

# 'Patton' A Top 10 Flick

"Patton" will probably be on most critics' list of 1970's ten best films, and it deserves to be. Certainly it is one of the best films to come to Chapel Hill this year.

"Patton's" subject is pretty well expressed in its title. It's about General George Patton, an American general, lover of military pomp and ceremony, aristocrat, authoritarian, poet, mystic, and glory-seeker; a truly religious, truly profane man; and a man, ultimately, who combined the technical expertise of a tank commander with a yearning for "the medieval grace/Of iron clothing." Patton is the stuff adventure films—and tragedies—are made of. That the movie "Patton" hesitates and then commits itself to the first category is perhaps indicative of the tastes of today's movie-going audience. But, considering the usual Chapel Hill fare, who are we to complain?

George C. Scott turns in an Oscar-caliber performance as the general. Scott is at stage-center for nearly all the three hours of the film. But he fills that stage, and manages to catch the nuances of Patton's personality as well as its titanic force and magnetism.

Director Frank Schaffner has done a fluent, sometimes brilliant job. Patton is a believer in reincarnation; and Schaffner, especially in the North African part of the film, communicates a sense of the enormity of time: that Patton's war is merely one of many that have been fought, bled for, and forgotten on the unchanging face of the Tunisian desert.

Jerry Goldsmith's music is also particularly effective. His slightly off-key and distant trumpet strikes exactly the right mood, as Schaffner's camera focuses on the salient detail or image: the Kasserine Pass, in Tunisia, where an

American tank column has been annihilated. The camera focuses first on a small hillock topped by a vulture, then moves to a dead and partially stripped soldier, with scorpions crawling over him. Only then does it scan the entire, eerily quiet scene: wrecked tanks, guns, armored vehicles; and dead, almost non-human soldiers, being stripped by Bedouin women. Last, the camera moves back to a dog tied to a now disabled tank, its master dead. The scene is almost unlocated, or located only in time, as an emblem of war.

Similarly effective are the film's battle sequences. There are just two. The second is a night battle. We see only the beginning of the fighting, the glare of explosions, and the terrifying image of soldiers hurrying through the darkness, lighted only by the bursting shells. The first battle is brilliantly executed but it's

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also the key to "Patton's" extreme limitations.

This sequence is a general's-eye view of an ambush Patton's tanks lay for a German panzer battalion. As far as it goes, it works. But it raises the question of how well and to what purpose the movie comments on Patton's personality. No observer, and surely no movie, can be completely objective, if only because both are finite. "Patton" tries to be objective about its protagonist's character, and, on one level, succeeds about as fully as possible. But on a second level it fails totally. It fills the screen with the multifaceted character into the world, how it is affected by and how it reacts to the man.

Hence, the battles take on an impersonal quality. By battle, I mean those presented and those many more talked about. Patton's great drive through Sicily, for instance: it is strongly implied that the drive conduces to nothing but Patton's glory, and to human suffering in general. It is implied, but the point is never driven home. The movie sweeps us on so quickly that we soon forget about

it in the noise and spectacle of Patton's triumph.

This points up a second problem in the film: the unnatural degeneration of everyone else. As Patton becomes more formidable, his subordinates, superiors, friends, rivals, and enemies all cease to act as human beings; they become images, and in this case improper ones, of the everyday world which Patton is bucking, and which eventually will destroy him.

General Montgomery becomes a squirt in short pants, Rommel remains a name to conjure with, but only a cardboard rival for the American general. The film's signal failure in casting the role of Gen. Omar Bradley is rooted in this bias. Bradley is played by Karl Malden, who is—well, Karl Malden. He is simply ineffectual. Yet, Bradley is the closest the movie comes to having a raisonneur, a voice of reason. When Bradley tells his brilliant but erratic subordinate, "George, you are a pain in the neck!" the result is only the enlargement of Patton's character. If you didn't know he was a genius, you know now.

I don't mean to make either too much or too little of these criticisms. They call attention to major flaws in "Patton," flaws which keep it from even approaching a great film. They cripple it intellectually.

It has been said that "Patton" is a sop to the silent majority; and it's a fact that President Nixon has seen it two or three times, and made his advisers see it, because he finds a moral in Patton's sense of leadership and vigor. Yet, for all his magnetism and ability, Patton is also a confused child. He loves playing at war, ordering people around, dramatizing his own personality. He is, as his first marvelous speech shows, an incipient fascist.

