

Super flicks

Studios bring out ones to talk about for holidays

By ANTHONY SEIDEMAN

You can see signs of it everywhere. The extra-slick ads on *Saturday Night Live*, the bulging trade newspapers and the brighter covers on the gossip magazines all indicate that the annual Christmas film flood is ready to roll across America. Fourteen full-length feature films will be released this Christmas, and chances are good that you may find one or two to suit your taste.

Superman is the most noticeable of the bunch, partly because it is so big. Produced at a cost a deep shade over \$35 million, the film is forming the core of a fairly large industry dedicated to the exploitation of the man of steel.

In an attempt to add some class to the picture, the producers have latched on to some real names like Mario Puzo, who worked on the screenplay, and Marlon Brando, who plays the father of the tot of steel. Also present are Glenn Ford, Margot Kidder as Lois Lane and newcomer Christopher Reeves, as Superman.

The publicity barrage for this film is so heavy that if you read anything other than textbooks between now and break, you'll hear about it. If you're into hype, you'll be into *Superman*, and even if you aren't, with all that talent around there's a good chance a decent film might result. You'll have to wait until Dec. 15,—when the film opens nationwide—to find out.

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No year could possibly be complete without a Neil Simon film with a star-studded cast, and this Christmas we'll have both in

cinema

California Suite.

The movie features Jane Fonda, Walter Matthau, Bill Cosby, Alan Alda, Michael Cane, Richard Pryor and Elaine May and is directed by Herbert (Turning Point, Goodbye Girl) Ross.

California Suite is a collection of several unconnected stories, except for the fact that they take place in the same hotel suite.

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Lord of the Rings is a convoluted, complex yet fascinating creation that manages to do a great deal of justice to Tolkien's trilogy.

Ralph Bashki directed the film, and his animation goes one step farther than any recent animated film has gone, achieving a realism and intensity unequalled since Disney was at his best. Bashki's film is spectacular and it sticks to Tolkien's story. It sticks so well, in fact, that those who aren't familiar with the text will probably have a little trouble fitting the picture together.

Be forewarned that although *Lord of the Rings* is long—about two-and-a-quarter hours—its title should be *Lord of the Rings Part I*. Frodo doesn't even get to the gates of Mordor. They're saving the best stuff for Part II. Let's hope Part I brings in enough money for Bashki to really do his stuff in the

second half.

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John Travolta is coming back, this time with Lily Tomlin in *Moment by Moment*, a role-reversal romance. And Susan Sarandon and Brooke Shields are back together again in *King of the Gypsies*.

As for the rest of the season's crop, it's quite a variety, with *Force Ten From Navarone* taking the action-adventure end and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* covering sci-fi horror.

Romantics won't be disappointed as Ryan O'Neal does a reprise in *Oliver's Story*, and a new fiction type—the "prequel"—is fitting into an old genre, the western, in the form of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid—The Early Days*.

Other productions include *The Brinks Job*, with Peter Falk; *Ice Castles*, with Robbie Benson; *Every Which Way But Lose*, starring Clint Eastwood; and *Brass Targets*, Sophia Loren and John Cassavettes leading. *The Deer Hunter* will open only in New York and Los Angeles; the producers must be hoping for some Academy Awards.

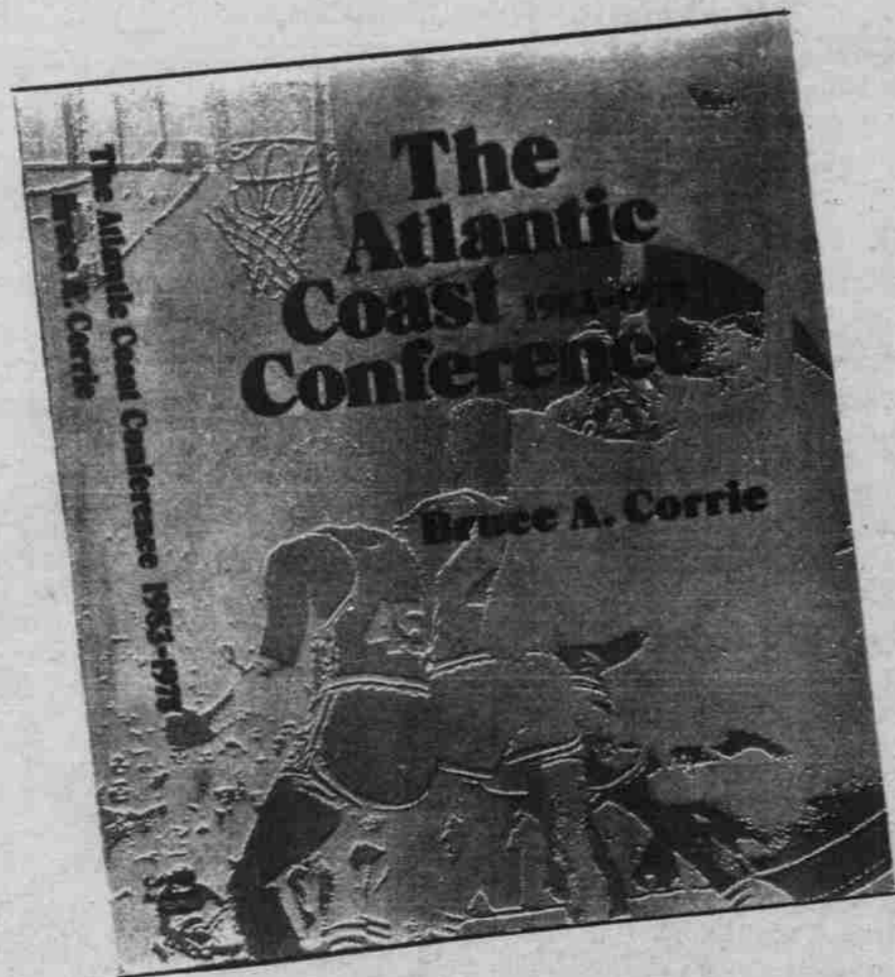
It should be an interesting Christmas. And I have a feeling that with all these new flicks a lot of people aren't going to be seeing much daylight.

Anthony Seideman is film critic for the Daily Tar Heel.



The man of steel

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