Hemingway and Lipstick

Karen Stabiner

Following the sinister tradition of "Death Wish," "Lipstick" is a frighteningly manipulative film that sentimentalizes violence and hypocritically cashes in on the lurid details of rape.

Sex and violence sell tickets; a story about a rape victim's plight probably would not. And the incredible ending of the film, which glamorizes the victimized woman, blamelessly, finds a sympathetic jury which will not send her to jail for her act of revenge, runs completely counterpoint to the real-life plight of Inez Garcia (and other women), currently serving a jail sentence for doing much the same thing.

"Lipstick" is first and foremost a high-pitched dramatic adventure, complete with the happy conclusion or illusion, that everybody gets their just deserts in the end. Director Luman Johnson and screenwriter David Rayfiel trade in any serious consideration of their subject matter for repeated cheap thrills. The result is a film that could have been - or should have been - a provocative, controversial one, but the editors cut it like just another slick TV courtroom drama.

That "Lipstick" promises a look at what would have been a fascinating contraddiction: The rape victim, Chris (Margaux Hemingway), is a highly successful model who sells lipstick by selling herself. Alluring billboards, Covers' uneven peaks, sultry pores - Chris is in the all-American business of mercenary sex. She is, basically, the image that women have been conditioned to emulate and men have been conditioned to want.

What happens is that Gordon Stewart (Chris Sarandon) takes her message to heart, and, letting off his psychoanalytic roll, rapes a woman whose personal persona subtly vitreous just that kind of response. Anne Bancroft, as attorney Carlotta Bondi, is, the only one who sees that the system is rotten, both with the general public's perilous "dare to the end," and with the perspective of the advertising world, satisfactorily enough, though, nobody goes with the serious conflict, and within the first 15 minutes "Lipstick" takes another turn.

What happens is that the film embraces the very values it might have condemned, all in the interest, I'm sure, of maintaining audience interest and giving everybody a little cinematic stimulation. The rape scene goes on and on, and, to care for us all to glimpse of the famed Hemingway anatomy; the courtroom scenes are a kind of parable, as are the references to the famous photographs of Chris. The film is being promoted by the very man, like Bancroft's character finds so disturbing.

As soon as the "not guilty" verdict comes through, all pretense of seriousness goes down the drain, and we're treated to a melodramatic conclusion sequence that's nothing more than an excuse for a flaming finale.

The casting of Hemingway better than that, I suppose, for nothing more than a thriller. In the tradition of "Cotton." and "Sleeping Cat," Hemingway's film could have been better. As it is, she may get by, but none of the main players make Chris into her clotheshorse that puts on and off a new look every few weeks, but she has the baby, barely 15, and has found an answer that's more and more satisfying.

As it stands, "Lipstick" is only one who brings a story to its role. But the contrast between the cardboard characters and the nearly simplistic scoping in the film, not passion. Even the technical aspects of the film fail to save it. Marion Aithman's perfunctory room sequence and the tinkling, no matter how simple and sound, of the electronic music of Michel Polnareff is a sentiment that comes to mind.

But you can't make out of nothing, no matter how beautifully you package it, finally get to address a contemporary problem - as to sell the story down the drain, and the sake of being clever, artificial a sentiment - is something that doesn't insult to the audience in nostalgia films that relate to life with current issues. Nostalgia is a frank appeal to the entertainment, carefully orchestrated one.

Be-Bop Deluxe and Supertramp

crowd would not be disappointed with this one, even though this cuteness quotient is at least equal to that of Peter Frampton and Alex Chilton and the band's music is a major star. He shared the visual focus on stage with loping bassist Charlie Tumahai, whose occasional percussion hits also provided effective punctuation for some of the more melodic rockers, such as "Ship in the Night." Drummer Simon Fox was consistent and energetic and, with Andrew Clarke's synthesizer solos, contributed a healthy instrumental balance to the lyricism of Nelson's guitar work. However, much of the rest of Clarke's keyboard playing, as well, did not make much of an impression on record, was lost in the overall live sound.

Concentrating primarily on material from their excellent latest Sanborn Finest album Be-Bop was no problem, though, fulfilling the expectations that album had raised, until a broken guitar string during "Blazing Apostles," deflated the total impact of a polished and exciting performance. Despite valiant attempts to maintain momentum, jamming guitar through the delay, the group was not able to fully recover from the break, and even after returning for an encore and a second encore, Nelson left the stage obviously disappointed.

... Robert Palmer, who held forth at the Roxy last weekend, is an engaging young Englishman with an obvious fondness for American rhythm and blues. On his two solo albums, since departing the late Vinegar Joe, Palmer has employed Lowell George and the full membership of Little Feat, along with top-notch session men from New York and New Orleans to create some pleasant, unsungly funky music. Without those stellar sidemen his music is essentially the same, but with a little of the edge missing. Moving briskly though a selection of material from both Pressure Drop and Sneaking Sally Through the Alley, Palmer displayed the same energy and ability on those albums, but overall his own songs suffered somewhat from a lack of distinction. However, his rendition of "I Love You More Than That" is available on the soundtrack album of The Harder They Come - a welcome taste of convincing non-Jamaican reggae, and the most successful number of his set.

People's Almanac (Continued from Page 15)


Wings

Jeff Dubron

I put on Wings' newest offering and felt the warm appreciation that comes with the return of an old friend. Oie Rubber Voice is back.