It's all there in George C. Scott's portrayal. "Patton," for all its faults, is a very good movie, just as its subject, at his chosen profession, was a professional. But Patton would have recognized why the movie never realizes or even approaches its potential. It doesn't try. It hasn't got the guts.



'You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown,' Thursday, 8 p.m., Memorial Hall.

# Carmichael's Abyss Ruins Music

by Frank Parrish  
Feature Writer

Ten Wheel Drive zapped everybody with volume. The group was loud enough to shake Carmichael's rafters. Richie Havens danced exuberantly, using his guitar as a prop. The Ike and Tina Turner Revue left some onlookers with impressions of flickering lights and swirling dresses.

Concert-goers were treated to spectacle but bedeviled by sound, either

nonexistent, excessive or sporadic. Ten Wheel Drive, which produced abundant decibels, brought its own sound system. Its set completed, the outfit left stage and took amplifiers with it.

Enter Richie Havens. The directional miking had been shifted. Amps had been hurriedly placed. It was virtually impossible to mix sound in the confusion. Richie Havens had to rush on stage. His voice was heard occasionally by those in the more distant seats.

Then, the Ike and Tina Turner Revue came to Carmichael for the second fall concert. The Turners' act had lots of instrumentation and no less than five voices. Result: lyrics were garbled or unheard and the band played on.

The Carmichael experience has belied rumors that musical concerts entertain the ears. After the first two concerts, some savage beasts left unsoothed and unsatisfied.

Yet it would undoubtedly be unfair to curse the wretched sound system. The problem of seeing and believing but not hearing in Carmichael is a longstanding one.

According to Howard Henry, Director of the Carolina Student Union, the difficulty in hearing is essentially caused by Carmichael. "It was built for basketball," Henry said. He observed that the stage's location tends "to compress sound rather than expanding it." The Union owns eight A7500 speakers which admittedly are not "totally adequate for the hardest driving rock group outside."

Indoors, within Carmichael's confines, Henry said, "There is difficulty regardless of who plays there." The Union director said the acoustical problem would be self-evident if you went into an empty Carmichael, snapped your fingers and listened to the three-second echo. "I don't think that the room will ever be worth a damn until it's completely deadened. If you could kill all the reverb in the room, the sound system would work much better, Henry said.

He estimated it would cost between \$60,000 and \$70,000 to put acoustical tiling on the ceiling. Painting the beams with acoustic paint would cost about \$15,000 or \$20,000. "The ceiling is a peculiar material," Henry said. It shifts during the summer. A paint job might end later in "flaking" and "it might not last," according to Henry. Henry said the paint would only be a "temporary solution."

Is there any other logical place to hold concerts? Probably not.

"We're stuck for big acts," Henry said. "We made Led Zeppelin a \$25,000 offer and they weren't even mildly interested," he explained.

Top acts demand top dollar. Heavyweights like Zeppelin don't want their pockets lightly touched. Ticket sales must match a group's reputation and its corresponding worth. The paying audience must be seated somewhere.

"There's no other place for concerts," Henry said. He noted that Memorial Hall only seats about 1640 although it was designed with listening in mind. Anyway, the sound hasn't been consistently atrocious in Carmichael. Henry remembered, "The Fifth Dimension used some of their sound equipment and a lot of ours." Their sound, he observed, was not lost.

Chicago will bring its own system. The throng which waited patiently for tickets might anticipate improved hearing at Chicago's performance.

Carmichael itself remains the chief obstacle. The Union director said there has never been any friction between an act's sound crew and the Union's. "In fact, we have tried to incorporate their suggestions," Henry said.

In the meanwhile, sound men will continue to roll their systems into Carmichael's waiting abyss. Unlike Sisyphus, who rolled stones uphill in Greek mythology, they will probably achieve their goal occasionally.

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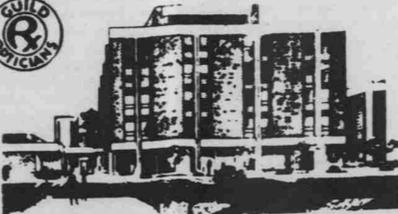
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