

# Thud and blunder on Valentine's

by Jack Hill

Ketchup was at a premium when the daddies played cops 'n robbers again.

THE ST. VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE  
Hyland Theatre

Fake snow flakes descends across a painted back - drop of Chicago in nineteen twenty - nine. A woman methodically removes her old socks from a clothesline. A few people walk down the street as usual on this day - February 14. Suddenly the silence is broken by the crack of gunfire. A woman screams. So the film starts and finishes, and what is sandwiched in between is essentially the same, people running around screaming and crying over the spilt blood of so many others.

"THIS IS AN AUTHENTIC MOVIE AND ALL OF THE EVENTS THAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO SEE REALLY HAPPENED IN AMERICA'S MOST VIOLENT ERA". Such is the film's approach and it's phoniness is evident.

The movie centres upon two main characters who could appear as either heroes or villains, Al Capone and "Bugs" Moran, who were badly acted by both Jason Robards and George Segal. The acting lacked the conviction, drive, fortitude and dignity that was always

present in the many gangster actors of the past, like Edward G. Robinson, James Cagney, Mickey Rooney and George Raft. The movie only showed each gang trying to "obliterate" the other, with various actors machine-gunning their way through a script which allowed them no discernible shape. The actors only shouted when they should have acted and acted when they were dead.

If this film is the documentary that it seems to be, then it is definitely a poor one. Not only is the film shot through and through with bad acting, poor dialogue, and mediocre film techniques, but even some of the facts shown the film are incorrect. In the film there are four men who committed the murder (two gunmen and two men dressed as policemen); in the real incident, there were five men (two gunmen and three men dressed as policemen); also, there is a large dog that associated with Moran's gang in the film, but in the real incident the dog was a small police dog used by the "officers".



SOME COULD ONLY MANAGE SUPPORTING ROLES  
And they didn't just have a sudden dose of the feelies

If the aim of director Roger Corman, had been as good that of Capone's men, the film might have had promise, instead of declining in-

to a typical Hollywood "C" grade movie. Mr. Corman should have taken some tips from Mr. Watkins, director of *The War Game*, if he wanted to make his film a documentary, for Mr. Corman's film techniques were of no great importance to the film. *The Massacre* lacked any drive or unique quality.

The use of flashback scenes so very well used in foreign films (Japanese - *Hiroshima* and Scandinavian - Bergman films), are inefficiently used here, for they do no more good than add more noise and bullets to the screen.

The narrator uses the same phrase before each character, who is about to die in the massacre, appears: "Pete Guseburg on the last day of his life..." After a line of victims has passed, by one begins to hope that the narrator's

name will soon be mentioned.

The dialogue had little more in it than name - calling both the Italians and the local "goons" their respective well - known names. What words were used were poorly utilized, making the film seem little more than a slightly dramatized *Untouchable* series, with some of the roles reversed.

The film had no central theme or overriding point excepting that of the massacre and related case histories of a series of "goons" who kill with a diversity of weapons. What humor there was came from laughing at the film, not with it. The only philosophy behind the movie was violence for the sake of violence. If you like violence and an ample supply of blood, see it!

In short, the film should have been buried like most of the victim's in it and I hope that it rests in peace.



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... nc, the action ain't what it used to be

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