

Taster's Choice

by Harvey Elliott
Films

"American Graffiti"—It happened one night around Me's Drive in. Just like it happened, over and over, for a lot of us back in those boring, banal nights of adolescent automotive cruising. A fine script, by Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz, captures it all in one of the best films of last year. (Continuing at the Plaza 1.)

"Busting"—Elliott Gould and Robert Blake play eccentric policemen on Los Angeles' vice squad. Your objections to the film may hinge on your objections to the duties of the Vice Squad in general, for, as Vincent Canby writes, "they spent most of their time arresting people who are more of an emotional than a physical threat to society: call girls, massage-parlor employees and the clientele of homosexual bars." This mission notwithstanding, Canby liked the film, calling it a "cool, intelligent variation" on the ubiquitous cop movie. (Sunday through Tuesday, at the Varsity.)

"Chariots of the Gods?"—You won't find that question mark on the marquee, but it's here for a reason: there's not an ounce of proven truth in this German pseudo-documentary about little helpers we might have had in times long ago, who (maybe) flew down out of the sky and (perhaps) taught us to build the Pyramids and Aztec temples, among other things. (Continuing through Saturday, at the Varsity.)

"Dirty Mary Crazy Larry"—"Varsity" summed up this Son of a "Vanishing Point" with "lotsa wheel-spinning, little movement." More than a third of the film footage is devoted to "spectacular chases and collisions deftly staged." (Continuing, at Plaza 3.)

"The Grasshopper"—This neglected drama of 1970 featured Jacqueline Bisset (in what some consider her first real acting role) as a young girl who left her L.A. fiancée because he was too boring, became a Las Vegas showgirl, then slipped to the depths of degradation before achieving self-knowledge and telling the world where to get off. It sounds like pretty lurid going, but Roger Greenspan wrote in the "New York Times" that "the film repeatedly transcends its own vulgarity... and achieves a fairly rare kind of intelligence and truth in the clarity and fluidity of its style." (Carolina Union Free Flick, Tuesday at 8:30, the Great Hall.)

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"Long Day's Journey into Night"—Working with the complete text of the Eugene O'Neill play, a cast directed by Sidney Lumet and headed by Katharine Hepburn (as Mary Tyrone), Ralph Richardson (as James, Sr.), Jason Robards, Jr. (as James, Jr.), and Dean Stockwell (as Edmund) rehearsed for three weeks, then shot this film in sequence in 37 days back in 1961. O'Neill devotees weren't too enthusiastic with the overall result; but the words are still there. (Wednesday at 8 p.m., Gross Chemistry Auditorium, Duke.)

"Mr. Deeds Goes to Town"—The Thirties' enchanting director Frank Capra, working with Gary Cooper and, for the first time, his favorite actress Jean Arthur in this story of a good, honest country boy who becomes a millionaire and who can't be "driven into a corner by predatory sophisticates." Although he won an Oscar as Best Director for "Mr. Deeds," he gives all the credit to Gary Cooper and screenwriter Robert Riskin, who "should have won." (Carolina Union Free Flick, Thursday at 8:30, the Great Hall.)

"Oh! What a Lovely War!"—American audiences didn't warm to Richard Attenborough's spectacular anti-war musical/revue/satire, but the British magazine "Films and Filming" called it "thunderingly good." It's "high parody in a stylized environment," as a heaven of British stars participate: Maggie Smith as "recruit-bait" is most memorable, but Vanessa Redgrave, John Gielgud, Ralph Richardson, John Mills, Laurence Olivier, Susannah York and Dirk Bogarde all contribute uniquely. (Tonight at 8, Biological Sciences Auditorium, Duke.)

"Othello"—The Laurence Olivier-in-blackface version. The good things are a fine Shakespearean play and a good cast, including Maggie Smith as Desdemona and Frank Finlay as a wonderfully villainous Iago. The bad thing is Olivier's insistence on racial realism through heavy application of what looks like shoe polish from head to toe. With every kiss of Desdemona, we can't help looking for smudges. (Carolina Union Free Flick, Sunday at 8:30, the Great Hall.)

"Paul and Michelle"—There was a quietly unassuming little film in 1971 about a couple of young teenagers who ran away from their unhappy home lives to the French countryside, where they lived together, conceived, delivered their baby and were separated. It was called "Friends" and it had

music by Elton John and it was okay. This is the sequel. (Playing all week, at the Carolina.)

"Serpico"—Undoubtedly the year's best cop film, with a great performance by Al Pacino as Frank Serpico, who blew the whistle on corruption within the New York Police Department. His is an intense, grand performance well worth seeing, and Sidney Lumet's film is gripping. (Starts Wednesday, at the Varsity.)