The well worn Battle rhythms and playful pom-pom string line to evidence that Paul McCartney may be able to earn his share of $5 million fast as he will likely earn in his next album. Finally, the best Beatles of the former Beatles and in

Brace Robinson

Bill Nelson is the creative force behind Be-Bop Deluxe, a progressive Anglophile quartet who made a most impressive debut concert appearance at the Santa Monica Civic last Friday. In addition to handling the lead vocals and guitar work with considerable flair, Nelson also writes all the group's material, much of which could be future classics. With disciplined and imaginative rock and roll.

Opening the show with a powerful and precise "Fair Exchange," Be-Bop made it clear that the expectancy was justified.

WALCHEKINY: A second one in 1978, and a third one, and so on.

JERGER: How long did you work on the current edition?

WALCHEKINY: I spent four and a half years on it, and it has sold out. Already the first edition is becoming a collector's item. When I went on a publicity tour recently, we sent copies ahead to those who wanted to write reviews, but many never received them. Apparently, the first person who opened the package saw that it went no further. Trying to conceal a 1000 page almanac is both difficult and a little comical.

JERGER: Apparently the price was right. $7.95 for the paperback and $14.95 for the hardback, not really much for so much information.

WALCHEKINY: The almanac would have been larger if they could have found a press large enough to bind such a big book. We collected 7000 pages of articles, but were only able to use 5000 of that's manuscript-length pages; so we have almost half left over, much of which can be used in Part II. But it's not going to be an update or just a revision which is what Encyclopaedia do with their Continued on Page 18.
Reclaiming Art  
a right, not a luxury

Melinda Wortz

The advent of an alternative publication provides an apt opportunity for philosophical / sociological musings vis-à-vis the state of the visual arts here in Southern California and in the nation. Just how do we regard the making and enjoying of visual art — as an encyclopedic, an ineluctable luxury for the wealthy or educated elite, or as an inalienable right, as a major means for the pursuit of happiness? My personal bias lies with the latter, but organized political groups seldom expose the cause of either artist or artists when labor, racism, law- and-order, Social Security, defense budgets, nuclear power and rural minorities raise much louder voices.

Melinda Wortz is the Art Gallery Director at the University of California Irvine and a teacher of contemporary art history. She has written for Arts Week, Arts News and other arts publications.

In aristocratically structured systems, the leaders have been raised with cultivated tastes and serve as patrons of the arts as a matter of course. In most European countries, before the twentieth century, this official establishment patronage often took the form of major commissions for public spaces — cathedrals, theaters, parks, plaques, commemoratives and sculptures, murals. With the exception of the WPA — a desperate measure undertaken only because of severe economic depression — and the American Academy of Arts and Letters, there is no real history of government sponsorship of the arts in the United States.

In 1930, the New York Stock Exchange crashed, and a few million dollars were made available for temporary art. Holland gives artists rent subsidies, and purchasers of contemporary art get tax deductions, and so forth.

It is true that some of our best architects — Philip Johnson, I.M. Pei, Frank Lloyd Wright — have designed museums, ostensibly for public institutions, although many are privately supported. It is interesting to consider just who the museums-going public is. While museum figures are paltry compared with sports events or even a single rock music event. Whatever the attraction, those who attend are primarily those who were expected to them when they were young, or through the process of a college education. Hence museum audiences consist largely of the college-educated middle class, in addition to groups of children based in from the ghettos. Funds for field trip transportation are, of course, the first to go when budgets are cut. In our ostensibly democratic culture, art may be theoretically available to public through public institutions, but it remains practically inaccessible except through exposure and education — to put it another way, an elitist privilege.

Even the public that does attend museums feels alienated by its unfamiliar form language. Ante-garde art, an idiom as specialized and internally coherent as that of advanced composers, is a form of paraprosody. It is an aesthetic, with an audience about the same size as that of avant-garde music. Ironically, the democratic process which should make art accessible to all rarely produces aesthetically knowable or sensitive leaders to champion the cause of art to the public, which would in turn provide wider exposure to current art forms. On the other side of the circle, artists without public support keep more to themselves, developing a work that is unique. How do we break this self- perpetuating, self-imposed cycle? Recent legislation requires that builders of any new structure for the purpose of recreation must set aside at least 1% of its cost to art. Public interest in and support for this stipulation could be an important first step in getting current art out of its ghettos. The very context into parks, malls, city streets and other public gathering places.

Some political agitation has been forthcoming from artists’ groups like the Artists in Economic Action. This is a positive sign among a notoriously irreligious, unpolitical society. Perhaps if artists can establish themselves as a recognized social, or at least a cultural minority, they can find a political voice. Most of their demands, however, center around inequalities regarding royalties, medical services, and the like, for self-employed artists. Public agitation for their own rights with regard to the opportunity to experience art is not being heard. By summarily dismissing art as not being necessarily healthy, we deprive ourselves of our nearly forgotten basic function. At its best, art becomes a means for expanding consciousness and achieving transcendence.

Older cultures incorporated art into life as the means for contact with and/or manipulation of supernatural powers. Many African tribes do not have a word for art; since it is not experienced separately from life as a whole. Contemporary Los Angeles artist Robert Irwin expresses a similar attitude: it is not experienced separately from life as a whole. Contemporary Los Angeles artist Robert Irwin expresses a similar attitude.

"What the artist develops for himself (or) art is the way of seeing which goes beyond the ordinary and isolates the most perfect. What would happen if that state of consciousness became the consciousness of society as a whole? Then our aesthetic monopoly would be the integral part of our society... and art as a separate discipline would not exist."

The need to reclaim the art of today, not just the past, as an indispensable life experience, as a spiritual encounter rather than a material acquisition, is surely pressing a societal requirement as any political demand.