Black Sunday: An atypical disaster

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John Frankenheimer's new film Black Sunday is a pleasant change from the line of disaster flicks which have literally flooded the Silver Screen in recent years. For, in addition to a sensational situation, this movie has plot and characterization.

The plot is a familiar one. A Palestinian activist group Black September feels that Americans are living in an atmosphere of safety. Feeling so far from the pain and suffering of the Palestinian conflict are ignorant of the anguish present there. So a small group of terrorists plots to wreak a similar fate upon the U.S. in an effort to shock its people into political awareness. Before they succeed, however, Israeli intelligence uncovers evidence of their plot and the situation evolves into a race between the two — the Palestinians proceed according to plan while the FBI attempts to thwart their efforts by locating a man and a woman whose descriptions are unavailable and whose specific plans are an absolute mystery.

One of the most interesting things about the movie is that it is difficult for a member of the audience to take sides in the conflict. One finds himself torn between rooting for the territies, whose cause seems almost just (despite the severity of their methods), or, alternatively, cheering for the Americans, who must also sidestep the governmental laws in an attempt to avert the impending disaster. The suspense is genuine because the characters are believable and the audience can empathize with both sides.

Robert Shaw, as the Israeli intelligence officer who arrives to join forces with the FBI, is a tremendous character — a man who will stop at nothing until justice is done.

To make the New York Times, it is necessary to grow large. It is not known who has learned to hate the U.S. and all that it stands for because of what he feels were committed against him by his family and the government during his captivity. His hatred turns to vengeance as he creates the plot to kill tens of thousands of Americans by blowing up Miami's Orange Bowl stadium during the Super Bowl. His performance is outstanding.

Marthe Keller, the Palestinian woman with a mastermind's operation for Black September, is also excellent. Perhaps the Palestinians in the movie are right — Americans do put an overly inflated importance on their comfort at times and are very likely to lose touch with the real world. This is an important theme about anything that might endanger their security.

There was, however, one disappointing factor in the movie: the quality of the photography. The focus was occasionally lost through overexposed shots and moving shots were often excessively bumpy. It was impossible to watch the screen during a long push shot without noticing the frustrating effects of the unstable camera movement.

The movie makes some interesting statements about modern society and the importance we place on some of our pleasures.

When the manager of the Super Bowl is asked about the possibility of cancelling the event in order to avoid danger of a disaster, he replies, "Cancel the Super Bowl? That's the most ridiculous idea I've ever heard!"

The man takes the outlook that the possible risk of 60,000 lives, including that of the President (who appears briefly in one scene), and bears a striking resemblance to Jimmy Carter. Nothing is weighed against the certain problems that would arise if Americans were forced to do without this important event. The President himself is unwilling to stay home and watch the game on TV either because he does not believe there is danger, or as another character suggests, because he is too important to make another appearance.

The exception, of course, was highly publicized climax of the movie, in which the Goodyear blimp plummeted toward its target — the Orange Bowl stadium. Photographs of this segment of the film were considerably better than the rest. It had to be. This was the part everyone had come to see... and they were not disappointed.

The MIT Musical Theatre Guild will present Pippin, an off-Broadway musical, on April 26, 27, 28, 29 and May 3 at 7:30 p.m. at the MIT auditorium. Tickets are $3.50 ($2.50 with MIT ID) and $2.00 for children under 12. For reservations, 494-4294.

The Boston Shakespeare Company presents The Merchant of Venice, in repertoire with the Company's current production, Much Ado About Nothing. Performances of The Merchant of Venice will be every Thursday and Saturdays at 8 p.m., with a Much Ado About Nothing performance on Fridays at 8 p.m. The Company's Theatre is located at Berkeley and Marlborough Streets in Back Bay. The box office phone is 267-5600.

The Newton Chamber Orchestra, directed by Philip Morehead, will present a concert of Baroque music on Friday, April 8 at the Newton High School Auditorium. Tickets are $3.00 and $1.50. For more information, call 267-5611.

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The People's Theatre, 125 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, will present Marat/Sade, on April 8-10 at 8 p.m. Tickets are $3.50, call 24-2490 for reservations.

The first appearance in Boston by the Rash Dance Company, a modern dance troupe, will occur in the Little Theatre of the Boston Center for the Arts, 534 Tremont Street — April 1, 2, 3 at 8 p.m., April 4 at 6 p.m., and April 5, 6, 7 at 8 p.m. Tickets are $3.00 at the door, no reservations.

The Boston Ballet presents The Sleeping Beauty, April 8-10 at the Boston Opera House, 534 Tremont Street. The performance times will be at 8 p.m. on April 8 and 9 and 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 10. Tickets are $6.45, $5.50 and $8.50, and are available at the Box Office, 555 Boylston Street, tel.: 267-6294 or box office phone, 267-6100. For more information call 267-6100.

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