

Poor scripts hamper summer flicks

By TOM MOORE
Staff Writer

Were the movies this summer really as bad as I thought they were or am I just getting old? After seeing such travesties as *Up The Academy*, *Wholly Moses*, *Fame* and *Bronco Billy* I contracted cinemophobia, a dreaded fear that I couldn't go to the movies without being thoroughly bored and disgusted.

I can't help feeling that maybe five years ago I would have liked a film like *Bronco Billy*. Now, however, I'm offended when filmmakers take the quick way out and just haphazardly throw together a film, thinking the public will plunk down a few bucks for anything that's well advertised.

Cinema

The majority of contemporary American films are super-budget jobs aimed at the lowest common denominator. The studios try to please everybody. The result is often similar to a McDonald's Big Mac, a rather bland, unexciting and inoffensive concoction.

For example, *The Blues Brothers* sacrifices its potential madcap trying to please a mass audience. The resulting tame spirit produces a very dull movie and Universal has little hope of getting back the \$30 million it sank into the picture.

The problem with movies of late can't be blamed entirely on the timidity of the studios. Recently, most of the really mediocre and flawed movies can trace their problems to a bad script. *Bronco Billy*, *Wholly Moses*, *Fame*, *The Fiendish Plot Of Dr. Fu Manchu* and *Up The Academy* all have weak scripts without any interesting moments. Even the few enjoyable flicks this summer—*Rough Cut*, *The Blues Brothers*, *Airplane* and *Caddyshack*—are marred by clichés.

And bad scripts marred the most eagerly anticipated movies of the summer, *The Empire Strikes Back* and *The Shining*.

The Empire Strikes Back is a fun movie but it lacks the freshness of the original. *Star Wars* has an innocent air about it that is quite pleasant. It manages to be a rousing adventure film without being too self-righteous. *The Empire Strikes Back* takes itself more seriously than the first. Instead of being mere fun, *Empire* tries to throw in some watered-down Zen Buddhism in a razzle-dazzle display of excellent special effects. It is capped off with an O. Henry ending designed expressly to bring folks back for the next one. Without *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back* couldn't stand on its own—a truism of most sequels. If George Lucas wants to continue filming the *Star Wars* saga, then he should, like the James Bond series, make each film in the series strong enough to stand alone.

Newsweek dubbed Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* "the first epic horror film," but Gary Arnold of *The Washington Post* was closer to home when he said the film could have been titled "The Big Disappointment of 1980."

Brilliant technically, no other film contains such masterful hand-held tracking shots. *The Shining* is marred by its attempt to go beyond the mere horror film. Kubrick tries to make meaningful statements on reincarnation and the persistence of evil. Kubrick makes these themes vague and confusing.

Also, Kubrick tries to be funny. But most of the time Kubrick's humor is too elusive to be amusing. Near the end of the film, when Jack Nicholson is stalking around like some

crazed psychopath in a Grade D horror movie, the film is reduced to fairly witless parody. Pauline Kael once wrote, "when a great director dies he just takes pretty pictures" and this—judging from *Barry Lyndon* and *The Shining*—seems to be what's happened to Kubrick.

The most enjoyable film of the summer is Brian De Palma's *Dressed to Kill*. Most critics have called *Dressed to Kill* a rip-off of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*. It is; but it's a rip-off with enough style and wit to stand on its own.

Dressed to Kill has the same general premise as *Psycho*. A middle-aged woman is hacked to death with a knife by a psycho-killer. Then the killer is slowly tracked down and his identity, when revealed, is a real surprise.

But Hitchcock made his film because of the novelty of a shower murder and as a vehicle for his macabre sense of humor. (Sample line—Norman says to a hotel visitor, "Mother isn't feeling quite herself today.")

De Palma uses his film as homage to Hitchcock, as a vehicle for his deliciously pornographic wit and to display his virtuoso cinematic talents. *Dressed to Kill* features the best use of inserts, split screen and deep focus I've seen in some time. Besides the brilliant technical aspects, *Dressed to Kill* has quite a few scares as well as some very witty moments.

Things look less dreary for the fall. A new film written, directed and starring Woody Allen will be released at the end of September. What little word has leaked out about it implies the film is like *8 1/2*—about a film director who's reflecting on his life while making a movie.

