

# A busman's holiday: pedestrian entertainment

It was Christmas time when they crept into the city. Stealthily and maliciously they took over the minds of the populace. Soon all was disaster. The holiday movies had conquered the world!

And the destruction they spread! Valley of the Dolls was the most vicious killer. Here we had a book which was a collection of first-rate, genuine trash, being completely destroyed by the movie which contented itself in wallowing in the defecation of the demented, perverted mind.

We had drug addiction, alcoholism, sexual blackmail, abortion and Patty Duke, who

will probably win an Oscar for 'most brazenly awful performance by a 26 year old child-star in 1967'.

On the other hand, we had The Penthouse which was good clean violence and perversion.

Cop-Out was a crap-out; in Camelot they ham a lot, destroying one of the greatest myths in our heritage; and Doctor Dolittle does less than that for the audience, never mind the actors' reputations.

Perhaps the only sensibly bad movie around was The Ambushers in which Dean Martin tries to be nothing more (thank God!) than Dean

Martin.

But before I give you the impression that my busman's holiday was a complete bore let me point to How I Won the War which is an impressive, stimulating movie.

And let me also point out Chappaqua which presents the story of the cure of a drug and alcohol addict not only in excellent taste, but with the brilliance and ingenuity of our underground movie-makers combined with the polish of the best commercial films.

The one movie which is really outstanding however (if you're thinking of Smashing

Time I said outstanding, not outrageous) is The Jungle Book. Throughout his life, Walt Disney has done more to set movies back 20 years than any other five men you could name, but this is an exception. The movie is brilliant, engaging and entertaining. Perhaps I'm a bit prejudiced, since my two girl-friends, aged 8 and 10, enjoyed it so much, but when I pass the Hollywood theatre, and I see the never-ending line-up to see Valley of the Dolls, I'm convinced they are the only two young ladies in the world with that rather elusive quality -- good taste.

## How Lester Won the War or, I set up an advance cricket field behind enemy lines

by Linda Bohnen

Richard Lester's How I Won the War hits you from so many directions at once you don't know whether you're with Alice, in Wonderland, or with Lawrence, in Arabia.

The film is all about a platoon of British musketeers trying to set up a cricket field behind enemy

lines in North Africa.

The theme, of course, is the absurdity of war. War is absurd. War movies are absurd. Anti-war movies are absurd. Maybe even absurdity is absurd.

Lester does wonderful things with a cast of caricatures. Michael (The Knack) Crawford plays a veddy Bri-

tish lieutenant who went to a grammar school and never quite recovered from it.

The platoon consists of some distinguished ne'er do wells, including a sarcastic clown, one quite sane coward and John Lennon, playing a charming version of himself.

But the film is worth seeing not because of its theme, which is continually banged into the audience's head (mind you, from the sound of some of the giggles, much of the audience had pretty thick ones). It is important because of Lester's technique.

Tragedy is played in counterpoint to comedy throughout: as a comrade lies dying of thirst Lennon breaks up the audience explaining why he let all the water out of the drum. Irony turns tables and plays magic tricks

when a nice German officer turns on Crawford and says, indignantly, 'You fascist!'

By the end of the film everyone in the platoon has died except the lieutenant and the coward. They are resurrected and march about in full uniform tinted pink or green or blue. I think Lester was having a bit of fun with his colors. It is all very lovely, anyway.

How I Won the War has a lot of faults, too. The theme is certainly overstated and occasionally Lester gets carried away with his imagery.

The film tries to demolish so many clichés that sometimes it is in danger of dissolving into a compendium of war clichés itself.

Above all, I wish someone had the nerve to supply subtitles for these British

movies - I've understood more dialogue in some Italian movies and I don't speak a word of Italian.

Still, go see it. But don't take anyone who actually fought in the war; it could be a very unsettling experience.

## Leftovers

by Bill Novak

This is the age of the heart transplant, which raises some interesting questions.

There is something rather tragic about the whole system -- so many in need, and so few to benefit. It's almost like a grand lottery for life.

Besides, we can do so little at this creeping rate of one per week.

So what we're going to have to do is to arrange for a collective heart transplant of society. There are higher media than medicine, and we shall have to employ them. This way we could choose the qualities of this new heart. Not physical qualities, of course, so that everyone would thereby conform to some meaningless norm.

But if we were to impart an honesty into this collective heart, a sort of personal honesty which we hardly understand today, we would certainly be better off. LBJ by definition, would be among the recipients. So would Ho, Mao, Charles, et al. You and I too, could share in this project, and we could talk more often as we sometimes have done.

So I have been looking into the details of the collective heart transplant. It doesn't appear too difficult--it's all been thought of before, of course. But I have run into one problem--where does one look for a collective donor?

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In the recent discussion of magazines, a good deal was left unsaid. Just as Time Magazine has been constantly and repeatedly cursed by those who cannot adapt digested news, so Playboy has been hailed in the last few years for its apparent liberalism and intellectual commitment. It is childish to pretend that Playboy is nothing more than junk, but

it is equally ridiculous to fall into the trap that Harvey Cox writes about in The Secular City, of joining this shallow and amusing cult, whose high priest is Hefner, and whose philosophy is an impersonal freedom. The man who devours Playboy religiously could be no less dangerous than the Time addict.

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Stan Getz appears with the Toronto Symphony on January 20, and although the most recent Jazz at the Symphony concert was a horrible show, one can occasionally pardon a mistake, and there is every reason to think that the Getz concert will be good. You be good too.

## Israeli music-hall: Arab plot

Last night Liebeck gave me instructions to go to the Royal Alex to see the Grand Music-Hall of Israel, a talent revue performed by enthusiastic young people with rather minimal ability.

The show opened with a full orchestra set up at the back of the stage. They played one sentimental number

with numerous flaws.

The curtain then dropped--onto the head of the conductor who struggled vigorously to free himself.

The Karmon Histraduth Ballet was next.

With 30 people on stage performing exactly the same

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