

At Home With the Movies

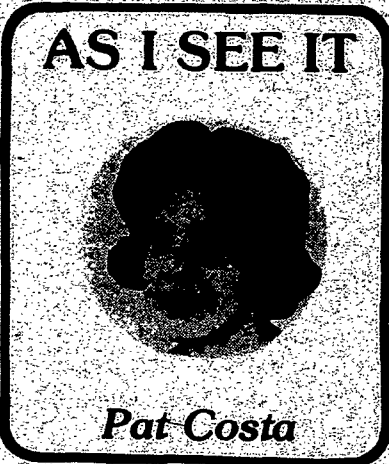
CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES [1972]
Thursday, Nov. 14

This is the fourth twist of the monkey's tail and it shows the fatal deterioration of going once too often to the cage. Gone is the refreshing touch of humor that saved *Escape from the Planet of the Apes*, and in its place is pretentious social significance.

All the apes on earth are abject slaves to their cruel masters until a new Moses swings forth: the tiny chimp thought killed in *ESCAPE*. Now grown and played by Roddy McDowall, he gets some help from the only good human around, a black man (Hari Rhodes) who remembers his own slave origins. The apes ponderous rebellion against vociferous governor Don Murray goes on forever, mostly repeating the same awkward riot footage.

Director J. Lee Thompson allows rather too much violence for the eight-year-olds who might otherwise buy this stale stuff and rather too few peanuts to satisfy anyone else.

A-III



In the last week I have seen three major motion pictures of other years.

All were seen for the first time on the home screen rather than at a movie house because by the time we figure out the cost of the movie, the sitter and sometimes even parking plus finished arguing over the choice of an adventure film versus a romance epic such trips just didn't seem worthwhile.

Thus it was that I thrilled to "The Poseidon Adventure," "The New Centurions" and "Midnight Cowboy" from the vantage point and relative comfort of our family room couch all within an eight-day period.

Well, maybe "thrilled" is a little strong for what I experienced. How about "endured"?

I had looked forward to seeing these movies if for no other reason than to be familiar with their characters, the storylines and actors' abilities when others brought the subjects up.

Having seen them, I probably could enter into a discussion or understand a review in which a

MOONEY PLAYERS

Under Milk Wood, a play by Dylan Thomas about the inhabitants of a Welsh seaside town, will be presented at 8:15 p.m. Friday, Nov. 22, at Cardinal Mooney High School, 800 Maiden Lane.

Brother Michael O'Palko, CSC, directing the *Mooney Players*, described the plotless drama as a "play for voices," because it involves 16 players in many roles and changes of voice. Two narrators, Rick Alexander and Rita Astrella, describe the circumstances of the various characters as their experiences, thoughts and dreams unfold.

THE STALKING MOON [1969]
Friday, Nov. 15

Salvaje, an Apache feared for his cruelty, follows the trail of those who have taken his young son and leaves his own path of dead settlers. Sam Varner, former Army scout who has taken the boy and his mother to his New Mexico ranch, waits for the inevitable showdown with his elusive pursuer who strikes without even being seen.

This Western has the usual amount of physical violence, but its cat-and-mouse story is plotted almost totally for its suspense potential. Gregory Peck is excellent as Varner, and Nathaniel Narcisco has the proper menace as the stalking Apache. But it is Penfield's Robert Forster as a half-breed scout who comes up with the film's most memorable performance, in a throw-away role at that.

A-I

WHERE EAGLES DARE [1969]
Saturday, Nov. 16

A spy-counter-spy melodrama set in the Bavarian Alps during World War II, *Eagles* pits Richard Burton, Clint Eastwood and Mary

critic refers to one of them for purposes of comparison.

But, as far as plain enjoyment goes, experiencing the emotions I was meant to by virtue of the sustained build-up or possessing the insight the director meant for me the viewer to attain — forget it.

The sad facts are what the movie people have been trying to tell us for a long time. That an artistic effort which is edited for television, abbreviated to fit X number of minutes, perforated in an unconscionable way to insert messages about bad breath, body odor and 50,000-mile warranties is in no way related to what the artists involved set out to do.

Character development in all three movies was mutilated. Motivation was nearly nil. When George C. Scott as the retired cop in "The New Centurions" sat down and pointed the gun at his own head I had to ask "Why?" When Gene Hackmas as the minister with a messianic complex let himself slip to his death in "The Poseidon Adventure" my puzzlement grew. And when Jon Voight, whole in body if not in spirit, tended with care and gentleness and ailing Ratso who had earlier ripped him off my consternation was complete.

