

Harvey Elliott

# Couple tour 'Badlands'

It's easy to be uneasy about *Badlands* because Terrence Malick has written and directed it in a style one could call American Naive, and the genre is new. Without precedent or cinematic reference, the film unfolds as an ingenious How I Spent My Summer Vacation and remains so firmly rooted in its straightforward naivete that an audience, unaccustomed to this point of view, is often caught wandering if the laughs are intentional. *Badlands* is essentially a tale of romance and murder, in that order, told by an adolescent South Dakota girl in the mid-1950's. She narrates, and co-stars in, her little short story, but she doesn't tell it as melodrama at all. Her narration is filled with the fake grandeur and false poetry one would expect. She talks about destiny and serene days, and every line sounds as hollow and artificial as it probably would be, coming from her. Holly calls Kit the most trigger-happy person I'd ever met. Well, he was that. She

was out in the front yard one day, twirling her baton, when Kit walked up and asked her if she wanted to go for a ride. Their meeting didn't have the sexual implications of Bonnie and Clyde's. Taking a ride was just better than twirling a baton. Their odyssey of casual, even apathetic, murder is told by Holly in a detached, simple manner. She never questions why she stays with the eccentric Kit, and the whole experience just makes her feel kinda blah, like when you're sitting there and all the water's run out of the bathtub. Her similes are positively childlike, and her reactions are consistent. For Malick is consistent, too. *Badlands* is his first film, and a fully realized one. It's most obvious with the actors, who comprehend the naive style right from the start and do their best to make the audience comfortable with it. Martin Sheen doesn't play Kit as James Dean, but he still allows the comparison to assert itself where it will. We see him as Holly does, which is as it

should be: a hellbent delinquent, guileless and attractive even to the end. *Blazing Saddles* — This Mel Brooks film is fitfully hilarious, but as Brooks gets broader and broader, the hilarity becomes deadened by too much of a good thing. It gets off to a spectacular start with Frankie Laine and a bullwhip singing the title song while big, fat, Fifties credits appear on the screen. And the first scene, with a character actor you'll remember from *Paper Moon* and a black chain gang, is the funniest in the entire film. Madeleine Kahn and Harvey Korman steal what's left of the movie, but Mel Brooks' mugging is embarrassing. (Through Thursday, if not longer, at the Plaza 2.) *Fiddler on the Roof* — a big, epic transfer of Broadway's penultimate ethnic musical to the screen. In general, it opens up nicely in its Yugoslavian locales and provides an exuberant sweep to many scenes. Some of the musical numbers are cinematically exciting (Miracles of Miracles and Sunrise, Sunset come immediately to mind, as well as the lesser-known Chaveleh), and others just seem to go on and on. It was all filmed through a stocking, and that's why it looks so golden. Leonard Frey, Rosalind Harris and Neva Small are excellent. (Last day today, at the Varsity.) *Jeremiah Johnson* — Even Robert Redford's carefully programmed charisma couldn't distinguish this outdoor adventure story when it was released almost two years ago, but in these glorious Gatsby days, never

# Entertainment Calendar

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let a sleeping Redford lie. Man against nature, man against Indians — it's the same old story filmed in a lot of wilderness by Sydney Pollack. The screenplay is partly written by John Milius, a macho cult figure. (Through Thursday, at the Carolina.) *On the Waterfront* — This Elia Kazan classic might not have the impact now that it had back in 1954, when American moviegoers were primed for Brando, the Method and screen naturalism, but it's one of the few films which can be said to epitomize a decade of movie history. Critics have commented that Kazan's mannered hysteria dates very quickly, but the film contains Marlon Brando's electrifying performance and is worth seeing. An interesting historical note: it has been called Kazan's justification for appearing as a friendly witness during the McCarthy hearings. The Brando character, you see, agonizes over informing. (Thursday, 8:30, Carolina Union free flick.) *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* — a somber and visually faithful rendering of Solzhenitsyn's story of one man's day-to-day survival in a Siberian labor camp. The camp was recreated 200 miles north of Oslo, from sketches by a former inmate, and the cast and crew underwent many of the same hardships and deprivations as Ivan himself. Tom Courtenay practically starved himself during the filming. And the experience is cinematically captured by cinematographer Sven Nykvist, who is responsible for at least half of Ingmar Bergman's renown, and who finally won an Oscar this year for *Cries and Whispers*. (Wednesday at 8 p.m., Gross


Chemistry Auditorium, Duke.) *The Trojan Women* — Katherine Hepburn, Vanessa Redgrave, Genevieve Bujold and Irene Papas enact Euripides, and the results weren't exactly pleasing to everybody. Pauline Kael, however, wrote that director Michael Cacoyannis (*Elektra*, *Zorba the Greek*) tries to make the movie impressive and botches it, but I think one would have to be maybe a little foolish to let aesthetic scruples about the movie's mediocrity as cinema deprive one of seeing *The Trojan Women* with a cast that one could never hope to see on the stage. Enough said. (Tonight, 8:30, Carolina Union free flick.) *The Way We Were* — Robert Redford's best acting to date, maybe it's because he plays a character to whom everything came too easy. At any rate, the Streisand-Redford chemistry works here to produce an involving enjoyable romantic drama — as long as it sticks to Streisand and Redford. Everybody else, however, turns to caricature, and, with the exception of a few scenes (notably Redford and Bradford Dillman in a sailboat), everything seems like filler in a story about Those Two. It shouldn't have turned out that way. (Through Thursday, at Plaza 3.)

*Welcome to Arrow Beach* — Laurence Harvey's last film. He directed and starred in it, and *Variety* calls it inept and distasteful... a lame-brained tale of cannibalism. It seems Harvey developed a taste for human flesh during the Korean War. (Starts Wednesday, at the Varsity.)

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