

Violence essential spark in 'Mississippi Burning'

By **KIMBERLY EDENS**
University Editor

"Mississippi Burning" is a frightening and moving film; its portrayal of the Civil Rights Movement and black-white relations in the 1960s is as telling about the 1980s as it is about the 1960s. But rather than a story of American history, it is more a story of human nature.

How can any man kill someone simply for working toward freedom?

It is hard for those of us who did not experience the violence and turmoil of the '60s to grasp the fact that this hatred routinely manifested itself; the lynching and bombings seem so horrible as to be remote, removed from our notion of "America" and what it

"... At seven year's of age, if you're told it enough times, you believe it. You believe the hatred. You live it. You breathe it. You marry it."

— Mrs. Pell

The movie revolves around the murder of three civil rights workers in Jessup County, Mississippi, and is based on a true story. But the movie will not be famous for its reproduction of the facts; there are several inconsistencies between the film and the truth. The movie is not a documentary and does not pretend to be; the murder is more important as a representation of the violence of the movement than as a specific detail.

The violence in the movie is excessive; the explosions, beatings and murders are so numerous that they become repetitive, almost gratuitous. One of our own DTH pundits called it "Rambo-esque." It is disturbing, and perhaps Director Alan Parker intended it that way. But it seems to go even deeper. The biggest question, the one that lies at the heart of this film, is "Why?" As Ward asks, "Where does it come from — all this hatred?"

stands for. The violence is essential; without it, how could the audience truly conceive of the horror of the time?

The violence becomes important in another way. Gradually, as each church is blown up and each black man threatened, the audience became less shocked and more angry, more tolerant of violence. People began cheering retaliatory violence against the white supremacists. And eventually, even the FBI — which, questionably, is made out to be the hero — decides to resort to violence to solve the case. Even Mr. Ward, the idealist incarnate, agrees that the most effective way is the Klan's way, when Mr. Anderson explains it this way: "These people crawled out of the sewers, Mr. Ward, maybe the gutter is the place we have to be." When you are surrounded by this kind of violence, it is almost impossible to remain above it.



Gene Hackman (Rupert Anderson) and Willem Dafoe (Alan Ward) star in "Mississippi Burning."

Mrs. Pell, who is both a spiritual and physical victim of this hatred, although she herself is not possessed by it, also explains its source: "... At seven years of age, if you're told it enough times, you believe it. You believe the hatred. You live it. You breathe it. You marry it." She thus explains to us where all the hatred came from — ourselves. She does not excuse it, rationalize it or minimize it. But she makes it understandable. None of us are above it — even those of us who believe we are the most liberal and egalitarian souls, and are most revolted by the KKK, the hatred and all it stands for.

But perhaps Mississippi Burning's most important message, rather than on the Movement or the '60s or on violence, is about race relations in the 1980s, and how our decade looks at the decade that produced all of this violence. Movies like "Platoon" and its spinoffs, and television shows such as "China Beach" and "Tour of Duty" have focused our eyes on the 1960s. It is a difficult and sensitive time to evaluate, because of the mark it left on our collective psyche. "Mississippi Burning" provides no easy answers, but it does bring the '60s a little bit closer to those of us who have

only experienced them second-hand.

The film is far from perfect; in fact, it is sorely lacking in a very sensitive area: its portrayal of blacks. The blacks of Jessup County just want the FBI to go away and leave them alone; they take no active role in their own salvation. The movie gives all the credit to the FBI for solving the case, which is not only factually questionable but symbolically confusing. But the movie is less about race, and more about our capacity to be influenced to the most abominable of crimes — and it makes a very convincing argument.

Lucinda Williams' simple, eloquent LP deserves an audience

By **DOUG EDMUNDS**
Staff Writer

Lucinda Williams — Lucinda Williams

I'll be the first to admit that I'm a shameless fan of good old-fashioned three-minute pop songs, the kind in which the verse, chorus and middle eight blend together seamlessly and the melody sticks in your head after one listen. "Paperback Writer," "Walk Away Renee," "Shake Some Action," "I Want You Back" and "Accidents Will Happen" are but a few good examples of this kind of classic pop nugget. "Passionate Kisses" off the new, self-titled Lucinda Williams LP is another fine example. This song is so damn catchy and her voice so pretty that hearing it made me want to risk the eight bucks and check out the whole album.

I'm pleased to say I was not at all disappointed. The 12 tracks on this record range from upbeat pop to country-style ballads to blues, and yet everything fits together nicely; nothing sounds contrived. Much of the credit for this mix is due to Williams herself, whose

versatility as a songwriter and vocalist is shown throughout. She handles the gentle melody of "Like a Rose" as easily as the honky-tonk lament in "Am I Too Blue" or the dirty blues howling in "I Asked For Water (He Gave Me Gasoline)."

Her three-piece band also deserves some credit for its understated, solid musical support. Gurf Morlix fleshes out the arrangements with 12-string guitar, pedal steel, mandolin and dobro, while Dr. John Ciambotti on bass and Donald Lindley on drums lay down steady, uncluttered rhythms. One look at these guys on the inner sleeve is enough to convince you that they're more interested in making quality music than becoming pop stars.

Lyrical, Williams doesn't try anything fancy. Her words are simple and honest and say what she means without getting overly sentimental or self-pitying. In "Changed the Locks" she writes about trying to shake off an unwanted lover. She changes not only the locks but also "the number on my phone... the kind of clothes I wear," and in the final

verse: "I changed the name of this town/So you can't touch me like before/And you can't make me want you more."

"Side of the Road" is a beautiful lyric about needing time apart from a lover, with lines like this: "If only for a minute or two/I wanna see what it feels like to be without you/I wanna know the touch of my own skin/Against the

sun, against the wind."

It's interesting that the LP is on Rough Trade Records, since it is more likely to be played on country stations than your average college or alternative outlets. With any luck, however, *Lucinda Williams* will find its way onto all kinds of play lists.

So, for those of you who like a bit of variety or who value musical

integrity more than popularity (not to mention all you fans of the three-minute wonder tune), shuffle on down to the platter shop and purchase this gem — or, at the very least, call WXYC and ask them to play something from it. Albums as simple and unflashy as this one too often are overlooked. I've done my part to prevent that. Now it's your turn.

Fast, Free Delivery!

Choice of crusts:
whole wheat or original



968-FAST
968-3278

Collect
Gumby Pizza Club Cards!
Collect 10 cards & receive a
FREE
12" one-item pizza!

Gumby Dammitt
12" One-Item Pizza

\$4²⁵

Double Dammitt
Two 12" Cheese Pizza

\$7⁰⁰
\$1.25 for toppings
on both pizzas

Gumby ZAP!
16" One-Item Pizza

\$6³⁷