

photo Martin Beales

Secret Society guitarist under and in front of the bright lights

Dinwoodie Bands belt it

by Bent Slightly

It is not very often that you can hear two bands cover *Some Kinda Fun* at the same place in the same evening. But it happened last Saturday at Dinwoodie. I personally believe that recording the aforementioned song was a waste of plastic. Whether or not this is true, *Secret Society* and *Nasty Habits* should have at least checked each others' play lists.

Nasty Habits is a competent rhythm and blues band. They played all the standards, but their specialty seemed to be old Stones classics.

Secret Society also has an affinity for the Stones; however, their version of *Get off My Cloud* was an absolute disaster. I don't know whether they just couldn't play the damn thing, or whether they were trying to rework it to suit their pseudo-punk name, but the result was something that even my pet cat wouldn't listen to. *Secret Society's* version of *My Generation* and *Twist and Shout* were equally bad - especially the vocals.

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Here's to you, Charles and Di...

Social satire skewers the ruling aristocracy

The Ruling Class
Principal Plaza Cineplex

review by Christine Koch

Social satire is too mild an epithet for *The Ruling Class*. Lately re-released in its original uncut version, this 1972 film, directed by Peter Medac is humour at its blackest, and provides an absolutely devastating attack on the British aristocracy.

The story concerns the contest between the lunatic heir to an Earldom (Peter O'toole) and his uncle (Arthur Lowe) who wants to have his nephew committed to an asylum and himself erected as legal guardian of the estate. The young earl, Jack Guerny, is a paranoid schizophrenic suffering from delusions of grandeur - namely, that he is Jesus Christ. His whimsical lunacies, generate wonderful - if irreverent - comedy. When, owing to the intervention of his psychiatrist, he realizes that he is not Jesus but simply Jack, the transformation from the role of God to that of young English aristocrat is quickly affected.

However, though he is indeed transformed, he is by no means cured, for the Jack with whom he now identifies is not

the Fourteenth Earl of Gurney (although he is clever enough to assume this superficially), but Jack the Ripper. The film here turns from hilarity to horror as Jack first kills his uncle's wife in a grisly seduction scene, then responds to his own wife's embraces with a knife in her belly, without arousing suspicion.

The message behind this film is clear. No one can accuse the playwright (Peter Barnes) or the directors of understatement. Jack and his madness are symbols for what the aristocracy has become - a degenerate, archaic institution. This is heavy-handedly reinforced at the end of the film with Jack's induction into the House of Lords, and his own (as well as the director's) vision of his peers as skeletal, mummified, rotting bodies in molding ceremonial garb.

Though Medac tends to let the scenes speak for themselves (and each one is rich in satire and symbolism), the voice of the socialist is aired in the butler Tucker, who is descended from generations of servants, and who has revolutionary aspirations. In speaking to the psychiatrist Hearder, Tucker says: "They are all bonkers, sir. You would be bonkers too, if you had nothing to do but what you wanted."

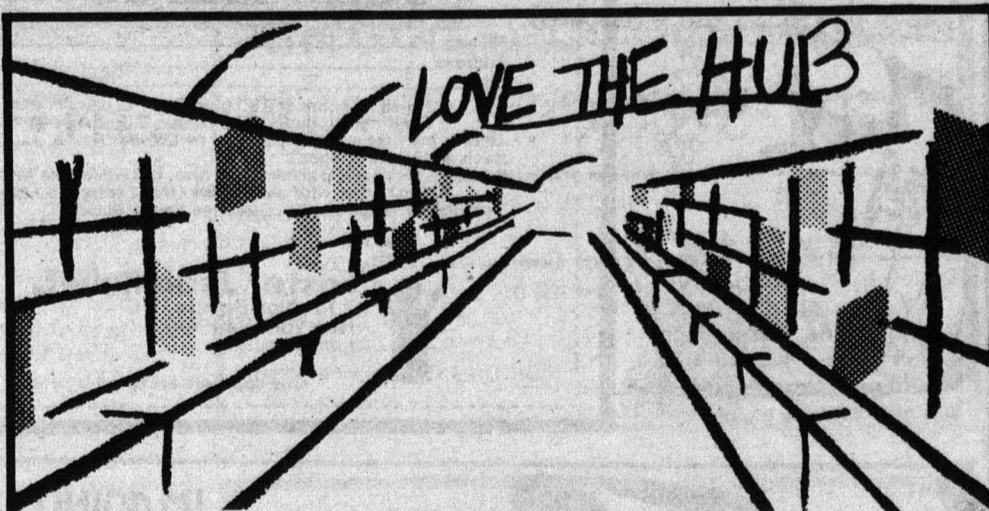
It is the world of the idle and often

immoral rich being portrayed and satirized, a class of people whom, the film implies, get away with murder, literally as well as metaphorically, by virtue of their birth.

The delusions of grandeur with which Jack is affected and of which he is the extreme case, are characteristic of the entire class and are encouraged by the other estates, the Church and the middle classes, over which the aristocracy hold sway. Ultimately, this film suggests a decline and fall of British life, relative to the continuation of the aristocracy, as a country only as healthy as its rulers.

Admittedly, the social criticism and faults of the upper classes are exaggerated to the extreme. Yet this is acceptable in satire, the definition of which is to ridicule something with the end of inspiring improvement.

The Ruling Class evokes both laughter and horror, comedy and tragedy. And we are left wondering at the close of the film as we hear the first words of Jack's son behind the screams of the murdered wife, whether he will follow in his father's footsteps, or whether his is the childish voice of new life and hope.



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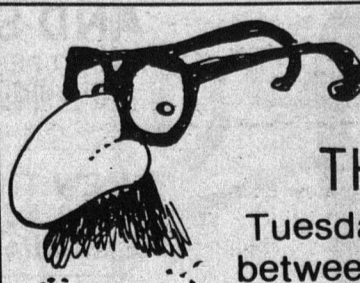
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