And there's *One Trick Pony*, a film about an aging pop star, written by and starring Paul Simon. Martin Scorsese will have a new film out, *Raging Bull*, starring Robert De Niro in a story based on the life of boxing great Jake La Motta. And there will be new films from Jean-Luc Godard, Francois Truffaut and Akira Kurosawa.

But perhaps the best film news is that Orson Welles is starting work on a \$6 million film this fall. It is Welles', the aging boy wonder of American cinema, first Hollywood film in almost 25 years. And the fact Hollywood is willing to let him work again (although on a paltry budget compared to most films today) shows there is still some hope for movies.

Magic doesn't help in musical 'Xanadu'

By LAURA ELLIOTT
Arts Editor

Xanadu

*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.*

When Coleridge awoke from his dream and tried to pen his visions, he was interrupted by a visitor. Afterward, he could not remember the entirety of his poem. *Kubla Khan* remains a fragment. A tragedy.

It is also a bit of a tragedy that *Xanadu*, a new teeny-bopper hit starring the queen of the teeny-boppers, Olivia Newton-John, was ever completed. Even in his worst opium nightmares, Coleridge never would have pictured the apple-pie soprano as one of the inhabitants of his mystical paradise. Neither would he have imagined that *Xanadu* would evolve into a disco roller rink.

Cinema

Or maybe that is what he meant when he wrote:

*A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was
haunted
By woman waiting for her demon
lover.*

Newton-John certainly does a lot of wailing in this movie. And Michael Beck, her enamored lover, would probably have been more effective as a demon. His tough-guy image of *The Warriors* has difficulty meshing with the adolescent flavor of Newton-John and her film.

But enough of this cross reference: the movie and the poem are in different leagues.

Xanadu is another of those pop-culture extravaganzas which exploits a timeless myth and reduces it to 20th century banality.

Newton-John is supposedly one of the nine Muses. Rather than inspiring poets spiritually, however, as those old-fashioned Muses of Greece did, she winks around on roller skates, provoking her artists with a teasing kiss. She's the glow-in-the-dark all-American modernization, leaving a trail of neon light behind her, Tinker-bell style.

After popping out of a Los Angeles street mural, Newton-John finds the frustrated artist, Beck, and inspires him to help an aging jazz clarinetist (Gene Kelly) to build a new club—*Xanadu*.

She entices Beck into loving her, singing "have to believe in magic" and smiling back over her shoulder like Lauren Bacall. I do believe Newton-John belongs somewhere other than on this earth.

Anyway, it is a new twist in romance. Beck even has to contend with an upbeat Zeus to win his lady fair. The film ends with Newton-John singing in her whispery voice and prancing about in everything from a cowboy to leopard suit. What will Hollywood think of next? The gods forbid.

The only saving grace is the endearing grin and the still supple dance of the legendary Gene Kelly. He obviously enjoys himself during the film—he always did have an art deco vein in him as evidenced by *American in Paris*. He adds a touch of legitimacy in the wild punk outfits in his dress shop debut. Even his charm, however, suffers a bit on roller skates.

Another miraculously good touch is the pas de deux cartoon. As kissing fish and flirting birds, Beck and Newton-John provide a few moments of true humor. It is a very clever and unfortunately short-lived stroke of creativity.

What *Xanadu* does provide is a visual aid to promote Newton-John's disco soundtrack. It has just the right formula of PG sexuality, cheesecake and punk-rock excitement to be a box office and recording success. I guess I have finally lost my faith in the Muses to prevent such disasters.



Jack Nicholson in 'The Shining'

Campus Calendar

Public service announcements must be turned in at the box outside the DTH offices in the Carolina Union by 1 p.m. if they are to run the next day. Each item will be run at least twice.

ACTIVITIES TODAY

Single tickets for UNC football may be picked up today and Thursday. One student may pick up two tickets if he has all the necessary identification for himself and the other person. All remaining tickets go on sale Friday. Standing Room Only tickets will be available to students at the gate before the game on Saturday.

The Public Affairs Staff of WXYC will hold an organizational meeting at 5 p.m. in 203 Union. No radio experience is necessary.

Welcome back Phi Chi members! You are invited to attend an informal organization meeting for all members of the Undergraduate Psychology Honors Society. We will meet at 7:30 p.m. in the Wallack Room, Davis Hall.

The UNC Pre-Law Club will hold an organizational meeting at 3:30 p.m. in 203 Union. All students interested in a law career are invited.

