and his playful virtuosity: miss it at your peril.

Alvin Comiter: Meaning And Context

by Michael Hymers

The significance which we attach to words, images, ideas and perceptions is often largely dependent upon the given context in which we experience them. Halifax photographer Alvin Comiter, a native of Brooklyn, New York and a resident of Nova Scotia since 1974, makes ample use of this idea in an exhibition entitled **Alvin Comiter: Photographs**, on display at the Dalhousie Art Gallery until December 11.

Consisting of 150 black and white images, this display compares and contrasts pairs of individual photographs taken over a period of ten years in locations as diverse as Nova Scotia, Spain and Hawaii.

In the commentary which accompanies the exhibit, Comiter quotes Bernard Rudofsky as saying of man that “Since he himself helped to shape and preserve his environment, he never seemed to tire of it.” The implication is that the settings imposed upon us by urbanized society can be tiresome and even stultifying, because we are no longer in as much control of our environments. In connection with this Comiter says that in his travels he readily noticed that “... the uniformity of the built landscape was staggering.”

We see evidence of this when we are forced to struggle to distinguish a house photographed among trees in Nova Scotia from

one captured in Van Nuys, California. At one point I “recognized” a building in Halifax, only to discover it was situated in Hawaii. Frequently the only thing which allows us to distinguish one place from another is the surrounding countryside, and the black and white format can make even this difficult, thereby emphasizing the uniformity.

Many works of the display are concerned with the rearrangement of mundane elements in such a fashion as to heighten contrast and reveal latent comparisons. Juxtaposition makes flowers sprout from a signpost-shaped building in Portland, Maine, suddenly suggesting to us that a signpost-shaped building

in Honolulu is sprouting from the surrounding trees. A dome-shaped structure in Calgary is approached by a straight path, while a curved path leads to a house in Brandon. A puddle on a street in Chattanooga, Tennessee is replaced by a shadow on what might well be the same street in Albany, California. The surface textures vary, but the element, the essence, remains unchanged.

Bringing separate instances of the world together creates a new context, and the result is revelation, irony, humour and sometimes even discomfort. Fenced-in trees in Halifax may take a certain comfort in a hanging chain entangled by vines in Kainaliu, Hawaii. In New York, “Stonecrest Memorials” is closed on Memorial Day, while in Hollywood a park bench advertisement for a mortuary is found adjacent to

one for a bank. And the clever juxtaposition of war memorial and a “Deposit Litter in Baskets” sign leads us to wonder about the garbage bags outside a Connecticut animal hospital, as well as our priorities about human life lie.

Photographers often speak of the necessity of “learning to see.” Indeed, this is in some sense an element of any creative art form, but the fact that it may have a more literal meaning when applied to photography does not deny its interpretive strength. Alvin Comiter's photographs show clear evidence of this sort of education, and, as such, offer a solution to Rudofsky's problem. They lend a new context in which to experience our surroundings, not tiresome and unyielding, but shaped and preserved by the individual.

Sex Role Stereotyping

Jean Kilbourne received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature from Wellesley College and her Doctorate in Education from Boston University. Following her graduation from Wellesley, she spent three years in Europe working for the British Broadcasting Corporation in London and for a French film company in Paris.

Upon returning to the United States, she taught English and media studies, founded and directed an extensive film study program, and became a media consultant and lecturer for many organizations, school systems, and conferences.

A free-lance writer and editor for many years, Dr. Kilbourne developed a program for using media to teach writing, and designed and led other media workshops for teachers nationally. Presently Assistant Director of the New England Screen Education Association, she has been on the Board of Directors since 1972.

In the late 1960's she became actively involved in the women's

movement and began doing research on sex role stereotyping in the media. In 1970 she began collecting advertisements and created the first version of what was to become **The Naked Truth: Advertising's Image of Women**, the slide presentation that she now presents nationally.

Alcoholism is another of Dr. Kilbourne's major concerns. She is particularly interested in the effect of alcohol abuse on women, minorities, and young people and its relationship to self-image and self-esteem. She has created a slide presentation and a film dealing with the advertisement of alcohol.

She has written on all of these topics and has been interviewed by many magazines and newspapers. She has discussed the topics on radio and television programs throughout the country. She has lectured for hundreds of colleges and other organizations.

In 1978 Dr. Kilbourne received a grant from the Educational Foundation of America for a

study of sex role stereotyping in television commercials. She is the co-creator of a film based on her slide presentation entitled **Killing Us Softly: Advertising's Image of Women**, and she is writing a book on the topic.

She is a member of many organizations including National Organization for Women, Women Against Violence Against Women, Action for Children's Television, and the National Citizens' Committee for Broadcasting. She is an associate of the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press and a member of the steering committee of the National Centre for Women in the Performing and Media Arts.

She lives in Boston and has travelled extensively throughout Europe, the United States, and Mexico.

Dr. Kilbourne's lecture and slide presentation **The Naked Truth: Advertising's Image of Women** will be shown Nov. 30, 8 p.m. in the McInnes Room. **Killing Us Softly** will also be shown following the presentation.

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