

CINEMA

Review:

The Falcon & the Snowman

Directed by John Schlesinger; screenplay by Steven Zaillian, based on the book by Robert Lindsey; with Timothy Hutton and Sean Penn.

Christopher Boyce was a product of the 60's, or at least that's the clue we get in the titles of *The Falcon and the Snowman*, which unfold over television images of historic events and figures from the decade of rebellion. Obviously director John Schlesinger is already working on Boyce's present motivations. After all, it isn't every ex-seminary student who sells US defense secrets to the Soviet Union.

Boyce (played by Timothy Hutton) is an exceedingly moral young man. When he learns of CIA interference in the democratic elections of ally Australia he decides there are limits to what can be considered national defense. He decides to even the global scorecard by filtering out plans for a secret spy satellite, in the works at the electronics plant where he is employed. The man he chooses to run the documents down to the Russian embassy in Mexico is childhood buddy Daulton Lee (Sean Penn), now a drug dealer who smuggles cocaine across the border.

Lee isn't too bright. Watching his lackadaisical approach to espionage and treason one wonders how he escaped prosecution from his drug-related activities. Lee wants to get rich and have fun, and his carelessness alienates both his Soviet contacts and Boyce, who blows up at him during a party. Boyce and Lee grow farther apart, due as much to the increased realization of their involvement in treason as to pure personality conflicts. They are simply from different worlds.

Schlesinger and screenwriter Steven Zaillian have created a strange bird in *The Falcon and the Snowman*. They take pains to give Boyce a political reason to commit treason, then turn the film into an apolitical spy thriller. The confessions scene at the denouement seems tacked on; Boyce mouths words he hasn't said since the opening minutes.

Yes, Schlesinger does seem more interested in the two young men than in their politics. They are well developed characters, given fascinating personalities by Hutton and Penn, and they could carry the film with simple self-explorations. But Schlesinger seems determined to give them a political context—Boyce, a reaction against the amoral international activities of the U.S. government, Lee, a slim patriotism that is overpowered by his love of money. Lee is the less complex and is handled well enough, but Boyce is inconsistent. He tells Lee he isn't interested in the money,

yet later he decides to make one last deal to squeeze the Russians for all he can get. He insists that the dangers of U.S. domination in the world has forced his hand; yet selling vital defense secrets to the world's other trigger-happy mega-power seems hardly the solution. It really isn't clear why in fact he's doing it, but Schlesinger and Zaillian play him as a hero of sorts. It seems a hardly valid position.

Despite the muddy thematic points of the story Schlesinger does provide an exciting tale, spiced with well written dialogue and tense action sequences. Hutton delivers a fine performance as Boyce and Penn is simply outstanding as the misfit Lee. Like a De Niro for the younger generation, he totally makes himself over into another persona for this role.

The problem with the film is Schlesinger's inability to define it. For all its political posturing, Boyce's own beliefs stay in the background and his change of attitude is never explored. Yet there are too few scenes with the two men together to develop their relationship fully (Boyce, in fact, spends more time with his girlfriend Lana, a character which might as well be non-existent as far as the screenplay is concerned). Too elusive to be totally satisfying, *The Falcon and the Snowman* is gripping and intriguing despite its flaws, but never as good as it promises to be.

—Sean Axmaker

NOW SHOWING

Amadeus: Mozart's music becomes a character in this lavishly filmed story of the playfully brazen child-man Mozart (Tom Hulce) and his mediocre musical rival Antonio Salieri (F. Murray Abraham). Cinema World (342-6536).

Beverly Hills Cop: Eddie Murphy is a Detroit cop who comes to Beverly Hills to solve the murder of his best friend. Directed by Martin Brest (*Going in Style*). Mayflower (345-1022) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

The Breakfast Club: Five high school students meet in the morning to spend the day in detention together and the antics of "The Breakfast Club" begin. John (Sixteen Candles) Hughes directs. Stars Molly Ringwald and Anthony Michael Hall (*Sixteen Candles*), Emilio Estevez (*The Outsiders*, *Repo Man*), Ally Sheedy (*War Games*) and Rick Moranis (*Ghostbusters*) as the janitor. National (344-3431).

Eureka: A tale told in mythic proportions. Gene Hackman is a gold prospector who strikes it rich in the Yukon and must later combat gangsters and a son-in-law who may be a sorcerer. Directed by Nicholas Roeg. Shows with *Repo Man*. Cinema 7, March 1-7 (687-0733).

The Falcon and the Snowman: True story of young idealist Christopher John Boyce, who, while working for TRW Corporation in 1974, decided (with friend Andrew Dalton Lee) to sell U.S. spy satellite data to the Soviets. Timothy Hutton (*Ordinary People*, *Ice Man*) plays Boyce, and Sean Penn (*Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, *Bad Boys*) plays Lee. Directed by John Schlesinger (*Yanks*). Springfield Quad (726-9073).

The Gods Must Be Crazy: Everyone knows that if a thing falls from the sky, it must be sent from the gods. This film has nothing to do with apartheid. A pilot flying an airplane over the Kalahari desert drops a coke bottle out the window which is found by Xi, a South African bushman. The significance attributed to the bottle is in direct proportion to its imagined source of origin. This delightful and funny story, playing to sell-out crowds in Seattle and San Francisco, was written and directed by Jimmie Uys. Bijou (686-2458).