Obviously I had missed something. Lots of somethings. Granted there is a solution. We should have budgeted 10 bucks and gone to the theater.

But that same week we had turned to Channel 21 to catch "Sergeant York" in its entirety, a matter of two hours and 10 minutes. Not cut up to serve television's purposes, the Gary Cooper film provides more pleasure than the other three movies put together.

To suggest that commercial television should provide sponsor-less movies is ridiculous. But there has to be a better way to present them — particularly when the network feels it has a valuable property as in "The Poseidon Adventure" or the upcoming "Gone With the Wind" and "The Godfather." Lumping the sponsors' messages together at the beginning, the end or even at one intermission would risk no loss of viewers.

On the other hand it would do much to sustain the mood and feeling necessary to appreciate a quality film.

Even if television did this it wouldn't be enough. But, it would be a good start.

Ure against what must be half the German army ensconced in a castle literally inaccessible except by cable car. The purpose of the mission comes clear only gradually (and undoubtedly for some viewers, not at all): the discovery of the names of the agents who have infiltrated the British Intelligence Service.

Alistair MacLean wrote the script (and later the novel) and Brian Hutton directs this interminable, totally implausible series of killings, escapes and pyrotechnic displays. The Panavision production is massive, the performance by all concerned is minimal.

A-III

THE GODFATHER [1972]
Saturday, Nov. 16 (I)
Monday, Nov. 18 (II)

This is it, you all, possibly the biggest media event of the year (aside from Evel Knevel's thwarted flight, that is). The *Godfather* muscles into your livingroom via prime-time TV.

Who doesn't know that this one is the blockbuster movie based on the Mario Puzo best seller, starring Marlon Brando as the aging but indomitable Don Vito Corleone, head of the fictionalized Mafia family? James Caan plays the hot-headed Sonny, and Al Pacino is the young, serious, and for a while hesitant Michael.

The movie follows the book's complex but always forward-moving plot lines, but co-screenwriters Puzo and Francis Ford Coppola (who also directed) wisely removed many of the side track characters and incidents.

What is left is the solid core story of a mob's rise, near-fall, and resurgence in the murderous world of New York racketeering. The movie is beautifully played by a fine cast, and Coppola's direction, right down to the use of an antique tint to give a proper Forties ambience, is a study in control and pacing. Even in a somewhat sanitized TV edition, the film is for adults, and the non-squeamish at that — the murders are plentiful and gruesome and very little is spared in detailing the intricacies of mob life.

A-III

HIGH PLAINS DRIFTER [1973]
Sunday, Nov. 17

Clint Eastwood's film in which he stars and directs is at best a pretentious and at worst a perverse continuation of his ideological commitment to the concept of sadistic vengeance applied outside the law by the individual. Eastwood here tells a pompous tale of how a stranger with no name destroys a town whose cowardly populace willingly collaborated in the murder-by-whipping of a high-minded marshal who opposed the local mining company's infringement on federal property.

Eastwood's ludicrous juxtaposition of clichéd metaphor — the stranger materializes out of the heat haze of the desert, appoints a midget as town mayor and sheriff, insists that the town be painted inferno red, administers justice with a bullwhip against a fiery background — and the conventional realistic plot devices of the Western would be utterly dismissible if it were not for the film's repeated visual brutalities and its sexist attitudes toward women.

Eastwood's general debauching of the town includes the quaint male fantasy that women (here Mariana Hill and Verna Bloom) cannot, after all, fail to respond to rape when instigated by the likes of Clint Eastwood. In short, an utterly despicable film.



Mission Weekend

Connie Gorton, Cathy Stone, Noel Knille, members of the Mercy-Mission Organization finalize plans for the annual Mission Weekend at Our Lady of Mercy High School, Nov. 15 and 16. The event is slated for 8:30 to 11 p.m. each evening. Proceeds will be used for both the Blossom Road school and for the missions.

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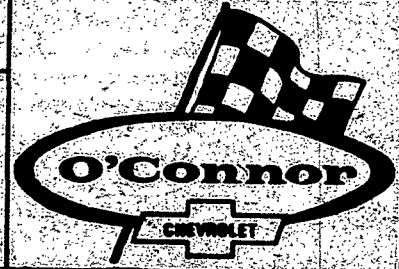
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