Roman decadence
(Continued from page 5)

"...After trying to cure Encolpius, the poet says, ’I’ll be waiting for you—your ship sails for Africa tomorrow.’ Overcoming his impotence, Encolpius returns to find Eumolpus dead. His will declares that his immense wealth is to be divided among those willing to eat his corpse. The poet’s final lesson to Encolpius is in the spectacle of greedy men munching away on his dead flesh. Encolpius joins the crew, perhaps even more so, leaving the sick society behind.

But it is not only through contact with the old poet that Encolpius grows. His experiences educate him as well. He forges his loyal friendship with Ascyllus, and when the latter dies at the end of the book, Encolpius grows. His experiences teach him fear and self-preservation, provide him with a perspective on mortality and good fortune, and acquaint him with every sort of depravity and repentance—all of which were unknown to him at the outset. By the end of the book, Encolpius, for the first time, is a whole person, capable of love, and of living in a way which he can respect.

The spiritual growth of the hero is reason enough for Satyricon’s prominence as a work of art. But further, it is one of the few occasions in which we can grapple with the idea of love, and of living in a way which we can respect. It’s not simply ancient Rome that is evoked; it is ancient Rome in a context in which events have a sense of, some sense, it’s still a reality. For the spectator, leaving society behind.

Ultimately, however, the most impressive aspect of Satyricon is the text’s experience. For the spectator, this may well be the most imaginative, beautiful, and visceral film ever made. The projector could be stopped almost anywhere, and the resultant stills framed for exhibition in a gallery. Satyricon is a complete film, using the medium to the fullest, both spatially and temporally, as a vehicle of ideas, and as a delight to mind and eye.

Life festival
(Continued from page 5)

It’s not worth the time or words to try to describe it all.

III

Woodstock’s greatest appeal will be to people who think the Festival was a good thing—an unusual state of affairs for an excellent movie, and especially for a documentary. If one considers documentary film as an art, it should succeed regardless of the viewers’ prejudices; yet Woodstock will quickly tire those who don’t appreciate loud rock music, and is bound to disgust people who were not there and didn’t enjoy it as just an extension of their view of times. It’s easy to conclude that the whole undertaking is just one big advertisement for festivals and rock music.

That’s too shallow a point, though. Those who enjoy it still think it’s excellent, rather than just good. There is a feeling that it’s just not a very tactical adver
tisement. There are reminders of the disaster that almost took place, including one scene of a rainstorm, in particular, that’s positively frightening. You don’t just realize it’s frightening, either; it’s and same goes for the rest of the film. Your rea
tions to the film are your reactions to the film.

For a documentary, that’s not fair, and if the general mix of emotions about rock fes

tivals, they’ll have mixed emotions about festivals, and individu
lies change: time will tell.

To see Woodstock will cost you four dollars (three in the early afternoon; enough people paid the first week to set records in every city where it opened, including Boston ($45,000). If the grosses lost money on the festival itself—it’s known in the world wasn’t as great as they claimed at first—they’ll likely make back that and more on the movie. In some ways, it’s a metaphor of the festival’s commercialism, taking advantage of the unma
terialistic spirit of the event to paddle it for cash.

Perhaps—and in one sense only: you can’t shoot, edit, and distribute a movie without mo
ney. Since woodstock was able to arrange and publicize a festival, and where there’s money in this country, there’s commercialism, Wadleigh was a natural choice to shoot the event, a young documentary filmmaker with a reputation for improvisation (name

es shows for National Educa
tional Television, two top prizes in European Festivals). He had recently been acclaimed for film

ing similar performers individu
ally. He became interested in the project, and when the original backers dropped out he formed his own company (with Bob Maurice, the producer) to fi

nance it. Warner Brothers bought distribution rights shortl

ly before the festival, but their check arrived just in time, and the filmmakers tell afterwards; what’s more, insurance on the equip
ment was cancelled just before shooting.

Nevertheless, the film was shot, and the prospects for pro
fit mushroomed quickly therea
fter. The distributor wanted a final print by Christmas, but Wadleigh took his time, in fact, he took pains to avoid any stu
dio interference, so that there’s no reason to believe the movie was significantly changed by the publicist. (Kornos of studio re


ducing are entirely false, accor
ding to Variety.) Some may claim that Woodstock would at least have used the movie to attack commercialism; but com

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