The UNC Water Polo Club will practice today and Thursday, 9 p.m. in Bowman Gray Pool. All invited, no experience necessary. The club will practice Friday at 1:10 p.m. in the pool.

The Media Board will meet at 5 p.m. in 203 Howell. Contact football! The Carolina Football Club invites interested students and faculty to play football this semester. Opponents in a 10 game schedule include State, Duke, UNC-G and UNC-W. There will be practice today and Thursday at 8:30 p.m. on Ehringhaus Field. This is in preparation for our Friday season-opener.

All-Campus Weekly Prayer meeting will be soon in the Student Union. Please check the Union desk for room number. All are welcome to come and pray for campus needs. Please check the change in time from last week.

AESEEC will have a meeting for all old members 6 p.m. in front of Carroll Hall.

The Astronomy Club presents the film "Universe" at 7:00 p.m. Thursday in 247 Phillips. Plans for the year will be discussed. All are welcome.

The Federal Republic of Germany has a national election on Oct. 5. The campaign between Helmut Schmidt (SPD) and Franz Josef Strauss (CSU) has been a heated one and the results will have a profound impact on international politics. This is the topic for an informal discussion at the International Center Coffee Hour at 3:00 p.m. in the Center's new office in the Union. All are invited.

Persons interested in the UNC Debate Team are invited to attend an organizational meeting or to contact Dr. Bahthrop in 101 Bingham Hall.

The Omega Phi Phi Fraternity, Inc. has 100 seats to the Furman game. To get a seat, take your I.D. and athletic pass to the 4th concession stand in Carmichael Auditorium and ask for Omega Phi Phi. If you are taking a date, take your date's I.D. and athletic pass and yours and get your tickets.

Be a Volunteer for John Unsworth's Presidential Campaign. Come to tonight's meeting at 7:30 in 101 Greenville.

UPCOMING EVENTS

A meeting for all interested in Fulbright Scholarships for graduate study or research abroad will be Thursday at 4:30 p.m. in 569 Hamilton Hall.

All Alpha Chi Sigma brothers meet at 6:30 p.m. Thursday in 302 Rollinwood Apts. for letter stuffing. Regular meetings will resume next week on Thursday nights at 7:30 in 221 Venable.

Lambda, the CGC newsletter, is meeting Thursday at 7:30 p.m. in 209 Union. Everyone is welcome.

The Undergraduate History Association will hold an organizational meeting Thursday at 8:00 p.m. in 306 Saunders. Anyone with an interest in history is urged to attend.

The Gallery Committee of the Union Activities Board will meet Thursday at 4:30 p.m. in 217 Union. People interested in joining the committee are invited to attend.

A "Campus Media Forum" will be presented by UNC's Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, to allow students to hear representatives of various campus media. SPI, SDJ, SDX business meetings will follow Thursday at 4:00 p.m. in 203-204 Howell Hall. All current and prospective members are invited.

Those interested in working on the SHE magazine staff should come to the meeting Thursday at 3:00 p.m. in the Frank Porter Graham Lounge in the Union. Writers and photographers are needed.

Sea Level album just batch of reshaped tunes

By ROB MONATH
Staff Writer

Ball Room

Sea Level has gone commercial. Their new album, *Ball Room*, instead of offering another innovative blend of funk, jazz and Southern rock, dishes out a sorry batch of reshaped tunes. Most of the cuts borrow unoriginal, but often profitable, musical formulas which incorporate the most cliché elements of

the musical genres mentioned above.

Davis Causey (guitar) and Randall Bramblett (keyboards, sax and vocals) composed the majority of songs on the album. Their three-chord rocker, "Wild Side," is so passified by excessive studio effects that it loses the very rawness needed to make this otherwise repetitive and predictable song click.

Likewise, "School Teacher," their attempt at uptempo Southern Boogie, is hampered by vague lyrics. It represents another well-mixed but uninspiring tribute to the commercial "accomplishments" of past artists from this musical mode.

Records

Bramblett and Causey even approach the pop side of the Eagles on "Comfort Range," a standard ballad whose trivial lyrics warrant all the false emphasis and sincerity Bramblett waxes into them.

Lamar Williams' instrumental composition, "Struttin'," couples his own funky bass riffs with mellow guitar, keyboard and saxophone harmonies. Unfortunately, the group doesn't fill out the song with any noteworthy improvisation. As the song stands, "Struttin'" could make an excellent soundtrack to a slide show or serve some other general background purpose.