The Killing Fields: This British film shows the transformation of Cambodia into a concentration camp after the American evacuation from Saigon. The true story of N.Y. Times correspondent Sydney Schanberg (Sam Waterston) and his Cambodian interpreter-friend Dith Pran (Haing S. Ngor). The men were separated and the journalist spent years trying to find Pran, who had been interred in the camps of the Khmer Rouge—the Killing Fields. British stage director Roland Joffe makes his film directorial debut. McDonald (344-4343).

Micki & Maude: Dudley Moore's wife (Ann Reinking of *All That Jazz*) is a hot-shot lawyer who won't let pregnancy interfere with her career. His girlfriend (Amy Irving, *Yentl*) gets pregnant, he marries her planning to divorce his wife, who, surprise!—is getting a visit from the stork. Blake "10" Edwards directs this good idea which could have been a good movie if

only... Shows with *Protocol* at the Fine Arts (747-2201).

Missing in Action: Action war film. Chuck Norris works toward the release of POW's missing in action from Vietnam. Shows with *The Beginning*. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Missing in Action, Part II: Another action war film, the story behind *Missing in Action* part I. West 11th Tri Cinema (342-4142).

Monarch of the Mountains: A nature film (G-rated) showing animals in their natural habitats, narrated by Slim Pickens. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Night Patrol: Comedian Pat Paulsen is a fellow policeman. "Ficer to a guy who is a cop by day and the unknown comic by night. Rumored to have some funny parts. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

A Passage to India: Set in a richly colored, politically fragile British Colonial India (1926), the story is an impassioned treatment of racially forbidden loves—one a deep and honorable friendship between two men, Indian Dr. Aziz and British schoolmaster Fielding (Victor Banerjee and James Fox); the other a forbidden yet uncontrollable connection between the vibrant Dr. Aziz and the beautiful Adele Quested (Judy Davis, *My Brilliant Career*). Maurice Jarre's music is a formidable character in this piece. West 11th Tri Cinema (342-4142).

Places in the Heart: Sally Field is a courageous young widow trying to hang onto her family and land in depression-era Texas. A moving and heart-warming story, written and directed by Robert Benton (*Kramer vs. Kramer*). Beautifully photographed by Nestor Almendros (*Kramer*, *Sophie's Choice*). Shows with *The River* at Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Protocol: Goldie Hawn seduces a Middle Eastern potentate and persuades him to permit placement of an American military base in his country. Directed by Herbert Ross (*Footloose*). Script by Buck Henry (*First Family*). Shows with *Micki & Maude* at the Fine Arts (747-2201).

Repo Man: One of last year's popular comic surprises. An angry and frustrated youth leaves his punker friends to follow the repo men and finds himself in the middle of a vaudevilian drama which includes dead alien corpses in one of the repo cars. (Not to mention the air force, generic food, generic mom 'n' dad, occasional quickie sex and other biting satirisms re: the world in which we live.) Shows with *Eureka*. Cinema 7 (683-0733).

Revenge of the Nerds: If your nose was too big in high school (or too small), you know what it's like to be an outcast. All the "uncool" underdogs who can't get into the primo fraternities form their own fraternity and get even. Bijou Late Nite (686-2458).

The River: Sissy Spacek and Mel Gibson fight the gov't. bureaucrats to protect their small Tennessee family farm in the early 1900's. Directed by Mark Rydell (*On Golden Pond*). Shows with *Places in the Heart* at Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Starman: Jeff Bridges is SO CUTE AND FUNNY as the "Lover from Another Planet" who materializes in the form of the dead husband of Karen Allen. Everyone likes this film. Good family fare. Shows with *2010* at the Oakway (342-5351).

The Sure Thing: Romantic comedy. A guy is hitchhiking to California to see his girlfriend and falls in love with his fellow hitchhiker—a girl

hitchhiking to California to see her boyfriend. Cinema World (342-6536).

Turk 182: Timothy Hutton (*Ordinary People*, *Ice Man*, *Falcon & the Snowman*) is furious when he discovers his brother has been denied his firefighter's pension as a result of an on-the-job injury. The "Turk" embarks on a one-man campaign to rally New York City behind his brother's cause. Directed by Bob Clark (*Porky's*). West 11th Tri Cinema (342-4142).

2010: More in the nature of *Star Trek* than *2001*, a well-done comic book film story. While Russia and the U.S. prepare to fight a war over a crisis in Honduras, a Russian craft with a Russian-American crew sets out to explore the circles of Jupiter. Directed by Peter Hyams. Oakway (342-5351).

Vision Quest: Romantic Comedy. A teenager is trying to win a wrestling scholarship to college and a girl disturbs his concentration. Cinema World (342-6536).

Witness: An American detective-love story from the Australian master of subliminal tension, Peter Weir (*Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *The Last Wave*, *Gallipoli*, *The Year of Living Dangerously*). Cultures clash as a 20th century police department meets 17th century agrarian-religious culture. Lukas Haas (*Testament*) is a young Amish boy who witnesses a murder. Investigating detective Harrison Ford (*Raiders*, *Indiana Jones*, *Star Wars*) discovers that police colleagues are involved in the murder, and hides out with the boy and his mother (Kelly McGillis, *Reuben, Reuben*) in Pennsylvania Amish Country, while a plan is devised. Cinema World (342-6536).

—S.R.

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