

Cinema

Silent Running, from page 5

Unfortunately, the director and the actors were just a bit short of fulfilling the original writer's dream. On occasion there is a flicker of what might have been, a brief glimpse of capturing, as would only be possible in this medium, the full essence of the struggle. But through most of the movie the majesty and poignancy of this struggle is lost in a number of irrelevant scenes. Too often the movie slips into sequences that are, certainly, entertaining (even the little mechanical robots are endearing), but scenes that are nonetheless unrelated to the essence of the picture. Admittedly, there are spots where the simple story line itself imposes difficulties. After all, there are only so many different ways you can interest the audience in a grown man playing with his animals. But the movie could have been much more forceful had there been more constant attention to the theme.

Technically the execution is superb. The director for *Silent Running* handled the special effects for *2001*, and brings all his ability into creating here a truly realistic view of outer space. As in *2001*, all the trade names are familiar: the freighters bare the American Airlines label, fertilizers are charged with the crest of Dow Chemical, and the like. Shots of the cockpit instrumentation should satisfy any aero & astro student. The photography matches the special effects, with the same breath-taking shots of space Stanley Kubrick used in *2001*.

Since there are only four human parts in the movie, the quality of the acting fluctuates rather markedly. The only important role was the conservationist, played by Bruce Dern, and his performance can only be rated so-so. There are some surface comparisons with Jesus Christ, and indeed a Christ-like man is just what the theme needs, but Dern's acting is uneven.

Rating the movie overall is difficult. It's certainly entertaining — the novelty of space that *2001* introduced has yet to be dulled by repetition. If only the movie could have built on the theme captured so well during the first and last 60 seconds, it might have been brilliant. As it is, it can only be rated good. *At the Pi Alley*.

~~~~~ Alex Makowski ~~~~~

Chabrol's *Le Boucher* is a latecomer

All too often, the year's best films receive little or no exposure. Occasionally, MGM or Universal releases a picture that is more than topical, but the majority of the real cinematic art is released by "foreigners," the French and the Italians who are perhaps the most notable film artists. The few foreign releases that do get screening often do so for the sole purpose of qualifying for the Academy Awards. Luckily, this is not the case with one of the more notable French releases, Claude Chabrol's *Le Boucher* (The Butcher), which was released last year but has required, regrettably, nearly a year to be given general screening in this country.

Chabrol is following in the steps of Alfred Hitchcock, who he considers to be his mentor, in producing sophisticated, well-filmed and -scored murder mysteries. Though the plot is not very long or twisted, it is very satisfying, and avoids being dragged out *ad infinitum*.

The characterization is a great deal

more than skin deep, especially in the case of the heroine, Helene, played by Stephane Audran (Mme. Chabrol). Despite the fact that her eye makeup doesn't run, when she cries, she is a remarkably real and many-faceted character, and in her reality lies a great deal of the success of the film.

In true Hitchcock style, the film's title is a pun. It refers to the protagonist, Paul, played by Jean Yanne, who, like his father and grandfather before him, is the town butcher. He is unlike his forbears, however, in that he hates his trade; it reminds him of his fifteen years in the army, to which he constantly refers and obviously cannot forget.

The film is also technically beautiful. Overall, the film is a short, beautifully constructed, intricate puzzle which acts as a marvelous showcase for Chabrol and all of his talented cohorts.

~~~~~ Sandy Yulke ~~~~~

Music

Jim Dawson, from page 5

We stayed for the second set, as did quite a few others. During the break between sets, while my friends discussed the earlier part of Dawson's career (his time with the Good Earth), I went out and ran through Harvard Square looking for Dawson's two LP's.

To call Jim Dawson and his music a combination of the best of James Taylor and Tom Rush is bad, but it's the best description I can make if you haven't heard him. His songs have tender, sensitive lyrics. The musicianship is just as tight. Between Dawson and his sidemen, they play a lot of string instruments and piano. The only phrase I can use is "beautiful music." Again, the phrase isn't good enough but it's the best I can do.

Dawson's second set had a different approach. A lot of the material was written by other people. But again, within ten minutes the audience was completely on his side. He did a couple of Everly Bros. songs, a Beatles tune, and excellent version of "There'll Never be Another You" and some other I can't name. Then some more of the songs on his two records. This time the audience joined in spontaneously on a few songs. After his regular set, he came back for a long encore, responding to his excellent reception. Again he closed his set with "Simple Song" singalong style, and we were singing as loudly as we could. My friends and I never realized we harmonized so poorly.

