

'Sandpiper' Sincere Flop; Burtens Best at Kissing

By STEVE DIMEO
Entertainment Editor

To be free as a bird (genus *Actitis*) is what Richard Burton should be from Liz—at least in pictures, since she has seemed to do him a double bed of good at home.

But if it weren't for her, there wouldn't be embarrassing, episodic "Sandpipers" for Burton. Of course if it weren't for her, there wouldn't be pendulous protuberous and flaming flesh for ogling audiences. If it weren't for those, however, there would probably be no Liz.

Whatever "The Sandpiper" is as a result, it is a sincere attempt at the unconventional in subject matter.

Motif Skillful

The sandpiper motif is carried through with remarkable dedication and congruity. Significantly, when Burton first visits Liz (mother of Morgan Mason who has been forced to enroll in Burton's

parochial school), Liz is mending the broken wing of the bird. The bird makes its own prison in the beach house and is never completely free again. The only way to tame the sandpiper, says Liz (who is in fact the bird carnally incarnate), is to let it fly free and she lives to prove her remark.

Though not always smooth, photography of the Kim Novak country (Big Sur) is artful and pleasing except when the print reveals its dancing black lines (ironically, they can come from celluloid that's the run of the reel).

The story line abandons social convention with abandon when it has Burton desert the sham of a ministerial career and a happy marriage and compromise a natural, naturalistic painted painter to compromise himself in the end.

Flick Talkative

It's understandable that Martin Ransohoff and his team should be a bit self-conscious about producing a great picture after adding nearly 2 million dollars to the Burtens' Swiss bank account. But try as hard as they do, they have just not come up with art that entertains and says something—perhaps because the movie says it too often. It cannot talk itself into an artistic manifesto for moral renegades.

And the cast is helpless to help. Eva Marie Saint ("Exodus," "North by Northwest"), who does well with what she has, has nothing more than skin and bones to work with in her wronged-woman characterization. Charles Bronson ("The Great Escape") and Robert Webber are little more than dislikable creeps. Little James Mason, as Liz' truant bantling, does manage to show a bit of promise in his bit of a role.

Essentially, though, "The Sandpiper" is the Burtens' and the Burtens are hardly at their best.

Contrary to the script, it is Burton who proves himself the artist, not Liz. Males might gloat that Burton should be so un-American as to be stronger than his wife at least in acting. But it is only in spurts that Burton bares his genius. Most of the time it's laying latent there on the beach beside the hot flesh of Liz.

Liz herself is only infallible when she's smiling at Burton and may easily lead perceptive viewers to think she is thinking of after-take recesses.

In the love scenes, of course, both excel. Strangely enough, it's as if they'd put body and soul into practicing those scenes day and night. Truly admirable dedication to roles. They must have written in a few extra for good measure (and for good boxoffice action), for they come too often, too incongruous and hence lose any possible excitement value (and thus any value at all).

Life was already a nepenthe for the movie role Liz plays. The comingling of hers with Burton's is similar oblivion for Burton. "The Sandpiper" should be doomed to the same oblivion.



TETE-A-TETE, Dick and Liz contemplate nepenthe on a beach in Big Sur in a cut from "The Sandpiper," held over at the Heilig.

Thursday Feature Times

EUGENE DRIVE-IN: Genghis Khan—7:15; Cat Ballou—9:45.
FOX: Sound of Music—8.
HEILIG: Sandpiper—6:15, 10; Of Human Bondage—8:15.
McDONALD: Masquerade—6:15, 10; Marriage on the Rocks—8:05.

New Yorker To Sing at SU

Ronny McClean, a New York-born singer and harmonica player who has made appearances across the nation, will appear in concert in the Bottom-of-the-Bowl tonight at 8 p.m.

McClean, who prefers not to be called a folksinger, will be accompanied by Eugene's John Bunce on guitar.

The event will be sponsored by the Student Union Jazz Committee, and will replace the committee's scheduled concert. No admission will be charged.

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