

Coursen's list: the best and worst films of 1975



Lisztomania

By DAVID COURSEN

The best film news on campus this term is the beginning of a major retrospective of the films of John Ford, my favorite director. To attempt to mention highlights would be to list virtually the entire series—several of Ford's generally under-appreciated early films are included, most notably the delightful "Judge Priest" (with Will Rogers in the title role).

On a more mundane level, it's that time of year when no self-respecting film critic can neglect to list the "ten best" films

of the year, and perhaps, their opposite numbers. The peculiarities of film distribution and Eugene's position as something less than the cultural center of western civilization combine to create a situation where many foreign (and even some American) films don't get shown here until many years after their initial releases. So this year there are actually two "best" lists: new films first shown in the area in 1975, and old films (made between 1943 and 1969) that finally opened here last year.

In listing the new films, I note that I've never had a chance to

review most of them, that the inclusion of some of them is self-explanatory and that the only order they are in is alphabetical: "Amarcord," Fellini; "Emitai," by the Senegalese director Ousmane Sembene; "The Man Who Would Be King," a film John Huston waited twenty years to make, and one of the best, most personal films by this unfashionable master craftsman; "The Merchant of Four Seasons," by Rainer Fassbinder, a remarkable prolific German director; "Nashville," Robert Altman's film, about which too much has already been written—notwithstanding the hypes, excellent; "Night Moves," Arthur Penn's first movie in five years, a meditation on the detective film; "The Passenger," Antonioni; "Scenes From A Marriage," Bergman; "Stavisky," Resnais.

Daryl Duke's "Payday" and John Milius' "The Wind and the Lion" aren't up to the others, but are, as interesting films by young directors, worth mentioning.

The older films include two by Renoir, "The Little Theater of Jean Renoir" and "Elena Et Les Hommes," two by Orson Welles, "Falstaff" and "The Immortal Story," and Ozu's "There Was a Father." Mizoguchi's "Princess Yang Kwei Fei" and "Ugetsu" were the best revivals of the year. And two old, obscure American films, Joe Lewis' "Gun Crazy" and "Crazy" Same Fuller's "Forty Guns," were also impressive.

Where there are good movies there must also be bad ones, and, in 1975 their number was, alas,

legion. To be one of the worst, a film had to be both repulsive and utterly devoid of merit. "Jaws," for example, didn't come close. Neither did Visconti's erratic "Ludwig," incoherently cut to two-thirds of its intended running time, dubbed into English, and so garbled by the whole process that it seemed finally, to offer the original if ridiculous proposition that homosexuality causes...tooth decay.

To be one of the worst of the year, a film must have truly deserved to be exhibited in the worst theater of the year, the West 11th "Entertainment Center," which should, at least, get an award for consistency; every frame of every film I've ever seen there has been out of focus. During one recent screening, the film was—naturally—out of focus, but apparently not sufficiently so to meet the big bunker's exacting standards, so a projectionist was dispatched to remedy the problem, making the necessary adjustments until the film was suitably blurred.

Prime baddies included "Once Is Not Enough," which attempted the formidable task of excising the bad taste from a Jacqueline Susann novel and was left, predictably, with nothing. It should have been called "It's Too Often." "Bite the Bullet" was definitely the Hubert Humphrey movie of the year—alternate title: "Spit It Out." For incompetent

pretentiousness, only "Sandstone" rivalled "92 in the Shade." Ken Russell, once interesting, was, in 1975 reduced to "Tommy" and, worse, "Lisztomania." "Beyond the Door," another birth of Satan opus, earned special congratulations for the clever promo man who decided on a name for the film's director, "Oliver Hellman." (Get it—those sly devils; we're supposed to think that the man from hell, by now a major screen personality, decided to try his hand at directing, and this is th real stuff—sort of like a home movie. It looks it.)

But the worst film I saw all year was "The Terror of Tiny Town"—so help me—a 1931 singing western with an all-midget cast (Jed Buell's Midgets, to be precise). Sounds like a kinky novelty, but the joke wears out after, say, the first thirty seconds, and anyone foolish enough to continue watching begins to suffer. Mercifully, I've completely forgotten the story, but the acting lingers in memory like a Big Mac; the midgets reciting their lines woodenly, as if in mortal terror of forgetting them, tearful that, should that happen, Mr. Buell would surely refuse to reclaim them. It's typical of "Tiny Town" that it used every cliché of the grade "z" western except the one that would have been a master stroke—"This town ain't big enough for both of us." Who says movies haven't gotten better?



Night Moves

Excelsior Café
Continental Cuisine in an informal atmosphere
European desserts—espresso coffee. Enjoy outdoor dining & a seasonal menu.
hours: 9 A.M.—12 P.M. mon. thru sat. 6 P.M.—12 P.M. sun.
754 E. 13th, ph. 342-6963

EUGENE FIBRE COMPANY

alpaca jute
goat hair camel hair
sisal hemp palm
cotton linen
knitting
spinning
weaving
1590-543-0651

CAMPUS SHOE SHOP
shoe repair our speciality

Dingo Boots & Moccasins

Resoling Hiking Boots with genuine Vibram
Rebuilding all Sport Shoes (Adidas, Nikes, Tigers)

843 E. 13th Ave. 343-6613