Movie:

Trumbo’s “Johnny Got His Gun”

By P. E. Schindler, Jr.

It was fitting that a book to end all anti-war books, and now it is a film. If you liked the book, you’ll love the film, and if you haven’t read the book you should see it anyway.

It is the first film directed by Dalton Trumbo, who has made sure that the cinematic adaptation is perfectly faithful to the original’s character, original, because he is the author. This film is a moving experience, graphically crisp, and well played by almost all of the actors. It may be a reflection of the kind of emotional pain Trumbo went through when he was blacklisted during the witch-hunt of the early fifties.

Johnny Got His Gun has already received international acclaim, and has collected several awards, including three at Cannes, making it the first movie ever to be so honored. This easy to understand: it is probably the best anti-war film to date, and considering the number of recent entries into the genre, that is no easy distinction to come by. The film’s greatest departure from the beatitudes is that it is worthy efforts is to keep the social character, his life, and the fortunes of war which turn him into.

Joe’s flashbacks alternate between actual events of the past, and real events of the present and future: they involve his family and his girlfriend in his attempts to maintain his sanity in an insane situation. His mind still functions, but he finds himself totally unable to communicate with the people who are caring for him. Finally, he is given one last, bequest by his father, in an imaginary scene that never occurred: he is re-instructed from various private sources managed to line up enough capital which led up to the final course which led up to the final deal.

Although it’s slightly unlikely, Joe establishes his communications with the outside world by nodding his head to send Morse code. Army officers are brought in, and Joe relays his request: “Put me in a freak show. But the thing is that these freaks are born that way. No one is imagining what it would be like to be on display as a freak. Perhaps if you haven’t read the book you’ll love the movie: and now it is a film. If you liked the book, you should see it anyway.

Johnny Got His Gun, to speak to the Boston area film critics. At the press lunch following the showing, in Joseph’s, there was the customary free lunch in a '50s restaurant, in order that we might be more kindly disposed to the film.

In this case, it wasn’t really needed. As a matter of fact, several of the critics stated that anyone’s appetite could be reduced by the emotional stress involved in viewing a film as moving as this one. Fortunately for this reporter, he recovered in time to take advantage of both the free food and the immediate proximity of the beautiful Ms. Fields, who, unfortunately, dressed more sedately in person than she was in the film.

Kathy explained that she could, in a way, speak to motivations in making the film, as the crew had been very close, while Trumbo had been very open, during the rocky two-year course which led up to the final product. Trumbo finally managed to line up enough capital from various private sources to go on.

The film was an emotionally trying experience for Trumbo, and a pro-totype of it is auto-biographical. Karen is drawn from Trumbo’s own childhood sweetheart, and many of Joe Bonham’s experiences are actually those of Trumbo’s childhood. His style is very

open, compared to most directors;

couch that: he is willing not only to listen to suggestions, as are most, he is also willing to follow them.

He invited members of the cast to his home when location shooting brought them nearby; this enabled most of them to get to know him pretty well. He often wore a black velvet jump suit, and unmonogrammed slips which, taken as a whole, made a stunning outfit.

The conversation then turned to a matter closer at hand: Ms. Fields herself. At 24, this is her first break in films. If the film continues to duplicate the very respectable gross it attained in New York City during the month after its release, she could be on her way to a bright career.

She comes from a show biz family: her father is an agent, her real mother was a child actor, and her stepmother is Polly Bergen. She is currently dating a writer-director Roger Gwitt.

She had several amusing anecdotes concerning the shooting of Johnny Got His Gun, but perhaps the most interesting was her description of the shooting of the desert fantasy scene. The scene was shot on location, on an extremely hot day. Her costume (see picture) included a pair of pasties, supported by glue. Unfortunately, the sun melted the glue, resulting in a take after take, until enough film was shot to put the whole thing together.

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