

# Preachers and loonies

Elliott Lefko

"I suppose a book like mine attracts all the lunatics"—Flannery O'Connor.

In 1962 at the age of 37, two years before her death, Flannery O'Connor wrote *Wise Blood*, a tragi-comic look at religion and its influence on people in the Southern United States.

Her hero Hazel Motes rebels at his fire and brimstone upbringing and proclaims a new religion, 'The Church Without Christ', whose followers need not fear sin or blasphemy, and there's no Jesus to die for your sins.

In 1975 Michael Fitzgerald fulfilled a life-long dream when he acquired the rights to *Wise Blood*. His parents are literary executor and editor of O'Connor's collected letters and *Wise Blood* was, in fact, written at the Fitzgerald's Connecticut home when Michael was a baby.

Working with his wife and brother, Fitzgerald wrote a



Oscar material: Wright, Stanton & Dourif.

screenplay and convinced John Huston to direct the film version.

Although Huston made the film in 1979, it's taken 18 months to arrive in Toronto. The wait was difficult. We had read tantalizing reports of this Buried Treasure and

we had to put up with Huston's 1980 effort *Phobia* (I'm allergic to the film). But now all one has to do to see this incredible work is venture down to the new and improved Cineplex, pluck down \$4.50, perhaps a buck for a capuccino, and sit back. The good life.

The first thing to mention about the film is the sizzling characterizations achieved by the actors. Led by Brad "Billy Bibbit" Dourif (he still stutters) as the nervous Hazel Motes, to Harry Dean Stanton as a mysterious blind preacher and Amy Wright as his backwoods daughter, to Daniel Shor as a young lonely boy who latches on to Hazel, the cast brings meaning to O'Connor's personal creed: "Everything funny I have written is more terrible than it is funny, or only funny because it is terrible, or only terrible because it's funny."

*Wise Blood* combines the pathos of *The Heart Is A Lonely Hunter* with the weirdness of a Delmer Davies horror story. This is a South not pictured on *The Waltons*. It is what the PTL Club doesn't tell you. It is riveting drama that entertains with subtle and sometimes direct innuendos. The kind of film that attracts all the lunatics, I guess.

# Cheap thrills

Reg Hunt

The recent, unheralded re-opening of a venerable Toronto film theatre promises relief for film-freaks staggering under the impact of the holiday increase in film admission.

Following the example of local revival houses such as the Roxy, Kingsway, and Revue, the Bloor Cinema, at Bloor and Bathurst, is showing second- and third-run films, classics, and art films for an admission as low as 99 cents.

Manager Carmen Bordonero said last week that the Bloor's general admission will be \$1.99 per film, but he is currently offering yearly memberships at \$5. Members will be admitted for 99 cents, but the price of a year's membership will rise to \$10 after Jan. 31.

Bordonero has been in the film distribution and exhibition business since starting with Warner Bros. as an office boy about ten years ago. He has been a partner and manager in other revival houses in the area, and as manager of Creative Exposures, a distribution and marketing company, has brought several relatively unknown films, including *Eraserhead*, to Toronto.

Currently the Bloor will be running two films nightly, though Bordonero may add matinees, at least on weekends. The line up for January and February includes *Performance*, with Mick Jagger, *Chinatown*, and Andy Warhol's *Frankenstein*. Several Hitchcock favourites are coming up, some Beatles flicks, and a good sampling of films which were playing in first-run houses a few months ago.

Bordonero's only comment on the recent increase to \$4.50 for first-run theatres was: "People can wait three months, then come here and see the same movie for 99 cents."

Bordonero thinks, however, that the future is bleak for film theatres, with the coming developments in video tapes and discs, and large-sized TV screens. Exhibitors will have to come up with new ways to attract audiences, perhaps with holograms or new screen shapes, he said.

In the meantime, he believes the only way small, independent theatre operators can survive is to specialize, to keep prices low, the program varied, and, when possible, the quality high.

The Bloor is located at 506 Bloor St. W., near Bathurst. For information call 532-6677.

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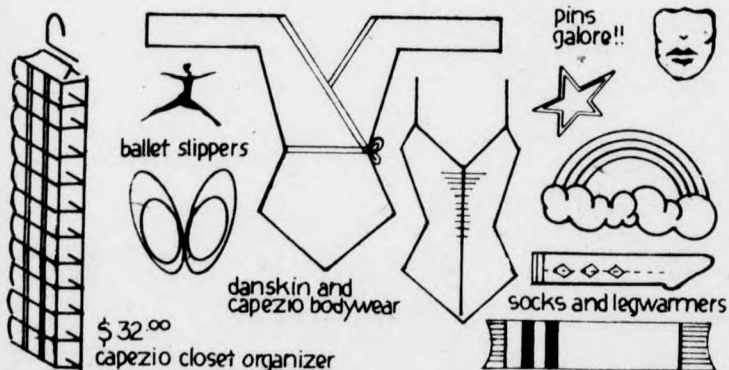
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