

# movie notes

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by Stephen R. Mills  
 Deliverance is not a motion picture to be dealt with lightly. It contains views of civilization and the nature of man which no individual at this late date can ignore.

The screenplay for Deliverance was written by James Dickey, based on his

novel of the same name. Dickey is best known as a poet and, though the forms of poetry differ greatly from the forms of the novel, and both differ from the forms of cinema, Dickey and director John Boorman have successfully conveyed themes poetically — ideas are felt rather than thought, experienced rather than filtered through vicarious buffers.

Dickey's plot is simple, as it should be; more a metaphor than an elaborate construction. The biggest river in the States is

being dammed and destroyed. Four suburban husbands — led by Burt Reynolds, the "hero" of the piece, and Jon Voight, its central character — decide to canoe down it. It is never made clear why. However, Reynolds gives an important clue in his short monologue on the decay of civilization. Machines now control the world, he states, but machines will soon break down, and after them will fall the other artificial forms of society. When these disappear, all that will remain is the struggle for

survival. And, as Darwin proved, the strong alone will survive.

The Reynolds character believes this — and is prepared. Voight, on the other hand, isn't. He claims he is satisfied with his middle class existence but his trips with Reynolds show he feels something is missing. The other two are ostensibly along for the ride but serve important functions as it is they who are the victims of developing circumstances.

During the trip, the men are attacked by moronic and sadistic hillbillies — one is raped, one killed. All are injured — by the hillbillies and the river, both showing no mercy when weakness — of body or spirit, is detected.

When the trip is finished, two hillbillies have been killed and their bodies disposed of. The three survivors are altered significantly. They return to their middle class lives but the truth of Reynolds' thesis — the struggle for survival and the suffering it entails — has been indelibly burned into their personalities.

Reynolds' character changes least, as might be expected; he is merely saddened by the vindication of his beliefs. It is Voight who is the Everyman in this case — appalled by what has happened, frightened and depressed, but still intelligent enough to ask himself what the trip has meant — is he really that way — only an animal motivated by the instinct to survive. The viewer is naturally left in the same position.

The emotional undercurrents generated by the film bring one face to face with the central theme. If civilization falls, will man survive, and if he survives, will it be worth it anyway?

The issue means so much more because Dickey refuses to deal with it intellectually and collectively. He believes it is an emotion and individual matter. Deliverance is his statement that, when the crisis comes, man the animal will dominate. The Voight character also embodies Dickey's belief that, after the animal, something more may emerge. As to what this may be, he has the good sense not to hazard a guess. He knows that each man must decide for himself and that, very soon, each man will.

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Among the other commercial offerings this week:

**THE VALACHI PAPERS** (Casino) Charles Bronson in another Mafia picture. It claims to be fictional recreation of fact. Exciting and frightening but lacks real intent, in purpose and execution. An interesting contrast to the Godfather, however, and well-worth seeing for this reason alone.

**THE GETAWAY** (Capitol) Steve McQueen and Ali MacGraw in a well-made Sam Peckinpah crime flick. Nothing sensational, predictable but exciting.

**YOUNG WINSTON** (Hyland) Over-rated, rather dull treatment of Churchill's early life. The actors are all good but the film takes a very long time to go nowhere.

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