

Sympathy for the Devil is Godard's latest

# Blacks, revolutionaries are saintly devils

By JIM PURDY

Jean-Luc Godard is a baffling film maker whose works are more film essays than film dramas. He deals chiefly with the language and syntax of film, so that his concerns are with the forms produced through various techniques or lack of them.

His films have gradually discarded and destroyed many of cinema's techniques, Godard being one of the first directors to blatantly disregard time sequence, chopping shots out of all logical order. He has basically eliminated lighting, using very fast film so that his shots appear flat, like pop and advertising graphics, without the benefit of shading.

His later films began to discard editing, with long takes, often of an interview, perhaps with the camera panning from side to side like a pendulum. This reached its peak in Weekend with the incredibly long pan of the traffic jam and the circular pan of the concert pianist in the country village.

His most recent film, Sympathy for the Devil, has rejected editing completely, except for the joining of relatively long sequences. Godard has filmed several set-ups in one long take and edited them together at intervals. The Rolling Stones record the title song, black militants live in a car wrecker's, a pornographic book store demands a vague ritual for peace from its customers, and a character spray paints slogans on windows, walls, sidewalks and cars.

Besides editing, Godard has also denied any use of characters moving within a precise situation. The circumstances in Sympathy are alien in content, without any thread of story or character structure, which Godard had started to destroy in Weekend. His complete disinterest in and indifference to the couple in that film is logically succeeded by lack of identifiable characters in the next. The Rolling Stones hardly count since their sequence is basically cinema-verite and they are not playing as actors in a created situation.

The Rolling Stones' recording session is long and monotonous as they sing the same song over and over and sit around the studio in boredom. The one long take in medium long shot accentuates this dragging of time because the lack of cutting serves to preserve the total stasis of the frame and the same dull viewpoint. Spasmodically the camera will slowly and slightly pan focussing on random, irrelevant objects in the room.

One such set-up traces several times over a triangle, the points of which are Mick Jagger, a light and a guitarist. The camera moves slowly from point to point in varying order.

The event is as real as possible because the purity of the film form does not present a version with broken time-space. Single, static space and real time are not altered with any editing that rearranges

the viewpoint or the spatial relationships of objects and abbreviates or lengthens time.

This repudiation of form becomes a form in itself, producing a repetitious and boring film heightened only by Godard's sense of humour in his comic punning and ridiculous situations. Lack of form and lack of meaning produce an absurd, monotonous rhetoric.

He punctuates the film with lettered cards and spray paintings which present vague, meaningless slogans and puns: SOVIETCONG, CHANGING SOCIETY, and CINEMARX. Like the slogans of the Marxist ideologues in La Chinoise, of the totalitarian state in Alphaville and of the pop advertising of most of Godard's films, particularly La femme mariee, a one-dimensional language spews forth propaganda which becomes an influential cultural environment.

The same applies for the narrator reading random pages from a book, with a cast of officials and celebrities involved in ridiculous and unbelievable situations. A Black man reads a passage from Elridge Cleaver in a car wrecker's where the sound of traffic and boats make it impossible to hear coherently.

Another Black is interviewed by two black sisters where the "same old questions" are brought up and the answers are recited in an indifferent, tired fashion. An interview in the woods with 'Eve' prompts simple 'yes' and 'no'

answers. The reading in the bookstore is long and boring, interrupted for customer service.

Like the black and Algerian garbage men who face the camera and deliver dead-pan politico-socio-theoretical speeches in Weekend, the audience is so alienated that they cannot follow the speeches. The ideological rhetoric of both the political and advertising worlds are ultimately empty.

This high degree of literacy is common in Godard's films, with long pedagogical readings, painted slogans, chapter headings and song lyrics, on top of characters' dialogue. It is therefore an added pleasure that the film is English and can be followed and received as Godard intended.

His previous French works included a multitude of subtitles, often two at a time to translate both the spoken and written word, which impeded easy reception for any non-French viewer.

