

Battling a wild river in a wild land

a pig. Just as Ed is about to meet the same fate, Lewis (who was more prepared for the journey than any of the others—remember the message on his wet suit) fires a perfect center shot to kill one of the assailants with an arrow.

The second mountaineer gets away and leaves the four city men with their biggest dilemma—what to do with the obdy. While the other three are willing to hide the man in the woods, Drew holds out for taking him to the city and facing up to the establishment organizations. In so doing he seals his fate.

This movie is about surviving after all of the establishment organizations have crumbled. Drew can not survive without the establishment, so he can not survive.

This survival message is given voice by Lewis. But in the end, it is Ed who faces the face-to-face

confrontation between civilization and survival.

Besides the outstanding jobs turned in by the four voyagers and the mountain people, Dickey himself does a good job as the sheriff—the representative of the establishment even in the mountains—who puts the survivors to still another test after they get off the river.

With Dickey so involved in the movie, it is somewhat surprising that he would have allowed the filming to take place without supplying the viewer with the same type of motivational information he supplied the reader.

But then maybe he, too, got caught up in the excitement of the film. That's easy to do. It's a damned exciting—as well as intense and frightening—movie.

Art Bushnell



movies

Lady Sings the Blues
Directed by Sidney J. Furie

"Lady Sings the Blues" draws you into the story of Billie Holiday so fast and so far that it is hard to sit back and look at it as a film.

Billie Holiday's life encompassed cat houses, cheap clubs, magnificent success, deep despair, dope, and jail.

She paid her dues so many times and in so many ways, especially in the film, that a television soap opera couldn't do better as far as sheer tragedy goes.

The events, though highly romanticized in sports, show plainly that talent can't overcome racism. Billie (Diana Ross) walks out of a whore house into a sleazy club. From there signs with an all-White band that tours the South waiting for that "big Break." While on tour she sees a Black man lynched, her bus is attacked by Klansmen and in one sequence when the band leader goes into a restaurant to get her a sandwich he turns to her and says "you're not missing a thing." Blatant but true.

The climb is too tough for Billie. She turn to dope. It is this that provides the most graphic scenes of the movie. The agony and horror of what dope can do is spread so thick across the screen that it is clear that director Sidney J. Furie uses Billie Holiday's troubles as propaganda against dope.

Diana Ross can actually act. She must play Billie from her early teens when she is scrubbing floors in a cat house all the way to her triumphant concert at Carnegie Hall. This in itself requires a great deal of talent, but considering that she is in almost every scene of the movie, the range of her acting talent is broad indeed. Her singing is full of emotion but trying to copy such a great singer as Billie Holiday implies that her singing is a bit mechanical.

Ross' scenes when she is either high on dope or suffering from not having any are probably the most graphic to be seen outside of the real thing. It is to her credit that they are so horrifying.

Billie Dee Williams as Lewis McKay her lover, is a loser. He may be good looking and he may have the brightest teeth since Ipana toothpaste went off the market, but his mumblings and blank stares leave a great deal to be desired.

Richard Pryor as Piano Man is the biggest loser. He plays the part like a loser too. It seems that he really wasn't given any lines but that he was just allowed to mumble, rap and appear cute. He is not cute. Pryor may be one of the best comedians around but you can't see that in this film.

As the movie progresses, you realize that Billie Holiday can't win. She tries to kick dope but is arrested at the hospital. She makes a big comeback after she gets out of prison but can't perform in the downtown clubs because her cabaret license has been lifted. She travels across the country in a fantastically successful tour, but despair about going home sets in and she once again turns to dope.

Carnegie Hall is hers when she comes back. But not the clubs. Jail looms large again and then a tragic death.

Screenwriters Terrence McCloy, Chris Clark and Suzanne de Passe have structured this movie to keep the viewer enthralled. But at times it is hard to believe that her life was this slick and evenly paced. The viewer gets the idea that the tragedy of her life was too colorful and too bright to be true.

"Lady Sings the Blues" is hard to describe and hard to judge. At worst it is melodrama; at best it is a tragic story. It is just put together too well to be real.

Bill Bucy

The Getaway
Directed by Sam Peckinpah
Edited by Steve McQueen

"The Getaway" is the second most exciting movie in town (after "Deliverance"), but it isn't the best of

Sam Peckinpah's films. In fact, it isn't even entirely his.

Naturally the director was involved extensively in the pre-film planning of the movie, so the script and action revolve around a pure Peckinpah plot. But the end result is unpure Peckinpah, as edited by the film's star, Steve McQueen.

"The Getaway" was one of the first productions of the new First Artists Production Company and raises questions about stars owning the company that makes their movies. Quite simply, the star of this movie — McQueen — is one of the owners of the film he's working in (other founders of First Artists include Barbara Streisand and Dustin Hoffman).

And the movie reflects McQueen's position of power. He went over some of Peckinpah's original shooting as film editor and left his mark on what began as Peckinpah's film.

The end result is a movie along the same story line as "Straw Dogs," but put together like "Bullitt." And it is that Bullittesque editing that detracts very much from an otherwise good movie — if you like Peckinpah's blood and guts approach to excitement.

But even McQueen couldn't entirely hide Peckinpah's influence. The film is quite similar in plotline to the director's previous works.

Just as in "Straw Dogs," the film follows the coming of age, the attainment of manhood by an outsider — in this case McQueen as Carter "Doc" McCoy, bank robber.

Just as in "Straw Dogs," the man's wife is unfaithful to him for his own good — here Ali McGraw's body is used to gain McCoy's release from prison at the outset of the film.

And just as in "Straw Dogs" the wife and husband are reunited by physical suffering and a violent showdown in which the two of them take on fantastic odds, kill the enemies who so greatly outnumber them — and in the process

become more permanently bound to each other than ever before. In "The Getaway," all of this action takes place as McQueen and McGraw escape from a bank robbery, fighting police, the gang McQueen robbed for and one of his rebellious co-workers.

McQueen is good in the lead role — after all, he tailor made the movie to perfectly fit him.

McGraw at times leaves something to be desired, however, as the wife. She is least believable whenever she has to pick up a gun and kill someone — once the character starts firing, she can't seem to stop and McGraw just can't pull it off. How could that nice girl that died of cancer ever do something so mean and cruel? At times she really does look like she stepped into all the carnage straight from "Love Story."

During the course of the getaway, one of Doc's wounded partners in crime takes a county veterinarian and the vet's wife hostage to aid him in pursuing McCoy. Sally Struthers as the vet's wife is superb. A real gum-chewing, radio-listening housewife who gets hooked on the excitement brought into her life by the bandit emerges. A far cry from "All in the Family."

All in all, the film is quite exciting since it's really one continuous chase scene with violent stopovers. But Peckinpah could have done better; perhaps he did. McQueen's editing intrusion into the film prevents the viewer from knowing exactly what Peckinpah had in mind.

One thing's certain about McQueen's involvement in the final version of the film. As McCoy and his wife drive toward the horizon and whatever kind of questionable future they might have together in Peckinpah's mind, you can't help but think they should be riding in a Le Mans race car, or maybe even a motorcycle.

Then McQueen's handiwork would be complete; his brand would be on the entire film.

Art Bushnell