Eventually it was all over. Even Passim's owner was happy. He keeps a few LP's of the current performer every week. He sold his entire stock of Dawson's *You'll Never be Lonely With Me*.

~~~~~ Bob Klein ~~~~~

## Brinsley Schwarz: fantasy amidst the fantasy

*Silver Pistol* — Brinsley Schwarz (United Artists)

• Without warning the saloon doors swung wide open, and in he stalked. He was dressed from head to toe in dingy white leather, offset only by his black lace shirt and his cracked, sun-baked skin. An empty holster hung at his hip. He moved slowly toward the bar, sitting down beside Jed Grinner.

"What'll ya have, stranger," asked the barkeep.

"The usual," came the reply, grumbling deep from within the rough-hewn throat.

Jed and the barkeep exchanged glances. Jed grinned.

"I ain't seen you around these parts, stranger. Whatcha name?"

"Earl Stranger," came the terse reply.

"Well," chuckle Jed, "glad to know ya, Stranger. What brings you to Collier Bluffs, Wyomin'?"

"It's a long story."

Jed was, coincidentally enough, in the mood for a long story, and was about to prod the stranger on when the doors flew open and in marched the Olders Brothers Gang. Hollering and yelping they stampeded over to where the barmaid, Miss Lola LaVoid, was standing. The stranger's jaw twitched when he heard a shrill cry: "Keep your mitts off my bodice, buster!!"

Then, suddenly, he stood, his dark face turning a ghastly, lurid white. "I have seen enough!" he bellowed. Jed wasn't grinning when he saw the beams of pure energy shooting out from the stranger's eyes, lifting the hollering, yelping Older Brothers Gang until they touched the ceiling, then tossing them across the room and through the plate glass window and out into the street below. . . .

The point is, none of this would have happened had the alert bartender put a copy of Brinsley Schwarz's latest, *Silver Pistol*, on the gramophone at the outset. Y'see, Brinsley Schwarz is both a person and a group; the group consists of five British chaps who rank among the finest western (as opposed to *country and western*) bands in the known universe, at the present time. Their new release consists of 12 pleasant, if somewhat redundant, cactus cornball numbers, a good many of which might remind you of The Band, due mainly to Bob Andrews organ work. One song, "Range War" deserves individual attention, as it sums up, I think, BS's free 'n' easy sagebrush approach to music making. The chorus goes, in part:

"Range war is on the run

Grab your coat and getcher gun

Silver Surfer won't you come and help me"

The reason that Marvel Comics' Guardian of the Spaceways pops up in a song otherwise populated by stagecoaches and gunslingers is to remind us how important the element of fantasy is to the whole cowboy trip. Sure it's rootin' tootin' fun if you don't take it seriously. Try this experiment: watch *Gunsmoke* reruns some night with the sound off, and *Silver Pistol* on the stereo. I guarantee, you'll be a-grinnin' just like ole Jed faster than you can say — "Yippie-tie-one-on!" Honest Injun.

~~~~~ Mark Astolfi ~~~~~

David Clayton-Thomas on his own

David Clayton-Thomas (Columbia)

This album may be a good sign. David Clayton-Thomas has left Blood, Sweat & Tears and recorded an album with other musicians. You can hardly tell the difference, though, which makes you wonder just how much of a backup band for its lead singer BS&T had become.

Now if you remember, the group's first album featured another singer, Al Kooper. Kooper also arranged and helped produce and it is still their best release so far. The next one was without Kooper but it was still interesting. The rhythm and blues mode still dominated, but it was slowly being overcome by a very slick, jazz-pop sound, which made the band much more popular (though to a very different audience). The third and

fourth records were well-played but essentially vacuous. Essentially, BS&T had forgotten its roots and had been led astray. It just seemed like a waste of talent, since several of the members are fairly creative players.

The sound of the last two albums has been brought over to this solo effort, and it will still be enjoyable to anyone who liked it before. The material Clayton-Thomas performs is strong, for the most part, and with the exception of a few strings and female background singers, it could easily have been a Blood, Sweat & Tears record. It was produced by BS&T's producer/drummer Bobby Colomby, who has captured the band's current sound well. Perhaps he should bottle it and sell it to others.

The point of all this is that if David Clayton-Thomas' influences were what made BS&T so bland and commercial, perhaps these forces are now separated from the talent of the rest of the group and future Blood, Sweat & Tears work will represent a sort of comeback to their older, more vital sound. That would certainly qualify as good news. And for those who like BS&T as they are now, *David Clayton-Thomas* will certainly be a highly pleasurable collection.

~~~~~ Jay Pollack ~~~~~

## Kathy Smith just doesn't quite make it

*Kathy Smith/2* — Kathy Smith (Stormy Forest/MGM)

Kathy Smith looks well in her album-jacket photograph, but it certainly is a shame that she doesn't sing nearly as well as she looks.

Ms. Smith's voice is nothing exceptional. It is pleasant enough when she stays within her limited range, but much too often she tries to reach notes outside her range. The result is a great deal of uncontrolled screaming.

For the most part, *Kathy Smith/2* is filled with songs that are composed of the most trite, contrived rhymes that I've heard since grammar school. "Rock and Roll Star" not only has trite lyrics, it also has music that doesn't fit with the lyrics. "Seven Virgins," another tiresome song, is filled with percussion and screaming and very little else.

There are however, two or three decent — although not outstanding — songs on this album. "Fly Off With the Wind," for example, has meaningful lyrics at times and has its musically redeeming moments. "For Emile" is a nice, slow song that seems to flow well. "Blessed Be the People" has potential, and the fact that it contains just simple piano accompaniment enhances this potential.

The remainder of the album is mediocre at best. "Willie" begins well with a harpsichord introduction but fails despite some interesting flute work by Jeremy Steig. Then, conversely, Steig gets somewhat carried away in "Travel in a Circle" and drowns Kathy's voice out. "It's Taking So Long" is the victim of choppy arranging and, again, mis-judgement of range on Kathy's part.

Kathy's main problem is one of imitation. Somehow, you can't help but think that you've heard traces of her before somewhere. She tries to add Judy Collinsesque and Joni Mitchell-ese touches to her songs, although she doesn't have nearly the range of either. She has a pleasant but not exceptional voice. Perhaps if she would try harder to be Kathy Smith, she would at least be listening material. Frankly, if this album is any indication of her "talents," I find it difficult to believe that she has one album, let alone two.

~~~~~ Wanda Adams ~~~~~

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