

Coppola offers rare, engaging film

by Glenn Walton

Horse pictures enjoy a long tradition in the cinema: what could be more exhilarating than the corral-to-racetrack saga, especially when coupled with the youthful optimism of starry-eyed adolescence? From **National Velvet** to **International Velvet** the desire to win the great race has carried audiences along with the hopes and aspirations pinned to inevitably unbeatable quadropeds. The latest entry in the equine Box Office Stakes is **The Black Stallion** a horse picture with a difference.

This one starts off as a

mystical, almost allegorical love story between a boy and a horse; indeed, the first half of the film is a prelude to the usual training-to-victory scenario of most films of this genre.

A young boy and his father are on a ship cruising off the West Coast of Africa in 1946; aboard the vessel, besides some sinister characters speaking strange foreign languages is a magnificent but wild black stallion. It is, naturally, love at first sight. In a terrifyingly real storm sequence, the ship goes down, but the boy and the horse manage to save each other; the former by opening the door to free the horse from his

chamber, the latter by dragging the boy ashore on the end of one of his tethers.



What follows is a 30 minute wordless sequence of survival that is the film's highpoint:

the director lays on the symphonic soundtrack, shoots the pair's gradual nearing and ultimate understanding from unusual camera angles. For example, the boy mounts the steed for the first time the predictable scene is filmed imaginatively from the sea-bottom, the two performing a ritual tango in the shallow waters of their island exile. An almost mystical bond is forged, and when fishermen appear on the scene, the boy refuses to leave without his stallion.

Back home in America, what follows is another variation on the racing sagas we have seen so often on the screen. A former champion

jockey (shades of **Rocky!**) agrees to train boy and horse, and ultimately we are treated to an exhilarating racing sequence (shot, by the way in Ontario). What makes the film work is the naturalism of cast and horse, (which steals the show easily from everyone involved). While the story is hack, the realization of it is surprisingly fresh and incidentally, exquisitely mounted: not since **Barry Lyndon** has a film got so much mileage out of mere visual ravishment without eclipsing the narrative. **The Black Stallion** is thus a rare film: the less it talks, the more engaging it is. A clear winner.

Gazette '79-'80



Yes, this is YOUR Gazette staff: kneeling- Greg Morgan; 1st row left to right- Flora MacLeod, Margaret Little, Sylvia Kaptein, Margaret Rumsey, Sue(Update) Edgett, Sandy(the Wednesday night czar) MacDonald, Mike Marshall, Marlene Peinszniski, Nancy Ross. Back Row Left to right; Ian Holloway Glenn Walton, Richard(Immanuel Labour) Samuels, Paul(Friend of engineers) Withers, Tom(head junior media czar) Regan, Pam(Tiger) Berman. Hams in small photo at right- Paul(I didn't show up for the staff photo on time) Creelman, Paul (Me neither) Clark and Greg(who cares, we got a picture to ourselves) Dennis, Missing from Photo- Bob(B.C.) Campbell, Eleanor Austin, Ellen Broadhead, Margaret Sutherland, Brenda Nichols, Larry Brown, Paul Tyndall, Margot Griffiths, Sandy Smith, and Steve (I pretend to be a socialist but I really love money) Garrett.

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but demand the attentive inspection of the curious viewer.

Another example of Urquhart's organic interests can be seen in the floor pieces which imitate the textures and shapes of the soil. These relief paintings are isolated from the viewer by heavy frames and thick sheets of glass. This psychological device was

meant to put the viewer at a distance that would allow him to feel the textures with his eyes but not his hands. The contemplative quality produced, along with Urquhart's attempts to directly imitate the forms of nature, gives the pieces a strong resemblance to museum exhibits.

Urquhart's interest in texture and time passage can also be seen in his texture paintings which illustrate old

doors and walls. These works add a stronger sense of mystery which was only hinted at in the other pieces. The box sculptures allowed the viewer to enter and explore their insides; there was nothing hidden from the observer and the only mystery lay in the purpose behind their creation. The doors, however, hint at the space behind them by exposing dark cracks which seem to recede into an undetermined volume.



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