"The Sting"—Audiences love being conned, even by big, overrated entertainments such as "The Sting." (Continuing, at Plaza 2.)

"Yellow Submarine"—A delightful cartoon excursion with a real Nowhere Man and lots of other goodies and (blue) meanies. (Late Show, Friday and Saturday, at the Carolina.)

Theatre

"My Fair Lady." Village Dinner Theatre, Raleigh. Buffet at 6:45, curtain at 8:20. \$11 Friday and Saturday, \$9.50 Sunday. Call 787-7771 for reservations.

"Look We've Come Through." Fred Theatre, Duke. Curtain at 8:15 Friday, Saturday and Sunday. \$2.50 adults, \$2 students.

Nightlife

Steve Ball Band. Town Hall. Friday and Saturday at 9. \$1.

South Wing. Town Hall. Monday at 9. \$1. Doug Clark and His Hot Nuts. Tiffany Lounge. Friday and Saturday at 9. Call 929-2171 for reservations.

Ezra Storm. The Pier, Raleigh. Friday and Saturday at 9. \$2, \$3 a couple. Jerry Coker Jazz Quintet. Frog & Nightgown, Raleigh. Friday and Saturday at 8:30. \$2.50 Friday, \$3 Saturday.

Bluegrass With Diamond Reo. Frog & Nightgown, Raleigh. Monday at 8:30. \$1. Mike Cross. The Cave. Friday at 9:30. \$1. A.C. Bushnell and Mike Kott. The Cave. Saturday at 9:30. \$1.

Parties

Birthday party for Assistant Features Editor CB Gaines and Dental Hygienist Cindy Everett this afternoon and tonight at the home of Ms. Everett, 40 Davie Circle. Come around back. Beer while it lasts. And music.

'Walking' takes stand

by Peter Hardy
Film Critic

For one reason or another I didn't get around to seeing *Walking Tall* any of the other times it played here in town, but I've finally found what the "Most talked about movie of the year" (last year, actually) is all about.

I can see why people get so worked up about it. Here you have big, tough Buford Pusser (you've got to admit it's a terrific name) going around fighting a corrupt system in his Tennessee county and cleaning up the whole place practically by himself. He loses dearly loved ones and survives a knifing and several shootings, and it's mostly true to boot!

Buford is played by manly—but warm—Joe Don Baker and it's easy to see why the audiences love him as he goes around bashing heads with his big stick, which he carries with him even in court. He's a rough customer, but it's OK because he never beats to a pulp, runs down with his car or just plain blasts holes through anybody that doesn't really deserve it.

He's human, too, and you can tell because he's not afraid to cry like a baby when his dog gets killed. He shows great remorse when he's forced to shoot a woman and never gives in to corrupting offers, even from friendly call girls.

I can't find it in myself to hate this movie, even though it started out inspiring but soured long before the ending where the townspeople come and burn the corrupt gambling club themselves. Sure it leans towards fascism, but many modern films advocate (if only indirectly) ideas and attitudes just as offensive.

It could justifiably be argued that *Walking Tall* is crudely powerful enough to encourage vigilante justice, but I couldn't really say that I find that idea more distressing than the despair and moral malaise seen in most youth hit films. *Walking Tall* is certainly not a very "intelligent" film, but *The Graduate*, *Little Big Man* or *The Paper Chase* were not very long on intelligence either.

It is an often mawkish and sentimental film, but then it is never glib or cynically evasive as many popular films are. And when we get down to it, a real hip film like *Clockwork Orange* advocated violence and

sexual abuse just for the pure fun of it.

And even though Buford Pusser is maniacally revengeful at times, he's still a more admirable hero than slugs like Ben Braddock or Billy Pilgrim. So which poison do we choose? Either you throw out the majority of movies being made today as being morally corrupt, you accept a mere few, like the people who don't go to see anything but Walt Disney films, or you accept them all. I don't find any of these suggestions satisfactory, and so I try not to think about it except when films like *Walking Tall* bring the problem to the fore.

Is Buford Pusser worse than Dirty Harry because he sadistically makes his traitor deputy crawl and beg for mercy simply for the sake of revenge, while Dirty Harry sadistically ground his heel into a killer's wound in order to gain life or death information? On the other hand, are these two fanatical idealists really worse than Billy Pilgrim who never takes a stand on anything?

Shall we choose *Walking Tall* which takes a moral stand to a dangerous degree, or morally idiotic films like *Slaughterhouse Five*? I know I'm talking in extremes, and that there are still films in the middle range, but I fear that they are in danger of becoming extinct.



Skull days

You better walk tall or you won't walk at all, as this guy would say.

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