Former Allman Brothers Band member Jai Johany Johanson has been



replaced on drums by Joe English, whose mundane pulse-setting and lame fill-ins make Johanson's absence from this album seem all the more crippling.

Keyboardist Chuck Leavell, also with ties to the Allman Brothers, contributes the only two cuts on the album which remind the listener of the band's past musical achievements.

Leavell's heartfelt lyrics mix with an intriguing progression on "Don't Want to be Wrong." But the absence of Leavell's accustomed fresh keyboard improvisation during all cuts is the final step in Sea Level's regression to a new constrictive, commercial format. A format which, for dedicated Sea Level fans, is quite a letdown to say the least.

ENERGY.
We can't afford to waste it.

St. Joseph's center presents lineup

The St. Joseph's Performance Center, 804 Fayetteville St., Durham, has an exciting lineup of films scheduled for the fall.

The list, versatile as ever, begins with the showing of Orson Welles' butchered classic, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, at 7 and 9:30 p.m. today. *Ambersons* traces the decline of a rich and influential family at the end of the 19th century. This was Welles' second film.

RKO feared that it would die at the box office like *Citizen Kane* so approximately 45 minutes was cut from his version. Despite the obvious tampering the film remains one of the greatest to come out of Hollywood.

St. Joseph's shows *The Ruling Class* on Sept. 10. The film stars Peter O'Toole and is a satire of British manners, morals and religion. *Ugetsu*, a Japanese film that blends reality and the supernatural in a story of two men who desperately pursue wealth and fame, will be shown Sept. 17. Rene Clement's *Purple Noon*, a thriller that involves Alain

Delon in a complex triangle, is scheduled for Sept. 24.

On Oct. 1, St. Joseph's presents an evening of short films. *The Battle of Algiers*, Gillo Pontecorvo's documentary-style film about the Algerian struggle against French colonialism, will be aired Oct. 8. On Oct. 15, Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon get on each other's nerves in *The Odd Couple*.

Fellini's *The White Sheik*, a comedy about a Valentino-like movie star, is scheduled for Oct. 22. On Oct. 29, as a special Halloween treat, St. Joseph's will show Peter Bogdanovich's *Targets*. This thriller is about an aging horror star (Boris Karloff) who is brought together with a crazed killer. *The Collector*, William Wyler's adaptation of John Fowles' novel about a butterfly collector who collects a woman, will be presented Nov. 5. *The Loved Ones*, will be shown Nov. 12. It's a far-reaching satire with Jonathan Winters, Robert Morse, Rod

Steiger and Liberace that's billed as "the motion picture with something to offend everyone."

Rene Clement's anti-war film, *Forbidden Games*, will be shown Nov. 19. It's about two children who play a strange game and use a group of farmers who bury dead soldiers as role models. Luis Bunel's *Nazarin*, about a priest confronted with the difference between religion and humanism, is scheduled for Dec. 3. And the final film in the series is Mel Brooks' hilarious movie, *The Producers*. It will be presented Dec. 10. *The Producers* stars Zero Mostel and Gene Wilder as two Broadway producers who have a sure way to riches—sell more than 100% of the play to backers, put the money into a real loser and pocket the extra funds. But things don't work as they planned.

For ticket information call 682-3453.

—TOM MOORE

KRISSA

GREEK RESTAURANT

has the atmosphere
...the excitement
and
EXOTIC BELLY DANCERS
(Every Tues., Thurs., and Sat.-7:30-11:00 pm)
300 B. Rosemary St. (Beside PTA Pizza)

Interfraternity Council
Invites You To

Open House

Tonight

7-10 p.m.

All Houses Will Be Open to
Any Interested Student

Trunk Shows Provided
See Posters in Dorms

Class

"Targa by Sheaffer"™ puts it in writing.

Elegantly styled and precision crafted, Targa by Sheaffer lets you write your own fashion statement.

Available as a fountain pen, rolling ball pen, ballpoint, pencil or gift sets in beautiful 23K gold electroplate or striking sterling silver.

Straight line design
rolling ball pen
and ballpoint set **\$25.00**

Not Pictured:
Geometric Design
Fountain Pen \$20.00
Geometric Design
Ballpoint \$12.50

there's more in your
STUDENT STORES