By Katy Cropp

The Front, starring Andy Alan, Zero Mostel, Horchel Bernardi and Andrea Marcovicci, directed and produced by Martin Ritt; written by Dave Grunion. The perseverance of innocent citizens for alleged Communist sympathies by Sen. Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee remains one of the country's darkest hours. Scientists were disciplined and civil servants forced from the government for supposed support of Communist causes. Entertainers, actors and writers were blacklisted and denied work by talent studios and networks for their alleged radicalism. The Front, starring Woody Allen and Zero Mostel, successfully portrays the effects of this witch-hunting. From the opening credits, black and white shots of the opulence being produced and consumed here, interspersed with scenes from the Korean War front, accompanied by Frank Sinatra singing, The Front catches the mood of the early fifties.

As the movie opens, Howard Prince (Woody Allen), a bar chairman and impecunious, is reunited with an old friend, a blacklisted television writer who warns Howard to front for him at studios so he can continue working. The writer is to cover bookmaking losses, Howard accepts. The scripts are sold to a dramatic series and Howard becomes an instant celebrity. Meanwhile, the network is pursuing the ruthless anti-communist Senator Joseph McCarthy, played by Zero Mostel, for marching in a Communist sympathizers parade in the thirties. Brown is fired and forced to spy on Howard to rehabilitate himself. The series assistant producer, Florence Barrett (Andrea Marviccci), with whom Howard has been having an affair, quits over Hecky's leaving and loves Howard after he refuses to write an anti-blacklisting pamphlet. The writing and characterizations support the theme of the movie very well. Both are carefully developed and of high quality.

Howard Prince, the bar chairman turned celebrity writer, develops into a quietly heroic martyr from a shallow, arrogant star and insecure, lower class loser. Hecky Brown's systematic destruction at the hands of the witch-hunters, while nearly inevitable, is sobering. Florence Barrett's transformation from loving the image to loving the man is convincing. The falls of both Hecky Brown and Howard Prince, the ultimate losers and ultimate heroes, illustrate the destructive mood of the time.

The cinematography was very well done, especially the use of black and white photography at the beginning to set the tone of the film. The symbols surrounding both Hecky Brown's suicide and Howard Prince's conversion to liberal hero are moving. The Front is a well balanced, well-acted film with a strong statement that cannot be ignored.