

'Racing With the Moon' not that bad for promising scriptwriter's first effort

A couple of years ago, as a freshman at UCLA, Steven Kloves decided that college life just wasn't his cup of tea. He dropped out the following year to pursue his "absolute passion for movies" by writing and submitting screenplays. At least one of them, he hoped, would catch the eye of a production company, which would then make a major motion picture out of it.

Right. A college dropout becoming a Hollywood screenwriter overnight. Fat chance, Kloves.

Well, it so happens that one of his screenplays did indeed catch the eye of a production company — Paramount — and the result of their collaborative toil is *Racing With the Moon*, a romantic drama starring Sean Penn and Elizabeth McGovern.

And it isn't that bad. The story takes place in the fictional northern California town of Point Muir, and the year is 1942. "Hopper" (Nash Penn) and his buddy Nicky (Nicolas Cage), two high school seniors, have enlisted in the U.S. Marines to assist Uncle Sam's war efforts. As the movie opens, Hopper and Nicky have only six weeks left until they have to report to boot camp.

Nicky wants to spend his last days of civilian life chasing as many skirts, cheap thrills, beers, etc., as possible. But his

Ed Brackett

Review

good times are soon spoiled by the accidental pregnancy — for which he is responsible — of Sally (Suzanne Adkinson), an erstwhile girlfriend of his.

Hopper, on the other hand, spends his so-called "last days of freedom" in other, less selfish ways. He is not nearly as interested in skirt-chasing as he is in finding himself.

Enter Caddie (McGovern), the cute, cherubic ticket-taker at the local movie theater. Initially Hopper can only admire Caddie from afar by anonymously sending her flowers or secretly watching her dance along Point Muir's scenic coastline. The two eventually meet, and they hit it off right away.

For Nicky, however, the problem of Sally's pregnancy remains. Not being one given to marriage, Nicky frantically tries to raise enough money for an abortion in the month left before he must leave. Eventually he does so with the help of Hopper and Caddie, and Sally's abortion is performed in a trailer park during the dark of night.

Finally, the time comes for Hopper and Nicky to leave Point Muir and their former adolescent lives behind. They must now face a different reality — that of World War II.

The scenario of *Racing With the Moon* shows promise. The acting is good, and the characters aren't stereotypes.

While *Racing With the Moon* isn't that bad, it isn't that good, either.

The particulars of its scenario, for example, often drag. Some scenes are just plain boring while others, infused with get-out-your-hankies-and-cry music, are hopelessly sappy.

Penn is an excellent actor — the same goes for McGovern — but at times Kloves' script makes him look too much like an offensive Mr. Joe Cool.

And director Richard Benjamin is not exactly an avid practitioner of the art of cinema. His direction is merely so-so and adds little to the movie.

But Kloves, at the mere age of 23, shows promise. He at least *tried* to write an intelligent script with a certain "soul" to it, and in the most basic sense he succeeded in doing so. Maybe in the future he will pay more attention to some of the finer details.

On the balance, though, *Racing With the Moon*, like Mt. Everest, is just "there."



Sean Penn tries to keep balance at a local skating rink in a scene from 'Racing With the Moon' ...The movie is about two high school seniors preparing to go to boot camp during World War II



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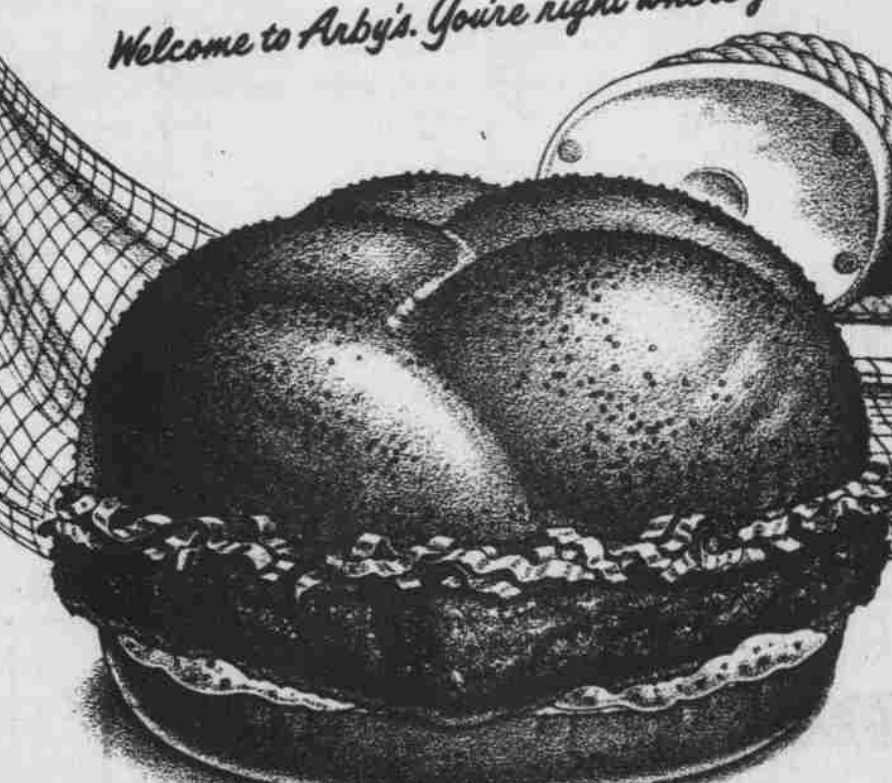
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