Whether in French or English, Godard still does not offer a very promising view of the modern world. In Weekend the middle class is seen in the midst of self-destruction through their material values, embodied in the automobile. In Sympathy that

society is in the wrecker's lot, with the junked cars piled high and inhabited by black militants armed with an arsenal of guns. They have replaced the hippie guerrillas living outside society in Weekend and are living in the central junkyard of civilization.

The Blacks and revolutionaries are the saintly devils who are out to renew life by destroying it and with whom Godard feels sympathy. The Stones repeat their song which grows in intensity by the end of the film and points out this dichotomy: "Just as all cops are criminals And saints sinners..."

Self-identity through alienation from and negation of society makes destruction and immorality a positive, life-asserting force. Godard achieves approximately the same sense of identity in an individual style which is a repudiation of all accepted standards and codes in cinema.

The final shot shows the filming of a heroine being shot, splashed with fake blood and hoisted high over a beach on a camera crane which was decorated with the red flag of revolution and the black flag of anarchy.

Once again Godard seeks the "end of cinema" to be a new cinema.—J.P.

# Stone's new album expresses the rebellion of a generation

By STEVE GELLER

When the contemporary pop boom began back in 1964, The Rolling Stones were thought of, and occasionally billed, as the group second only to the Beatles.

The musical complex which the Stones developed out of such publicity resulted in copying with Beatle popularity on a competitive basis. When the Beatles released All You Need is Love, the Stones forsook their tough, hard sound and came up with a single called We Love You.

Similarly, soon after the Beatles' Sargent Pepper's album was released, Jagger and company released their Satanic Request album which was their worst effort and probably their worst selling L.P. Light clean material such as "Why don't we sing this song all together..." just wasn't the Rolling Stones; rather, it was a commercial attempt at keeping pace with the world's then number one music machine.

The Rolling Stones stopped to redefine their sound-selves and there was a long lapse before the release of their next album. Beggar's Banquet was both a comeback and a reversion to their

original style of music, a style that vocally and instrumentally could pounce on all that is most obscene and grotesque in our culture, mirror all of our feelings, and throw them back at us in a self-conscious and rebellious way.

Let It Bleed (London NPS-4) does not only continue with Banquets' re-established pace but it reflects the very make-up of the Rolling Stones themselves, both personally and musically.

Just as the individual Stones are crude, rough and impolite individuals, the chorus of You Can't Always Get What You Want retains its British accent throughout, the song, resulting in an uneven, unpolished sound that does not detract from the quality of the piece but rather displays an intended attitude and personality trait. As they do in their appearances the Stones do on record, and Let It Bleed is an attack on popular culture.

Let It Bleed is exciting and startling because it cuts right through the false sentimentality of pop romanticism. Unlike a lot of the commercial youth culture, the Stones do not obscure our society's realities; instead, they reflect

them so harshly, starkly, and creatively that their music becomes an assault on our culture.

While other groups sing of idealized sexual relationships or romanticize male supremacy, the Rolling Stones slap you right in the face with songs as Live with Me, Midnight Rambler—the story of a rapist—or Let It Bleed's acute declaration that "We all need someone we can cream on."

Let It Bleed marks the musical maturity of the Stones. In their early years they played only their own translations of Black America's music, influenced greatly by Chuck Berry, B.B. King, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters and the late Otis Redding.

They made little pretense at exact copy and no real attempts at innovation. They mastered and retained the classic rock form and later added a few Soul elements. Now almost all their material is their own. They have recruited the efforts of Al Kooper, Nicky Hopkins, The London Bach Choir, as well as a few female vocalists to complement the outstanding arrangements on their new album.

Let It Bleed is not just a good album or even a great one; it's exceptional. It expresses, releases, incites the anger and rebellion of a generation whose national anthem screams: "I CAN'T GET NO SATISFACTION."

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