Skullduggery, starring Thom Haverstock and Wendy Crewson, written and directed by Ota Richter. A Wittman Richter Films release.

According to my dictionary, skullduggery means "deception or trickery; fraud." Director Ota Richter told me at last week's screening: "This film is designed to make the audience think it sees something that isn't really there. Basically, it is a mov- iew whose intention is to mislead." When the screening was over I wondered just how he meant to deceive people: by serving up a complicated story or by tricking them into seeing a bad movie.

Skullduggery is a different kind of horror story, sort of a Gothic comedy thriller, an imaginatively clean-cut, modern-day fellow, but whose mind and actions are con- trollable by the Devil. Every night, he is cursed by the Devil. Six hundred years ago he was a prince who was living in Dublin and wrote songs about- the defeat of Poland's Solidarity move-

ment, and "Seconds" (ominous nuclear holocaust). The more important, and less apparent, theme deals with the struggle to maintain love in the face of adversity in "Two Hearts Beat As One" and "Drowning Man." It is this second concern that elevates War above the level of sanguine dia- trite to that of coherent conceptual mas-

terpiece. It becomes difficult to deal with sincer-
ity in a medium as cynical as rock; there is always a desire to search for the underly-
ing irony. This has been a major stum-
bling block in any analysis of U2's work. Fused with genuine sincerity, the listener is ceilless. Singer Bono's simple, naively written songs are often disassembled as pompous or too allegorical, when in reality they are not the opposite: direct statements that mean just what they say. With War, Bono transcends these difficulties without com-

promising his outlook. When, in "Sunday Bloody Sunday," he sings And it's time we are immune When fact is fiction and TV is reality And today the millions cry We eat and drink while tomorrow they die. The real battle just begun.

To claim the victory Jesus won. On a Sunday, bloody Sunday we know he means it, because we can feel it, too. All of War communicates on this same visceral level.

War's music matches the lyrical direct-
ness, conveying more power than do U2's previous efforts. The rhythm section of brothers Adam Clayton and drummer Larry Mullen has finally come into its own, pro-

pelling music that was once carried solely by The Edge's thick guitar chording. The furious drumming that pushes "Sunday Bloody Sunday" and the bass pulse under-

ltying "Seconds" and "Surrender" are some of the album's finest moments and further testifies to War's unique sound. The Edge, freed from the majority of the rhythmic duties, adds his signature guitar colorings to the proceedings. Listen to the scratchy rhythm figures in "New Year's Day" and "Two Hearts Beat As One," or the slide guitar in "Surrender" for exam-

ples of his talents.

War is both a beginning and an end for U2: taking the sound developed on Boy and October to a limit as they simultane-

ously hint at new directions. The songs closing each side recall the previous albums: "Drowning Man" would have been right at home on Boy, while the straightforward psycho-thriller ending in "40" is straight out of October. Side two of War is most indicative of things to come, the fainly undercurrent of "The Refugee" to the wide-screen sound of "Drowning Man." The radio and dance-floor sucesso of "New Year's Day" and "Two Hearts" demonstrates that War is U2's American breakthrough; the band's acceptance is hastened by its recent sold-out concerts. The power and confidence displayed by U2 at its Orpheum concert Friday was a far cry from the frightened eagerness that characterized the band's first Boston ap-

pearance in December 1980, but its sincer-
ity hasn't changed a bit. "It's always good to play to a home crowd," Bono told the audience before launching the show that surprised even the most devout fans. Few singers can match Bono's ambling ener-

gy. He was constantly on the move, at times running into the crowd, and once climbed the balcony for an impromptu serenade. The band's set, consisting of the strongest material from the three albums, was tight, but left room for improvisation, including Bono's rendition of "Let's Twist Again." It took three encores to satisfy the audi-

ence, but they left converted to U2's cause.

If Boston is any indication, the rest of the country cannot be far behind.

David Shaw

Murder and mayhem in Massachusetts

U2 declares war on America

War, U2 on Island Records.

When the Clash landed in London and wrote political songs about Dublin, U2 lived in Dublin and wrote songs about God. Now that it is U2's turn, the third album in U2's conceptual trilogy, is a political statement that rings true even to any of the Clash's detached bourgeois pos-

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sene — Boy was about the trials of maturity (it dealt with an un踏实的 concept-

ization of the spiritual) — but War's pri-

mary concern is obvious, expensed in the songs "Sunday Bloody Sunday," "New Year's Day" and "Two Hearts." These songs are the key to the making of "War." By the time it comes time to put in "40," U2 is at its peak, its musical skills demonstrably in the service of their political ideas. War's subject matter has often been ob-

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